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THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN ISLAMIC RENAISSANCE  
AND THE RISE OF THE NATION OF ISLAM

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A Dissertation

Presented to

the Faculty of

the University of Denver

and

the Iliff School of Theology

Joint PhD Program

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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by

Patrick D. Bowen

November 2013

Advisor: Andrea Stanton

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Title: THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN ISLAMIC RENAISSANCE AND THE RISE OF THE NATION OF ISLAM

Advisor: Andrea Stanton

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### **Abstract**

This dissertation examines African-American Islamic culture from 1920 through 1959, a period I label the “African-American Islamic Renaissance” (AAIR). The AAIR is characterized by a significant increase in interest in Islam, extreme diversity in views about Islam, and the absence of a single organization dominating African-American Islamic culture for a significant amount of time. Previous works dealing with African-American Islam in this period have failed to fully recognize these features, particularly the last of these. As a result, explanations for the rise of the Nation of Islam (NOI) have not satisfactorily explained why it was only the NOI—and not other Islamic groups that were more popular than the NOI up until the mid-1950s—that became a “mass movement,” gaining the allegiance of tens of thousands of African Americans. There has been some tendency, for instance, to assume that the NOI was the most popular African-American Islamic group by the early 1950s, a notion that is probably an inference drawn from two other popular but inaccurate assumptions: that the NOI’s rise was due primarily to its radical racialized doctrines and its charismatic leaders, particularly Malcolm X, who became a popular minister for the group in the early 1950s. I argue, however, that the NOI was in fact not the most popular African-American Islamic group until at least 1955, and even as late as 1959 its official membership numbers were not particularly large by AAIR standards. Also, its doctrines were not especially unique in the AAIR, nor was its having extremely charismatic leaders. I contend that the success of the NOI in the mid-to-

late 1950s was the result of three levels of changes at the time: internal, external in the AAIR community, and external in the broader U.S. culture.

## **Acknowledgements**

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## **Chapter One: Introduction**

### **The African-American Islamic Renaissance**

Between 1920 and 1959 a cultural explosion took place in the U.S.'s northern black neighborhoods. In the nineteenth century there had been a handful of small, scattered, and short-lived black American Islamic communities. But, suddenly, beginning in the 1920s, hundreds, sometimes thousands, of African Americans, in virtually every city of importance between Boston and St. Louis, began claiming Islamic identities. While these individuals often had ties to at least one of the three main African-American-majority "Islamic"<sup>1</sup> organizations at the time—the Ahmadiyya Movement, the Moorish Science Temple (MST), and the Nation of Islam (NOI)—in reality, there were at least twenty-six distinct significant Islamic-identity groups or communities in which African Americans played important roles during this era. Moreover, there were over sixty African Americans in the U.S. presenting themselves as Islamic religious authorities in some way. The significance of these numbers, and of the level of prevalence and diversity they represent, has been, for the most part, underappreciated in the scholarship on African-American Islam, often because little evidence has been offered to demonstrate it. One goal of this dissertation, then, is to bring to light more of that evidence, drawing

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<sup>1</sup> "Islamic" here is meant to reflect these groups' self-identity; it is not a normative statement on the authenticity of their "Islamic-ness." It should also be pointed out that some of the groups in the AAIR and later identified their teachings as "Islamic," but did not identify themselves as "Muslims"—in some cases, they only identified as "Moors" and, especially after the AAIR, at least one group understood "Islam" as a culture and "Muslim" as a religious identity, and they rejected the latter.

from previously under-explored newspaper reports, academic studies, archives, and government documents. It will be shown that, far from being an era of a few disparate movements, the time between the arrival in New York of Muhammad Sadiq in 1920 and the ascension of the NOI to its position as far and away the most dominant African-American Islamic organization in the late 1950s was one of deep and widespread Islamic cultural florescence for African Americans. I have therefore named this period the African-American Islamic Renaissance (AAIR).

By using the term “renaissance” I mean to highlight a number of specific features that characterized this period in African-American Islamic history.<sup>2</sup> When a cultural group is said to have undergone a renaissance, it is usually understood that there is, first of all, an *increase of interest in older knowledge and culture*. Whether in early modern Europe or in Harlem in the 1920s, the major shapers of a renaissance are typically individuals who are rediscovering the writings, cultural or religious practices, and art of their cultural predecessors—or at least the older societies that they admire. This interest is largely propelled by the desire to see how the past can inform the present conditions.

The second feature of renaissances is that this interest is explored and expressed in incredibly *diverse ways*. Reference to the early modern renaissance in Europe usually conjures up a time in which there were impressive developments in a wide variety of fields. In fact, renaissances in general frequently produce innovations in literature, visual art, philosophy, science, and music.

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<sup>2</sup> While the following list of features of renaissances is my own, my thoughts on the subject are particularly indebted to Garhart B. Ladner, “Terms and Ideas of Renewal,” in *Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century*, eds. Robert L. Benson et al. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), 1-33.

During these periods, there is also often an *emphasis on both re-birth and new birth*. Although the “re” in “renaissance” suggests a repetition, in addition to the discussions of rebirth and regeneration that certainly are present in most renaissances, there was also a stress on newness. Sometimes the emphasis is on discovery (of, say, new facts about the world), but more commonly there is a strong millennial element that proclaims the imminent dawning of a new age. This corresponds with a related feature of renaissances, which is *a rise in attraction to what might be called magical or mystical philosophies or religions*, particularly those that promote the ability of humans to become (or return) closer to god and attain an increased level of divine power, such as the power to manipulate the natural world. Though this feature is primarily associated with the early modern European renaissance, it existed to some degree in the Harlem Renaissance.<sup>3</sup>

A fifth feature, then, is the idea that *humans have more power to control the world than they had had in the recent past*. Humanity’s role in the world is typically redefined in ways that justify a more significant role in the shaping of conditions on earth. Often, this is connected to a belief that either humans generally or a certain community had forgotten their “true” natures or roles, and that the current era was a time of reawakening. This new mindset ultimately leads to the notion that humans should not be passive victims of either natural or social forces; therefore renaissances also have a trend of people urging *reform and rebellion*. Reform and rebellion in renaissances can take a wide variety of forms, from overt political and sometimes violent action to the transmitting of subversive but encoded texts, which were merely designed to spiritually inspire members of a secret community.

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<sup>3</sup> See Hans A. Baer, *The Black Spiritual Movement: A Religious Response to Racism* (Knoxville, 1984).

The belief that humans have a special role in the world, and are not mere tools or victims of other humans and nature, essentially gives humans a greater sense of worth and therefore a feeling of self-respect or dignity. During renaissances, then, there is a stress on the notion that *humans have dignity/self-respect and should claim this dignity*.<sup>4</sup> And during renaissances, dignity is frequently associated with the other major notions popular at the time: re- and new birth, magic, worldly power, and reform and rebellion—all of which contribute to developing a new notion of humanity that is defined as self-respecting, dignified.

All of these features characterize the AAIR. While the period that would follow the AAIR—which was, in terms of African-American Islam at least, unquestionably dominated by the NOI—would see an even greater *rise in interest* in Islamic culture than that which had appeared during the AAIR, the *diversity* of interest receded as the images and discourses associated with the NOI drowned out those of most other groups.<sup>5</sup> In fact, during the AAIR, no single movement could honestly claim to have dominated African-American Islam to a degree anywhere close to that which the NOI could claim later. While the MST had, technically, for most of the AAIR, more adherents and probably the single biggest influence on African-American Islamic culture, its impact was severely dampened by it being broken into a several factions. Furthermore, the MST's

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<sup>4</sup> The central importance of “dignity,” and its connection with the other elements of “renaissance,” is highlighted by Ernst Cassirer, who influentially identified Pico della Mirandola's *Oration on the Dignity of Man* as a defining text of Europe's early modern renaissance; see Ernst Cassirer, *The Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy*, trans. Mario Domandi (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 2000), 83-87.

<sup>5</sup> It is significant that the term “Black Muslim” in popular culture became synonymous with, and only with, the NOI.

membership size and influence were only slightly greater than the other prominent AAIR groups’.

Because there was so much diversity in the AAIR, two tendencies emerge concerning the notion of birth. The first tendency, which was unquestionably the most popular, was that of *re*-birth. Islam was frequently presented as the religion of African Americans prior to their enslavement in the U.S., and their time as Christians was seen as a spiritual sleep or even death. Embracing Islam was understood as a revival, a rebirth, for African Americans. On the other hand, particularly when it was presented to African Americans by immigrant Muslims, Islam was sometimes *not* framed as the original religion of African Americans. Islam was frequently promoted as a religion that black Americans should join because it offered *new* things, particularly freedom from racism and a chance for individual advancement in modern society.

Another important aspect of the diversity in the AAIR was the views on whites and integration with them. In two of the most popular movements, the MST and NOI, integration was strongly resisted. Often there was a deep sense of a dichotomy of white and black, and even those who were sometimes classified as non-white in the eyes of the dominant U.S. culture, such as Arab immigrants, were sometimes classed by African-American Islamic groups as “white.” On the other side of the spectrum were the Ahmadis and several other immigrant-led communities. For them, Islam was a truly universal religion, one that embraced all colors. In some cases, though, particularly in the Sunni groups but also to some extent in the MST and NOI, views on race vacillated or were not neatly defined; sometimes emphasis was put on the connection between Islam and

blackness but at the same time there was willingness to work with and learn from Arabs and even non-Arab white Americans.

One feature that seems to have been shared by most of the AAIR communities, however, was *an interest in the magical or mystical*. Frequently, this magic was the magic of exaltation—the ability of humans to elevate themselves either to a position closer to god than they had in the past or to become actual divine beings.<sup>6</sup> In some of the most prominent groups, African-Americans were told a gnostic-like story about their original divine nature, and it was said that by recognizing this truth and performing certain rituals (such as paying for and memorizing teachings) they would regain their divine powers to shape the world. In other cases, though African-American divinity was not stressed, the ability to have religious visions, interacting with spirits, the importance of number symbolism, and homeopathic or mystical curing were popular concepts. This connection between Islam and magic during the AAIR is particularly notable because it reflects a long tradition in the major renaissances in Western culture. In the European renaissances of the twelfth century and early modern period, as well as the American renaissances in the early nineteenth century and in Harlem in the 1920s, Islam was *frequently* present and was often connected to magic. I will explore these connections and how they related to the AAIR more in chapter 2.

In almost all cases, the embracing of Islam for African Americans—whether it be as a rebirth or new birth, through exaltation or through a simple taking of an oath—meant *having more power to control the world in which they live*. African-American Muslims,

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<sup>6</sup> I am borrowing this term and concept from Gyorgy E. Szonyi, *John Dee's Occultism: Magical Exaltation through Powerful Signs* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004), esp. 19-37.

inspired by their new faith and disciplined by both their abstinence from alcohol and various foods and their new concepts of gender, were able to attain better employment, become somewhat financially self-sufficient, and earn more respect and better treatment from whites on a day-to-day basis. African-American Islam was, in many ways, an “uplift movement,” a movement that helped improve the conditions of black Americans. In fact, beyond the personal transformations that Islam gave to African Americans, the embracing of Islam endowed them with the ability to struggle for both *reform and rebellion*. During the AAIR, African-American Muslims could be found in courtrooms throughout the country demanding and sometimes receiving legal justice that had previously been denied them. And, in a few instances, when they perceived their oppression so great that simple reform would be ineffective, some African-American Muslims openly rebelled against the U.S. government. On a handful of occasions, members of the NOI rioted against the police and courts in their cities. During World War II, some in the MST and in the NOI rejected allegiance to a country that would not treat them as full citizens, a decision that led to government scrutiny and, for some, imprisonment.

Fundamentally, though, the African-American turn towards Islam from 1920 to 1959 was about the desire for *dignity*. Emancipation had not granted this, nor had migration to the North. If African Americans were going to gain their dignity, they needed something more; they needed a change in how they thought about the world and themselves, they needed a change in how they behaved and interacted in society, they needed a symbol to tell themselves and others that they were fully human and deserving of the level of treatment that whites alone were receiving, and they needed ways to

convince whites to change their own behavior towards and ideas about African Americans. The story of the “African-American Islamic Renaissance” is therefore, in the end, a story about a struggle for dignity.

With this dissertation, however, I do not simply aim to demonstrate that the period from 1920 to 1959 should rightly be called a “renaissance,” I also highlight and explain one particular aspect of this story: the rise of the Nation of Islam. Contrary to what many may think, for most of the AAIR, the NOI was not the largest or most influential African-American Islamic organization. Though there was a brief period in the early 1930s when the NOI had more members than any other AAIR group, it fell apart soon after and maintained a rather small following until the mid-to-late 1950s when it quickly and powerfully took a significant lead in the African-American Islamic community. Because there has been a general lack of awareness about the prevalence and diversity of the non-NOI groups in the AAIR, the story of the NOI’s rise has been somewhat distorted and undertheorized in the literature.<sup>7</sup> This dissertation seeks to correct that. I argue that the NOI’s rise in the 1950s was the result of three levels of changes: internal—the NOI’s own organizational activities, external in the AAIR—the decline of non-NOI AAIR groups, and external in the broader culture—the emergence of the Civil Rights movement, which resulted in the deregulation of religious and cultural

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<sup>7</sup> See, for example, Karl Evanzz, *The Messenger: The Rise and Fall of Elijah Muhammad* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1999), 121; Claude A. Clegg III, *An Original Man: The Life and Times of Elijah Muhammad* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997), 104; Richard Brent Turner, *Islam in the African-American Experience* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 159, 169; Jane I. Smith, *Islam in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 80-81; Edward E. Curtis IV, *Muslims in America: A Short History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 36-37. Robert Dannin, meanwhile, understates the prominence of the Moorish Science Temple; see Robert Dannin, *Black Pilgrimage to Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 32. C. Eric Lincoln’s seminal study on the NOI (cited below) is a notable exception in terms of theorizing the NOI’s rise, although there are parts of Lincoln’s theory that need refining, as I show below.

groups in African-American culture, thereby creating an environment in which the NOI could thrive. In the following section, I give an overview of the existing scholarship on the AAIR to show why this dissertation, its specific goals and its main arguments are important for advancing the field.

### **Scholarship on the AAIR: A Review and Assessment**

The first phase of scholarship on the period I call the AAIR lasted from the 1920s to the early 1930s. Most of these early discussions were about the U.S. Ahmadiyya Movement and appeared in Christian missionary periodicals, either in news briefs or overviews of Islam in the U.S.<sup>8</sup> By and large, writing on the subject was short and rather superficial. I know of only two studies from this period that focused exclusively on Ahmadi—both were short articles written by individuals who had visited the Ahmadi headquarters in Chicago.<sup>9</sup> At most, these various early pieces recorded the existence of the movement's principal U.S. centers and the fact that it had attracted mostly African Americans. During this period, as far as I am aware, there were only a handful of non-journalistic mentions of non-Ahmadi African-American Muslims: two mentions of

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<sup>8</sup> Samuel M. Zwemer, "A Mohammedan Mosque at Detroit, Mich.," *Missionary Review of the World* 44 (Oct 1921): 787-791; "Islam in Chicago," *Moslem World* 13 (1923): 403-404; Mary Caroline Holmes, "Islam in America," *Moslem World* 16 (1926): 262-266; "The Moslem Movement in America," *Moslem World* 20 (1930): 309-310; "Islam in America," *Lutheran Witness* 51 (1932): 104; "Mohammedan Activities," *Missionary Review of the World* 55 (1932): 246; "Islam in Pittsburgh," *Moslem World* 23 (1933): 90; "Islam in America," *Moslem World* 24 (1934): 189-190; "Islamic Ceremony in Chicago Hospital," *Moslem World* 28 (1938): 98-99.

<sup>9</sup> A.T. Hoffert, "Moslem Propaganda," *The Messenger* 9 (May 1927): 141, 160; John Van Ess, "A Moslem Mosque in Chicago," *Neglected Arabia* 141 (1927): 13-15. Hoffert's article was followed up with a brief update in 1930: Andrew T. Hoffert, "The Moslem Movement in America," *Moslem World* 20 (1930): 309.

followers of the Moorish Science Temple (MST),<sup>10</sup> one of Abdul Hamid Suleiman,<sup>11</sup> one of Sufi Abdul Hamid,<sup>12</sup> one of a Muslim from Madagascar proselytizing to Harlem's black residents,<sup>13</sup> and one of what were probably Sunni converts who had immigrated to Egypt.<sup>14</sup> Only very basic facts were learned—or at least written about—during this period: these groups were in several cities in the eastern U.S., they proclaimed Islam to be devoid of racism and therefore more appropriate than Christianity for African Americans, and a few African Americans had become leaders in their groups. Because most of these discussions were short, often buried in news brief sections or articles on other topics, and were likely only read by scholars who read Christian missionary periodicals, little scholarly advancement was made—each discussion was likely written by an author who had no knowledge of the previous discussions.

In the mid-to-late 1930s, the literature improved due to the appearance of four longer works. First was G.H. Bousquet's 1935 five-page article on Islam in the U.S.<sup>15</sup> The majority of Bousquet's piece focused on the Ahmadis and the MST, and it contains the first scholarly discussion of the MST's main book, *The Holy Koran of the Moorish Temple of Science*. Then, in 1938, the *American Journal of Sociology* published the first

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<sup>10</sup> "Reaching a Mohammedan," *Annual Report of the American Bible Society* (1927): 102; "Islam in America," 90.

<sup>11</sup> "New Jersey," *The Smart Set* 72 (October 1923): 10.

<sup>12</sup> "Islam in America," 90.

<sup>13</sup> Holmes, 265.

<sup>14</sup> Pierre Crabites, "American Negro Mohammedans," *Moslem World* 23, no. 3 (1933): 272-284.

<sup>15</sup> G.H. Bousquet, "Moslem Religious Influences in the United States," *Moslem World* 25, no. 1 (1935): 40-44.

full-length academic article on an African-American Islamic movement.<sup>16</sup> Erdmann Doane Beynon, a geographer and Christian minister who was serving the Hungarian immigrant community in Detroit, had become interested in the Nation of Islam after it had made several headlines in Detroit's newspapers in the 1930s. His study was primarily based on interviews with remaining members of the movement and he was allowed to see some of the group's early written materials that would only be known to later scholars through republished editions that contained some significant alterations. A few of his respondents had also been former members of the MST and showed Beynon a copy of its catechism; so, in addition to noting some of the historical connections between the MST and NOI, Beynon briefly (if implicitly) compared the texts and philosophies of both groups. He observed their shared interest in black nationalism and Marcus Garvey, that both were led by individuals regarded as prophets, and that both claimed unique Islamic genealogies for African Americans.<sup>17</sup> Beynon also stressed that both racial discrimination and the fact that converts were recent immigrants from the South were important factors that strengthened the size of the movements.

The third and fourth longer works to appear in the late 1930s were studies conducted by African Americans on Sufi Abdul Hamid's movement; these studies signaled the beginning of a period in which African Americans led the research and scholarly discussion of African-American Islam. One was written by a black Harvard graduate student, Raymond Julius Jones, who had visited Hamid's Temple of Tranquility

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<sup>16</sup> Erdmann Doane Beynon, "The Voodoo Cult among Negro Migrants in Detroit," *American Journal of Sociology* 43 (May 1938): 894-907.

<sup>17</sup> Beynon, 898-900.

in Harlem in 1938.<sup>18</sup> The other was a 1939 unpublished collection of three studies based primarily off of interviews with various residents of Harlem in the 1930s.<sup>19</sup> The research for the 1939 studies had been sponsored by the Works Progress Administration (WPA), a Depression-era federal program initiated to provide work for the unemployed. In many cities, a handful of African Americans were given jobs as researchers of African-American culture, and it was through the WPA that black researchers began recording information on the MST, NOI, and other African-American Muslims.<sup>20</sup> The WPA gave the principal narratives of the rise of these groups and their leaders, as well as some basic details about their early activities. Because African-American writers and scholars were among those employed for the WPA research, much of the information they gathered made it into the books—both journalistic and scholarly—that they would publish in the 1940s about African-American urban life, such as Arthur Fauset’s *Black Gods of the Metropolis*, St. Clair Drake and Horace R. Cayton’s *Black Metropolis*, Arna Bontemps and Jack Conroy’s *They Seek a City*, Roi Ottley’s *New World A-Coming*, and Claude McKay’s *Harlem: Negro Metropolis*.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Raymond Julius Jones, “A Comparative Study of Religious Cult Behavior among Negroes with Special Reference to Emotional Corporation Conditioning Factors,” *Howard University Studies in the Social Sciences* 2 (no. 2, 1939): 120-23. Roi Ottley, *New World A-Coming* (New York: Arno Press, 1968), 116.

<sup>19</sup> See Works Progress Administration, *Negroes of New York* (New York: Works Progress Administration, 1939).

<sup>20</sup> A collection of several of the relevant WPA studies have recently been compiled and published as Works Progress Administration, *Early Studies in Black Nationalism, Cults, and Churches in Chicago*, ed. Muhammed Al-Ahari (Chicago: Magribine Press, 2011).

<sup>21</sup> Arthur Huff Fauset, *Black Gods of the Metropolis* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, [1944] 2002); St. Clair Drake and Horace R. Cayton, *Black Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life in a Northern City* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, [1945]); Arna Bontemps and Jack Conroy, *They Seek a City* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, Doran and Company, Inc., 1945); Roi Ottley, *New World A-Coming: Inside Black America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1943); Claude McKay, *Harlem: Negro Metropolis* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Company, inc. [1940]).

These works marked a significant stage of development for the study of African-American Islam not only because they were all written by African Americans, but also because they popularized both the knowledge of the major organizations and individuals as well as certain interpretations of the movements. Every single one of these studies placed African-American Islam within the context of the African-American Great Migration to the urban North; all noted that the Islamic groups were but a few of the many new religious movements that were forming in the urban black communities; most recognized that the turn to Islam was done largely out of a desire to escape “negro” identity; most saw a strong connection between these groups and black nationalism, particularly that of Marcus Garvey; most observed the importance of a mystical element in the groups; and a few noted in passing that African Americans had been developing relationships with immigrant Muslims, though for the most part their Islam-related discussions focused on communities with little interaction with immigrant Muslims: the NOI, the MST, and Sufi Abdul Hamid’s group. In addition to these sociological and historical details, Fauset’s book contributed an extensive discussion of the MST ritual—significantly improving scholarly knowledge about the more religious aspects of African-American Islam.

Meanwhile, progress was also being made by other researchers. Ulysses W. Boykin, an African-American journalist, wrote briefly about Detroit’s MST and a NOI-connected group, the Development of Our Own, in a 1943 book about the black community in that city.<sup>22</sup> In 1942, the Christian missionary periodical *Moslem World*

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<sup>22</sup> Ulysses W. Boykin, *A Hand Book on the Detroit Negro* (Detroit: The Minority Study Associates, 1943), 45-46.

published the MST catechism and in 1947, citing the journal's earlier discussions of the MST as well as Fauset's book, it became the first periodical to publish the discovery that the MST's *Holy Koran* was largely composed of uncredited borrowings from Levi Dowling's *Aquarian Gospel of Jesus the Christ*.<sup>23</sup> This latter article also added information about the MST having a governing constitution and about some of its temple locations in the 1940s. In the next year, the *Moslem World* reprinted an Ahmadi missionary piece being used in the U.S.<sup>24</sup> Finally, in 1948, an international Muslim studying at the University of Pittsburgh wrote his Master's thesis on the African-American Ahmadis and Sunnis in Pittsburgh, making this the first scholarly work to explicitly identify African-American Sunnis.<sup>25</sup> Like others, he showed that racism, the Great Migration, and contact with Muslim immigrants were significant contributing factors in the development of African-American Islam. This study, however, went largely unnoticed.

In the 1950s, due to African-American Islamic groups becoming relatively quiet during the latter part of the previous decade and the fact that the WPA program was terminated in 1943, scholarly and Christian missionary interest in African-American Islam died down significantly.<sup>26</sup> There were, however, three important works on African-American Islam produced in this decade. The first was a 1951 Master's thesis on the NOI

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<sup>23</sup> "A Moorish Temple Catechism," *Moslem World* 32 (1942): 55-69; Frank T. Simpson, "The Moorish Science Temple and its 'Koran'," *Moslem World* 37 (1947): 56-61.

<sup>24</sup> "Qadiani Islam in America," *Moslem World* 38 (1948): 303.

<sup>25</sup> Noshir P. Kaikobad, "The Colored Muslims of Pittsburgh" (M.A. thesis, University of Pittsburgh, 1948).

<sup>26</sup> For instance, while in the 1920s through 1940s the *Moslem World* discussed African-American-majority Islamic groups on at least ten occasions, I have found only a single mention of one in the 1950s—and it is only a three-sentence long brief; "'The Moslem Sunrise'," *Moslem World* 40 (1950): 302.

written by an international Muslim student at the University of Chicago, Hatim A. Sahib.<sup>27</sup> Being a Muslim, unlike Beynon, Sahib was given unprecedented access to the group, including Elijah Muhammad himself, whom Beynon had not interviewed. This access and the thesis format (which was much longer than an academic article) enabled Sahib to record Elijah's and other long-time members' detailed recollections of the early years of the movement, its significant decline from the mid-1930s to the mid-1940s, the backgrounds of those who joined, and the Islamic lifestyles it promoted in the early 1950s. Because of these details, Sahib's study remains an important source for scholars. The interest in the NOI was also an element of the second important piece from the 1950s, Charles S. Braden's "Islam in America." In this article (in which he cites Fauset), Braden discusses the three major Islamic movements for African Americans that had been discussed by scholars up to that point: the Ahmadis, the MST, and the NOI. Therefore, though the article did not go into much depth and was relatively short, it was one of the first works to provide a side-by-side comparison of the three widely known movements.<sup>28</sup>

The third important piece from the 1950s, however, did not touch on these three groups. Nadim Makdisi's "The Muslims of America" first appeared in a British Lahori-Ahmadi periodical in 1955 and was republished with slight modifications in a 1959 issue of *Christian Century*.<sup>29</sup> In addition to discussing Sufi Abdul Hamid, this article was the

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<sup>27</sup> Hatim A. Sahib, "The Nation of Islam" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1951).

<sup>28</sup> In 1959, Braden also published an article that looked in much more detail at the Ahmadis; see Charles S. Braden, "Moslem Missions in America," *Religion in Life* 28, no. 3 (1959): 331-343.

<sup>29</sup> Nadim al-Maqdissi, "The Muslims of America," *Islamic Review* 43 (June 1955): 28-31; Nadim Makdisi, "The Moslems of America," *Christian Century*, August 26, 1959, 969-971.

first scholarly work to mention lesser-known African-American-majority Sunni organizations, such as the Moorish National Islamic Center, the Academy of Islam, Harlem's International Moslem Society, and Sheikh Daoud Faisal's Islamic Mission of America. Here, Makdisi stresses African-American ties to immigrant Muslims, thus placing the history of African-American Islam more within the history of the immigration of Muslims to the U.S., and less within African-American history.

The slow-down in academic interest in African-American Islam would suddenly be reversed at the beginning of the next decade. This phenomenon was almost entirely due to the surge in media attention given to the NOI in the late 1950s. As will be discussed in chapter 7, in the mid-to-late 1950s the NOI made rapid gains in membership after Malcolm X became a leading minister and the group began to promote itself through several media outlets. Then, after a widely publicized confrontation with the police, the NOI had begun attaining national and even international attention, culminating in the 1959 television documentary on the movement, "The Hate that Hate Produced," watched in millions of U.S. homes. With the public's eyes focused on the NOI, academic interest in that group increased significantly.

The most well-known product of the early 1960s scholarly attention to the NOI is C. Eric Lincoln's 1961 *The Black Muslims in America*.<sup>30</sup> Besides being the first book-length treatment of twentieth-century African-American Islam, *Black Muslims in America*, following the popular tendency at the time, crystallized the equating of the term "Black Muslims" with the NOI. Lincoln, an African-American sociologist, was, like

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<sup>30</sup> C. Eric Lincoln, *The Black Muslims in America*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdsman; Trenton: Africa World Press, [1961] 1994).

Sahib, given extensive access to the group. However, by the time Lincoln conducted his research, the NOI had over ten times as many registered members and tens of thousands more believers and sympathizers than it had in the early 1950s, so Lincoln's focus was much more on the group's current state and much less on its past. While acknowledging the importance of racism, the Great Migration, and the NOI's connections to the MST and Garvey, the group's struggles in the late 1930s and 1940s were not emphasized as much as they were in Sahib's work. Also, Lincoln, though he recognized the fact that the NOI did experience an increase in membership in the 1950s, after interviewing many members largely attributed the NOI's success to the appeal of its doctrines and activities for African Americans who had recently immigrated from the South. This conclusion has several limitations. First of all, it does not fully explain either why the early NOI—even when it had the same doctrines and activities as it would in the late 1950s—experienced such a significant breakdown in the 1930s and 1940s and why its real growth only came in the mid-1950s. Second, Lincoln does not appear to have been aware of the fact that other African-American Islamic groups had doctrines and practices very similar to those of the NOI; consequently, Lincoln fails to explain why it was that only the NOI became a “mass movement,” and not the other Islamic groups. Both of these limitations are largely a factor of Lincoln not being able to provide clear and reliable estimates about the size of the NOI and other African-American Islamic groups at regular intervals since their beginnings.

This is not to say that Lincoln did not offer a nuanced analysis. He observed that the NOI had a complex relationship with Sunni Muslims, both African Americans and immigrants. He also recognized the importance of both the NOI's use of media and

Malcolm X's charismatic speech for popularizing the group. And, following mass movement theory, he noted that the NOI's success was largely attributed to a major social change (which he determined was primarily the Great Migration) and he understood that its main membership drew from people who were denied access to mainstream society ("permanent misfits")—in other words, African Americans, particularly those from the lower classes. Though later in this dissertation it will be shown that more specificity would be needed to explain why it was *only* the NOI that was able to exploit these factors at the time, Lincoln's contribution was in making explicit the importance of these factors. Because of the popularity of his book and the fact that knowledge about non-NOI African-American Islamic groups remained minimal over the next few dozen years, his analysis—which emphasized the NOI's doctrines and activities—became and has remained the dominant one in the literature.

Interest in the NOI in the 1960s was partially stimulated by the Civil Rights and Black Power movements, both of which were encouraging a rediscovery of African-American culture. Due to this cultural change, a number of older books on African-American culture were republished, including several that contained the WPA information about early African-American Islamic groups.<sup>31</sup> For the most part, however, the increased interest in African-American Islam only meant a greater focus on the NOI. Several articles on the NOI were published that decade in widely varying fields.<sup>32</sup> And, in

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<sup>31</sup> There were re-publishings of the books by Bontemps and Conroy, Ottley, and McKay.

<sup>32</sup> E.g., Morroe Berger, "The Black Muslims," *Islamic Horizons* 1, no. 3 (1964); "Divide for Black Muslims," *Economist* 210 (March 14, 1964); Edwin E. Calverly, "Negro Muslims in Hartford," *Moslem World* 55 (1965): 340-345; John Howard, "The Making of a Black Muslim," In *Social Process in Minority-Dominant Relations*, E.R. Dickie-Clark, ed., 127-290 (New York: Free Press, 1968)" H.M. Kaplan, "The Black Muslims and the Negro American's Quest for Communication," *Journal of British Sociology* 20 (1969): 164-176.

1962, a study similar to Lincoln's, but conducted by an African scholar who had done his graduate work in the U.S., was released.<sup>33</sup> Like Lincoln and Sahib, E.U. Essien-Udom was given special access to the NOI, but he spends less time doing sociological analysis and instead goes into greater detail about the activities of the NOI in the 1950s than Lincoln had. As a result, he provides what are probably the most accurate estimates of the group's membership and sympathizer sizes and offers more information about the NOI's relationship with the MST and other non-NOI Muslims. Still, like Lincoln, he largely attributes the group's popularity to its black nationalist doctrines.

In addition to these works on the overall NOI, as Malcolm X became more popular in the early 1960s, interest in his life and character grew exponentially. In 1964, Malcolm X published his autobiography,<sup>34</sup> a book that was an immediate hit, going through several printings in the first year alone. Several biographies, analyses of his life and impact, and printings of his speeches soon followed.<sup>35</sup>

While the 1960s and 1970s scholarship saw the occasional discussion of African-American Sunnis, Ahmadis, and other sectarian groups, these were primarily in lesser-known works that were not cited by the majority of the scholars of the period who looked at African-American Islam, as these scholars were for the most part focused on the post-

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<sup>33</sup> E.U. Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism: A Search for an Identity in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962)

<sup>34</sup> Malcolm X and Alex Haley, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (New York: Grove Press, Inc., [1964] 1965).

<sup>35</sup> E.g., George Brietman, ed., *The Last Year of Malcolm X* (New York: Schicken, 1968); John H. Clarke, *Malcolm X: The Man and His Times* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1969); Peter Goldman, *The Death and Life of Malcolm X* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973)

1959 NOI.<sup>36</sup> However, the NOI's claim that the Africans brought to the U.S. as enslaved persons were originally Muslims stimulated a new wave of research into the religious roots of African slaves, and as early as the late 1960s the beginnings of a new sub-field that focused on enslaved Muslims in the Americas had emerged.<sup>37</sup> The topic quickly entered into popular narrative when Alex Haley included Muslim subjects in his 1976 book *Roots*, which was in the next year made into an incredibly popular television miniseries. Through this research, which was largely led by black scholars, there was also a rediscovery of both eighteenth- and nineteenth-century writings on enslaved Muslims as well as the work of Edward Blyden, a late nineteenth-century author who promoted the idea that Islam was beneficial to Africans because it was free from racism.<sup>38</sup>

In the 1980s, due to the increase of Muslim immigration to the U.S. after 1965, there was a significant rise in Muslim-Americans writing about Islam in the U.S. Though

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<sup>36</sup> C. Umhau Wolf, "Muslims in the American Mid-West," *Muslim World* 50 (1960): 39-48; A.A. Wasfi, "Dearborn Arab-Moslem Community: A Study of Acculturation" (PhD diss., Michigan State University, 1964), 176-177; Tony Poon-Chiang Chi, "A Case Study of the Missionary Stance of the Ahmadiyya Movement in North America" (PhD diss., Northwestern University, 1973); M.A. Rauf, "Islam and Islamic Institutions in the Americas," *Impact International*, April 22, 1976, 43-46; Jameela A. Hakim, *History of the First Muslim Mosque of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania* (Cedar Rapids: Igram Press, 1979); Patrick Chike Onwuachi, "Religious Concepts and Socio-Cultural Dynamics of Afro-American Religious Cults in Saint Louis, Missouri" (PhD diss., Saint Louis University, 1963). In addition to these works, two books devoted small sections to discussing the influence of Islam in Garvey's movement: Randall K. Burkett, *Garveyism as a Religious Movement* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, Inc.) and Tony Martin, *Race First: The Ideological and Organizational Struggles of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1976), 74-77.

<sup>37</sup> E.g., Philip D. Curtin, ed., *Africa Remembered: Narratives by West Africans from the Era of the Slave Trade* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1967); Douglas Grant, *The Fortunate Slave: An Illustration of African Slavery in the Early Eighteenth Century* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968); Clyde Ahmed Winter, "Roots and Islam in Slave America," *Al-Ittihad* 13 (October-November 1976): 18-20; Terry Alford, *Prince Among Slaves* (New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977); Allan D. Austin, ed., *African Muslims in Antebellum America: A Sourcebook* (New York: Garland Pub., 1984).

<sup>38</sup> E.g., Thomas Bluett, *Some Memoirs of the Life of Job, the Son of Solomon* (London, 1734); Joel Chandler Harris, *The Story of Aaron (So Named) The Son of Ben-Ali* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, and Co., 1896); Edward W. Blyden, *Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race* (London: W.B. Whittingham and Co., 1887).

these studies were primarily concerned with the non-black immigrant population, in a few instances (particularly in the work of the Gambian-American scholar Sulayman Nyang) African-American Muslims were included.<sup>39</sup> However, because the NOI, MST, and Ahmadis were considered, at best, sectarian groups and, at worst, not legitimate Islamic organizations, there was a great deal of reluctance on the part of Muslim immigrants to include them in these studies.

During the 1980s and early 1990s, the most influential and pioneering work to include African Americans in the general study of Islam in the U.S. was done by Yvonne Haddad and Jane I. Smith. Perhaps because neither of them were either Muslim or African-American, they seem to have been less inhibited by the existing popular sectarian and cultural commitments and interests that had been shaping the scholarly definition of Islam in the U.S. and chose a rather expansive view, which was consistently used in the several books and articles that they wrote and edited. Still, because their information on African-American Islam often relied on the research of others, what they wrote and edited was largely shaped by current and earlier scholarly interests.<sup>40</sup> Their books

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<sup>39</sup> M. Arif Ghayur, "Muslims in the United States: Settlers and Visitors," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 454 (March 1981): 150-163; Arif Ghayur, "Ethnic Distribution of American Muslims and Selected Socio-Economic Characteristics," *Journal Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs* 5, no. 1 (1984): 47-59; Sayyid M. Syeed, "Editorial Introduction," *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 1, no. 1 (1984): v-ix; Samir Abed-Rabbo, "The Neglected Focus," *Journal Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs* 5, no. 1 (1984): 64-66; T.B. Irving, "Muslims in USA—A Survey," *Islamic Order* 8, no. 3 (1986): 30-38. Some of Sulayman Nyang's work on the topic includes "The U.S. and Islam: The Stuff that Dreams are Made of," *Arabia: The Islamic World Review* (November 1982): 24-26; "Growing of Islam in America," *Saudi Gazette*, October 19, 1983, 6; *Islam in the United States of America* (Chicago: ABC International Group, Inc., 1999).

<sup>40</sup> Their most notable relevant works include Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, Byron Haines, Ellison Findly, eds., *The Islamic Impact* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1984); Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad and Jane I. Smith, *Mission to America: Five Islamic Sectarian Communities in North America* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1993); Yvonne Y. Haddad and Jane I. Smith, eds., *Muslim Communities in North America*, (Albany: State University of New York, 1994); Jane I. Smith, *Islam in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999); Yvonne Y. Haddad and John L. Esposito, eds., *Muslims on the Americanization Path?* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

therefore included extended discussions of the NOI, post-1959 African-American Sunnis, enslaved Muslims, the Ahmadis, the MST, and the post-1960 groups, such as the Nation of Gods and Earths and the Ansaar Allah community. Nevertheless, because they produced a large number of good-quality publications, Haddad and Smith's works became highly influential for those studying both African-American and immigrant Islam, thereby encouraging the learning about the various sectarian African-American groups and the looking for connections between African Americans and immigrants.

In the early 1990s, other white researchers, including some Muslim converts with ties to African-American Muslims, produced works that would go on to have an important influence in the field. Larry Poston's *Islamic Da'wah in the West* provided an overview of Islamic proselytization movements in the U.S. and included some discussion of Ahmadi and Sunni missionary work among African Americans.<sup>41</sup> Peter Lamborn Wilson's *Sacred Drift* contained the first chapter-length study of the early history of the MST and its founder, Noble Drew Ali.<sup>42</sup> Muhammed al-Ahari, meanwhile, wrote a number of unpublished essays on early African-American Islam—particularly on the origins of the MST—that were circulated among scholars. Al-Ahari would go on to play an important role in the development of the field through re-publishing rare texts used by African-American Muslims of various sects.

In the mid-1990s a new sub-field arose: scholarship that, while it focused primarily on the history of African-American Islam, was more willing to highlight the

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<sup>41</sup> Larry Poston, *Islamic Da'wah in the West: Muslim Missionary Activity and the Dynamics of Conversion to Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

<sup>42</sup> Peter Lamborn Wilson, *Sacred Drift: Essays on the Margins of Islam* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1993), 13-50. Haddad and Smith's chapter-length study on the MST (in *Mission to America*) came out that same year, but did not record as many details about the MST and Drew Ali's early history.

various sectarian commitments of and immigrant influences on African-American Muslims. This more inclusive African-American Islam sub-field was pioneered by African-American scholars, both Muslim and non-Muslim. Though this research was partly inspired by the work of Haddad, Smith, Wilson, and al-Ahari, it was also stimulated by two important social factors: a widespread increased interest in African-American Islam in the early 1990s and the fact that a large number of African Americans had become Sunni after the NOI's shift to Sunnism in the late 1970s. With the majority of African American Muslims now Sunni but at the same time aware of their sectarian history, there was an increased interest in the history of diverse forms of African-American Islam and how they related to each other.

The first book-length studies of African-American Islam to take this inclusive perspective both were published in 1995: Aminah Beverly McCloud's *African American Islam* and Adib Rashad's *Islam, Black Nationalism and Slavery: A Detailed History*.<sup>43</sup> In her first chapter, McCloud identifies a number of early African-American Sunni and non-NOI, non-MST sectarian groups, including several that had not been mentioned in prior scholarship. She goes into detail about the Ahmadi and Sunni African Americans in Pittsburgh and provides more information on Sheikh Daoud Faisal. Despite adding some new details, however, most of these groups were all covered in a single chapter, and no extensive discussions were made. Nevertheless, McCloud's book is also notable because it contains, I believe, the first articulation of the fact that early African-American Sunnis

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<sup>43</sup> Aminah Beverly McCloud, *African American Islam* (New York: Routledge, 1995); Adib Rashad, *Islam, Black Nationalism and Slavery: A Detailed History* (Beltsville, MD: Writers Inc., 1995). In 1994, Rashad also published a study of Elijah Muhammad's thought that contained a good deal of analysis of the Moorish Science Temple: *Elijah Muhammad & the Ideological Foundation of the Nation of Islam* (Newport News, VA: U.B. & U.S. Communications Systems, 1994).

did not define their Sunni Islam in the way many do today: for them, “‘Sunni’ meant the Muslim world in general”; they did not distinguish sharply between international sectarian groups, such as Shi’ites and Ahmadis, and their understanding of Islam was developed through the influence of both African-American sectarian groups (like the MST and NOI) and immigrant Muslims who taught culture-specific practices.<sup>44</sup> Rashad’s book, on the other hand, while it spent more time examining Islam among enslaved Africans, added some important details about an influential African Muslim missionary in the 1920s named Satti Majid. Both McCloud and Rashad’s books used the work of earlier scholars, including al-Ahari, Wilson, Sulayman Nyang, and Hakim (the author of a 1979 piece about the Pittsburgh community). In addition to these two works, in 1995 Robert A. Hill edited the FBI’s 1943 Survey of Racial Conditions in the United States, which was a summary of the FBI’s investigations into African Americans in the early 1940s.<sup>45</sup> This book contains a great deal of information about African-American Sunni groups at the time, though scholars have generally ignored it.

In 1997, Richard Brent Turner’s groundbreaking study of African-American Islam was published.<sup>46</sup> Turner, who had written his dissertation and an article on the African-American Ahmadis (which had served as the bases for Haddad and Smith’s work on the group), built off of and cited most of the scholars mentioned so far. His book also provided new insights into connections between U.S. slaves and West African Islam, the ties between Islam and Garvey, the MST (his chapter on the MST remains the most

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<sup>44</sup> McCloud, 22, n. 30.

<sup>45</sup> Robert A. Hill, ed., *The FBI’s RACON* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1995).

<sup>46</sup> Richard Brent Turner, *Islam in the African-American Experience* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, [1997] 2003).

extensive analysis of the MST FBI file), the Ahmadis, the Sunnis, and the NOI. Though he did not delve into every aspect of the early non-NOI groups, his book still represented a significant advancement in knowledge about the AAIR era. He also proposed new influential analytical concepts and approaches, such as the idea that African-American Islam was about re-signifying identity—an approach that was indebted to the Religious Studies scholar Charles Long, which therefore helped better situate the study of African-American Islam within the field of the new wave of Religious Studies that was being shaped by post-structuralist thought—, and terming the notion that Islam is free from racism as “the myth of race-blind Islam.” His overall understanding of the rise of Islam in African-American culture, however, remained in line with Lincoln’s, stressing the attraction of the doctrines and practices, especially those promoted by the NOI. Turner, like Lincoln, did not attempt to provide clear and reliable documentation for the sizes and prevalence of the Islamic organizations over the years, and so he, again like Lincoln, understood the NOI as being the most attractive of the early African-American Islamic groups. Nevertheless, Turner’s book, because of its inclusive approach, its synthesis of the previous literature, its new contributions in the details of the histories of non-NOI Islamic groups, its complexity and depth, and its new analytical concepts and approaches remains one of the best resources for students of African-American Islam.

The mid-to-late 1990s produced a number of other important studies of AAIR groups. 1997 marked the year of the publication of an essay concerning the aforementioned Satti Majid, the Sudanese Muslim missionary who proselytized to

African Americans in the 1920s.<sup>47</sup> It provided several new details about his life and career in the U.S., including his run-in with the MST, thus adding a new connection between early African-American Sunnis and non-Sunni Muslims. This was complemented by two pieces by Rogaia Mustafa Abusharaf that included some more information about both Satti Majid and Sheikh Daoud Faisal.<sup>48</sup> Ernest Allen, Jr., meanwhile, produced several valuable articles dealing with issues concerning the early MST, NOI, and related groups.<sup>49</sup> Also, in the late 1990s two biographies of Elijah Muhammad were released.<sup>50</sup> These biographies paid close attention to the NOI's early years and evidence concerning Wallace D. Fard, the NOI's founder. However, although their authors were aware of and contributed new details concerning some of the other early non-NOI groups, particularly the MST, they, again, did not attempt to produce a clear and reliable estimate about the relative size of each group, and continued to perpetuate Lincoln's thesis about the causes for the rise of the NOI.

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<sup>47</sup> Ahmed I. Abu Shouk, J.O. Hunwick & R.S. O'Fahey, "A Sudanese Missionary to the United States," *Sudanic Africa* 8 (1997): 137-91.

<sup>48</sup> Rogaia Mustafa Abusharaf, "Structural Adaptations in an Immigrant Muslim Congregation in New York," in *Gatherings in Diaspora*, eds. R. Stephen Warner and Judith G. Wittner (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), 235-261; Rogaia Musafa Abusharaf, *Wanderings: Sudanese Migrants and Exiles in North America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), 17-32.

<sup>49</sup> See the following by Allen, Jr.: "When Japan Was 'Champion of the Darker Races': Satokata Takahashi and the Flowering of Black Messianic Nationalism," *The Black Scholar* 24, no. 1 (Winter 1994): 23-46; "Waiting for Tojo: The Pro-Japan Vigil of Black Missourians, 1932-1943," *Gateway Heritage* (Fall 1995): 38-55; "Religious Heterodoxy and Nationalist Tradition: The Continuing Evolution of the Nation of Islam," *Black Scholar* 26, n. 3-4 (1996): 2-34; "Identity and Destiny: The Formative Views of the Moorish Science Temple and the Nation of Islam," in *Muslims on the Americanization Path?*, eds. Yvonne Y. Haddad and John L. Esposito (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 163-214.

<sup>50</sup> Claude Andrew Clegg III, *An Original Man: The Life and Times of Elijah Muhammad* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997); Karl Evanzz, *The Messenger: The Rise and Fall of Elijah Muhammad* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1999).

While the twenty-first century has had a number of contributions in the scholarship of early African-American Islam—including several notable articles and dissertations by female scholars, such as Debra Washington Mubashshir, Susan Nance, Kathy Makeda Bennet Muhammad, and Sarah F. Howell<sup>51</sup>—a handful of books have come out that have offered new evidence and analyses. Edward E. Curtis’s 2002 book provided two helpful contributions: a side-by-side comparison of the principal beliefs of the major African-American Islamic thinkers and the popularization of the argument that the sectarian character of African-American Islam can be explained by the fact that Islam, like any major religion, faces the challenge of being both universally applicable while also useful and comprehensible to a particular people in specific historical context.<sup>52</sup> Dennis Walker’s 2005 study of the NOI provided more information about the post-1975 NOI, the MST, and Garvey’s ties to Islam.<sup>53</sup> 2005 also produced Sherman Jackson’s *Islam and the Blackamerican*, an analysis of African-American Islam from the perspective of a black Sunni scholar. Its main contribution, for our purposes, was that it

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<sup>51</sup> Debra Washington Mubashshir, “A Fruitful Labor: African American Formulations of Islam, 1928-1942” (PhD diss., Northwestern University, 2001); Susan Nance, “Respectability and Representation: The Moorish Science Temple, Morocco, and Black Public Culture in 1920s Chicago,” *American Quarterly* 54 (2002): 623-659; Kathy Makeda Bennet Muhammad, “Humble Warriress: Women in the Nation of Islam: A Comparative Study 1930-1975 and 1978-2000” (PhD diss., Union Institute & University, 2008); Sarah F. Howell, “Inventing the American Mosque: Early Muslims and Their Institutions in Detroit, 1910-1980” (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2009). Other contributions were made in this period by Jacob S. Dorman, with his dissertation and book chapter on black Islamic mystics, and Patrick D. Bowen, with the following articles: “Early U.S. Latina/o - African-American Muslim Connections: Paths to Conversion,” *Muslim World* 100, no. 4 (2010): 390-413; “Islam and ‘Scientific Religion’ in the United States before 1935,” *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 22, no. 3 (2011): 311-328; “Abdul Hamid Suleiman and the Origins of the Moorish Science Temple,” *Journal of Race, Ethnicity, and Religion* 2, no. 10 (September 2011): 1-54; “The Search for ‘Islam’: African-American Islamic Groups in NYC, 1904-1954,” *Muslim World* 102, no. 2 (2012): 264-283; and “Satti Majid: A Sudanese Founder of American Islam,” *Journal of Africana Religions* 1, no. 2 (2013).

<sup>52</sup> Edward E. Curtis, IV, *Islam in Black America: Identity, Liberation, and Difference in African- American Islamic Thought* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002).

<sup>53</sup> Dennis Walker, *Islam and the Search for African-American Nationhood* (Atlanta: Clarity Press, 2005).

tied the African-American Islamic experience more closely to the mainstream history of Islam. In that same year, Michael Gomez's encyclopedic examination of African Islamic diaspora in the Americas since slave times was released.<sup>54</sup> While it provided little new in terms of data on pre-1960 African-American Islam, it synthesized much of the pre-Turner *and* post-Turner scholarship on the topic and did the best job of linking the discussion of contemporary African-American Islam to the sub-field of the study of enslaved Muslims in the U.S. Gomez, like others, concluded that there were probably some, but still relatively few and indirect, pre-slavery Islamic retentions in twentieth-century African-American Islam.

For the study of the AAIR, however, the single most important work from the first decade of the twenty-first century was Robert Dannin's *Black Pilgrimage to Islam*.<sup>55</sup> Dannin, who spent several years interviewing and studying two of the most prominent African-American Sunni communities that had been established prior to the 1950s, contributed a wealth of new data on the AAIR. *Black Pilgrimage* was the first work to provide in-depth examinations of Wali Akram's Cleveland Sunni community; the West Valley, New York Sunni village established in the 1940s by Muhammad Ezaldeen; and the short-lived national African-American Sunni umbrella organization, the Uniting Islamic Societies of America. He also offered new information, primarily acquired through oral narratives, about the development of the early Sunni communities in Buffalo, Pittsburgh, and New York. Furthermore, Dannin mentioned in passing institutions and figures—such as the Academy of Islam, Paul Nathaniel Johnson, and

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<sup>54</sup> Michael A. Gomez, *Black Crescent* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

<sup>55</sup> Robert Dannin, *Black Pilgrimage to Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

Sheikh Khalil al-Rawaf—that had been noted by other scholars but had previously not been connected to an in-depth knowledge of the period. *Black Pilgrimage*, then, did more so than any other work to show the complex and diverse character of the AAIR.

There were, however, a few limitations to Dannin's book. First, like Turner, Dannin essentially still understood the NOI's rise as a result of it being the African-American Islamic group to most successfully capitalize on the core ideological elements in the relatively unified tradition of African-American Islam. Second, the sometimes desultory structure of Dannin's narrative made it difficult to see clearly all the data given about particular groups and how the various groups related to each other. Also, because his information relied primarily on oral narratives, which were transmitted to Dannin sometimes fifty years after the event described and were therefore probably somewhat tainted by errors in memory, he sometimes presented conflicting and even inaccurate information—though this was difficult to recognize because of the data not being arranged in a clear way. One of the most notable examples of this was his offering two completely different narratives of Ezzaldeen's return to the U.S. and the establishment of his national Sunni organization.<sup>56</sup> Nevertheless, conflicting stories are common in history writing, and it is up to subsequent scholars to find evidence to verify claims. In this dissertation, in fact, I will address many of these conflicting and inaccurate stories and provide new evidence to strengthen our knowledge about the important AAIR events that Dannin discussed.

Dannin's impact was immediately felt. In 2003, a second edition of Turner's book was released, and its new introduction primarily contained information gleaned from

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<sup>56</sup> Compare pages 33 to 121-122 and accompanying notes.

Dannin's research, though Turner did not attempt to use Dannin's findings to produce a significant reassessment of his original conclusions. Then, in 2010, two books came out that incorporated much of what Dannin had found. One was the *Encyclopedia of Muslim-American History*, edited by Edward E. Curtis.<sup>57</sup> This contained entries on many—though not all—of the figures and organizations that Dannin had brought to the forefront, and they relied on Dannin for much of the data on these people and groups. However, in some cases, the contributing scholars gave—sometimes without citation or acknowledging the differences between their data and Dannin's—dates, names, and other details that differed from the data found in Dannin's and other known scholarly works.<sup>58</sup> Like Dannin's own claims, this new data must be checked against other evidence for verification and to clear up the increasing number of conflicting claims. The other important 2010 book was Kambiz GhaneaBassiri's *A History of Islam in America*.<sup>59</sup> This was the first work to synthesize in a single narrative A) most of the existing studies of African-American Islam (including Dannin's) and B) studies of immigrant Islam in the U.S. In terms of its treatment of the AAIR, GhaneaBassiri's work is also notable for rigorously citing most of its claims, for contributing some new information on AAIR groups (such as Satti Majid's organizations and Talib Dawud's Moslem Brotherhood), and for beginning to discuss in more depth the early relationships between African-

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<sup>57</sup> Edward E. Curtis, ed., *Encyclopedia of Muslim-American History* (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2010).

<sup>58</sup> See, e.g., M. Naeem Nash's article on Muhammad Ezaldeen and Lawrence H. Mamiya's article on "African-American Muslims," both of which give slightly different data for Ezaldeen's return to the U.S. than what Dannin provided. Also see Edward E. Curtis's entry on Wali Akram. Other discrepancies can be seen in Fatimah Fanusie's entry on "African Americans" in Jocelyne Cesari's 2007 *Encyclopedia of Islam in the United States*. It should be noted, however, that none of these discrepancies are significant, but the fact that they exist should encourage a more rigorous analysis of the evidence.

<sup>59</sup> Kambiz GhaneaBassiri, *A History of Islam in America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

American and immigrant Muslims. Nonetheless, GhaneaBassiri, like his predecessors, does not explicitly identify the early period of twentieth-century African-American Islam as unique or at least as distinct from the post-1959 period. He fails to see a number of significant historical trends unique to this period and also ignores the sizes and level of influence of the early non-NOI groups, which leads to the implicit perpetuation of the distorted understanding of the NOI's ability to have the cultural impact that it did.

Overall, then, the literature dealing with the AAIR has seven limitations:

1. It has not fully recognized the diversity and complexity that characterized African-American Islam in this period. There are numerous non-NOI AAIR groups that have received no more than brief mention in the literature, and even other, better-known groups were much larger and contained more factions than has been acknowledged. In fact, one reason that I chose the term "renaissance" to characterize this period was to destabilize the idea that early African-American Islam was, essentially, dominated by a single or even a few types of Islam.
2. Because of the failure to fully recognize the diversity of Islamic forms in the period, the literature still has generally also not recognized that the NOI's doctrines and activities were not as unique as many have thought—and this has perpetuated the somewhat inaccurate theory that the NOI's doctrines and activities were the primary factors for it eventually dominating African-American Islam.

3. The literature has not appreciated the prevalence and influence of non-NOI groups before 1959; there has been almost no attempt to estimate and compare the sizes of the various AAIR groups over certain intervals or to identify all the locations of the various groups and their branches.
4. With the first three issues in mind, the literature has not offered a clear and persuasive explanation about why it was only the NOI—which was in fact numerically smaller and much less widespread than many of the other groups at the time—that became a mass movement and not the other groups.
5. Some of the available writings of non-NOI African-American Muslims, such as the various MST newspapers, have barely been investigated.
6. There has not been an attempt to make full use of the other available primary source material, such as the several online collections of newspapers, rarer newspapers that have been put onto microfilm and are available through interlibrary loan, the several FBI files on African-American Islam, various libraries' special collections of African-American Islamic materials, Ancestry.com, and websites that allow for people to do word searches of digitized works.
7. The literature has not offered a periodization of early African-American Islam that accounts for the significant changes in dynamics, such as the rise in popularity of specific forms of Islam and types of leadership used.

Periodizations are useful for many reasons: they help with breaking down complex historical time periods into manageable sections, thereby increasing the specialist's ability to focus in on the details of a sub-section without having to worry about drawing out—or even forcing—links with other periods; they help both newcomers and those outside of the field gain a somewhat nuanced understanding of a group's history; and they help specialists in related areas, such as those working on Latina/o and white Muslim converts, to see correspondences and divergences in the historical trends of the various groups—which can potentially lead to new insights.

### **Goals and Significance of this Study**

One goal of this dissertation is to correct these limitations of the AAIR scholarship. To do this, I will present an up-to-date overview and analysis of the AAIR that will include the following features:

- An attempt to better situate the study of African-American with both the general history of Islam and within the current scholarship interested in applying post-structuralist theories to Islam (chapter 2)
- a synthesis of A) existing knowledge and B) new information from previously little-used primary sources, including several FBI files (throughout)

- discussions (primarily in footnotes) of conflicting claims in the literature (throughout)
- a periodization of the overall AAIR (chapter 8) and periodizations of the AAIR's major currents (throughout)
- a discussion of the key historical structures and cultural currents that contributed to the AAIR (chapters 2 and 8)
- a clear and reliable presentation of the development of the AAIR groups, especially their sizes and branch locations (throughout and appendix)
- a reassessment of the rise of the NOI (chapter 7)

The principal significance of this dissertation is its contribution to the scholarship on early African-American Islam. However, by reassessing the AAIR and the early NOI's rise, I will come to conclusions that have relevance for other scholarly discussions. For example, by emphasizing and explaining the diversity of forms of Islam in the AAIR, I will be contributing to discussions of the character of Islam in the modern period. Islam has often been seen in modern popular culture as a monolithic religion, one that is frequently associated with dogmatic beliefs, puritan moral behavior, an anti-Christian or anti-Western perspective, radical activity, and, sometimes, violence. These characteristics have been applied to African-American Islam, whose image remains largely connected to the late 1950s/early 1960s popular presentations of the NOI. As will be shown in this dissertation, however, these characteristics frequently did not apply in the AAIR and certainly should not be the characteristics to define Islam in that period. Furthermore, I

will show that Deleuze and Guattari's concept of "deterritorialization"—a term that represents the significantly-increased pace and freedom of travel of symbols and ideas in the modern period—helps explain why forms of Islam in the AAIR, like the forms of Islam throughout the rest of the world during the modern period, vary in numerous ways. By demonstrating how deterritorialization is a phenomenon deeply grounded in the ecology of world (including Islamic) history, it will be seen that even when new "re-territorializations" begin to develop, such as with the NOI's rise in the late 1950s, they should be regarded as temporary developments that cannot in the end completely negate the process of deterritorialization. It is my hope that this notion of deterritorialization will be useful for those in both Islamic studies and those studying other aspects of religion in the modern period.

### **Theory and Methodology**

The overall approach of this dissertation largely draws on Andreas Suter's discussion of theoretical and methodological issues in social history.<sup>60</sup> Social history is a field that, in its original form, sought to distinguish itself from "*histoire evenementielle*," a style of history writing that essentially amounted to chronicling events in the order in which they actually occurred. The problem with *histoire evenementielle*, according to the early social historians, is that it did not address in a significant way the larger social contexts that influenced the major changes in a society. Social history, then, was created to compensate for this. Rather than focusing on micro-level events, it drew out the key

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<sup>60</sup> Andreas Suter, "Theories and Methods for a Social History of Historical Events—A Reply to Hermann Rebel," *Central European History* 34, no. 3 (2001): 383-418.

macro-level dynamics.<sup>61</sup> However, while this new approach improved understanding of deep processes' importance in social change, it came at the cost of ignoring the impact of micro-level events. Social contexts alone cannot totally explain micro-level events; and these events themselves can in fact shape the macro-level factors.<sup>62</sup> Therefore, an approach is needed that can address both micro-level events and the macro-level structural dynamics.

Suter's solution is to combine the two approaches to history writing using what he calls "slow motion." In the slow-motion method, the writer, who ideally is armed with "the totality of available source information,"<sup>63</sup> familiarizes him/herself with both the major macro-level factors and how these affected the development of the micro-level events. Then the writer must identify which micro-level events most shaped both the larger social context and future micro-level events. For a social history writer, the crucial micro-level events are the times when communities and individuals create significant social innovations, such as new popular organizations or influential doctrines. The crucial micro-level events might also be times when communities undergo, due to external forces, significant institutional changes that directly affect many other related communities.

Once one determines the key micro-level events, then the writing process begins. The social history writer describes the major macro-level social context issues and gives a brief summary of the important, but not crucial, events in the history. Then the writer

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<sup>61</sup> Suter, 393-395.

<sup>62</sup> Suter, 396-398.

<sup>63</sup> Suter, 404.

“slows down” to present an in-depth, “thick” description of the crucial events. That Suter employs Geertz’s “thick description” here reflects the fact that Suter encourages using anthropological, ethnographic, and other social science theories and methods to help deepen the explanation of the crucial events. This means that a description of an event may include more than just a chronology of key actions; it can include descriptions of key cultural dynamics, written texts, biographies, and social science explanations. Finally, the writer has the freedom to choose how many of these “slow-motion” sections to use and where to place them in relation to the “faster” macro-level discussions.

This dissertation will generally follow the “slow-motion” method, but it will add the use of what I term cultural “currents.” In a complex social landscape, such as the AAIR, large social contexts will affect disparate populations in different ways. In each instance, a distinct “current”—or cultural tendency—will be produced. These currents will have their own histories, but they will also interact with and affect other currents produced by the same large social contexts. Therefore, having this dissertation built around the AAIR’s principal currents will be the best way to clearly identify the major relevant cultural currents and their histories, interactions, and influences on and from the macro-level social context. These currents will be identified, along with the crucial micro-level events, in the several charts, timelines, and maps that will appear in the appendix.

A word should be said here about my use of FBI files. While FBI files contain a wealth of information about AAIR groups that can be found nowhere else, these files are not unproblematic, especially when they concern African-American Muslims. As Michael Gomez has pointed out, because there has been a history of both conflict

between various government agencies and African-American Islamic groups like the NOI, and willingness on the FBI's part to attempt to discredit the those groups, we should at least be cautious when using government files concerning African-American Muslims.<sup>64</sup> To account for this fact, Abdul Alkalimat advises that any research using information obtained through the Freedom of Information Act must attempt to also provide alternative sources.<sup>65</sup> In addition to the FBI files, then, this dissertation utilizes numerous contemporary public newspaper articles, other government records (including censuses, court and prison records, and incorporation documents—see bibliography for a complete list), several Muslim-published journals from the period, and extant copies of the AAIR groups' own publications.

### **Outline of Dissertation**

This dissertation will begin, in chapter 2, by identifying four key macro-level dynamics that have influenced the development of the AAIR. These are 1) the de- and re-territorialization of religion in the modern era, 2) the “mystical” Islam tradition in the West, 3) Muslims from abroad in the U.S. (both slaves and immigrants) and their interactions with non-Muslim African Americans before 1920, and 4) religion and the African-American struggle for dignity. Each of these dynamics, which were grounded in long-term historical processes, preceded and continuously shaped the AAIR, and were especially important in the development of crucial AAIR micro-level events. They also all were in some way helping to shape the African-American desire for dignity that was

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<sup>64</sup> Gomez, 277.

<sup>65</sup> Abdul Alkalimat, “Studies on Malcolm X: A Review Essay and Research Design,” *Sage Race Relations Abstracts* 17 (Nov 1992): 6.

at the root of the AAIR. This chapter will conclude with a “slow motion” look at an important figure in the development of the AAIR: Rev. Dr. Prince de Solomon, a person who best represents the early confluence of these four dynamics and initiated important developments in African-American culture that helped bring about the AAIR.

Chapter 3 presents the first micro-level event in the AAIR: the emergence of a relatively widespread African-American interest in Islam. While most histories of early African-American Islam recognize that African-American Islamic groups began appearing around the early 1920s, they have generally failed to see how great of a cultural eruption this was. Beginning in 1920, African-American culture, rather suddenly, began showing a significant level of interest in diverse forms of Islam—what I term “Islamophilia.” Not only were a number of people converted to a handful of different Islam-tinged groups at that time, but Islam was also being regularly endorsed by one of the most influential African-American organizations in the period, Marcus Garvey’s United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). And the fact that the UNIA—a group based out of Harlem—was a significant player in the development of early African-American Islam reflects another fact that has largely been missed in the literature: New York City—not Chicago or Detroit—was the main birthplace of African-American Islam. It was in early 1920s New York City that most of the early organizations and currents that would go on to shape the rest of the AAIR appeared. One New York group in particular has never been included in any discussion of African-American Islam: the African-American followers of George Ivanovich Gurdjieff, a man whose doctrines show a strong Sufi and Central Asian Islamic influence. Though his doctrines may not have

had an impact on a large number of African-Americans, they reflect an additional layer of Islam in the AAIR that has been almost entirely missed: a Sufi influence.

Chapter 4 is the first chapter to be shaped around a major AAIR “current.” The AAIR group that dominated the second half of the 1920s was the MST. However, between 1929 and 1934 the MST underwent a “Great Schism,” a period during which the group experienced so much fragmentation that since that time it has never regained a degree of unity anywhere close to that which it had had in the mid-to-late 1920s. I find it appropriate to label this schism “great” because it had more of an impact on the rest of the AAIR than any other AAIR schism; due to the MST losing its position as the unquestionably most dominant African-American Islamic group, numerous new Islamic organizations were able to emerge and thrive. In addition, this schism allowed for MST doctrines to disperse and blend with others, generating a great diversity of new forms of Islam. Even after 1934, however, the MST continued to have a significant influence on the rest of the AAIR, as it was, for most of the period, numerically larger and much more widespread than the other AAIR groups, despite it being broken into several factions.

Chapter 5 looks at a number of the diverse, but smaller sectarian groups and independent mystics that were present in the AAIR. Some of the groups and mystics were influenced by the MST and were able to grow because of the Great Schism. Others, however, were influenced by different elements, such as the Ahmadis, immigrant Muslims, and the association of Islam with Garvey and black nationalism. Perhaps the most important smaller sectarian group in this period was the community in the Ohio-Pennsylvania region that turned from the MST to Qadiani Ahmadiyya Islam and then, in 1934, to Lahori Ahmadiyya Islam. I argue that the existence of these smaller group

schisms, sects, and independent mystics reveals the degree to which the AAIR was very much the product of deterritorialized Islam.

The 1934 transition in the Ohio-Pennsylvania region played a significant role in the development of the cultural current that chapter 6 examines: African-American Sunni Islam. There were four phases of Sunni Islam in the AAIR. The first phase, which lasted from 1920 to 1934, was prior to and had little to do with the 1934 schism in the Ohio-Pennsylvania region. This phase was primarily led by Satti Majid, a Sudanese Muslim missionary who established the first national Islamic umbrella organization. Phase two, covering the period 1935 to 1942, is characterized by the development of Sunni Islam in two distinct regions: New York City and the Ohio-Pennsylvania region. The latter region had been prepared for that development by its transition to Lahori Ahmadiyya Islam, which is closer to Sunni Islam than the Qadiani form, and because the members of the Ohio-Pennsylvania Lahori community were now used to changing their forms of Islam to ones better suited their needs. By their connecting with the immigrant-influenced African-American Sunnis in New York, in phase three (1943-1947) a large Sunni network was established, stretching across the eastern coast and as far west as St. Louis. Though this network was only organized into a formal institution for a few years, as an informal network it remained somewhat intact, allowing for, in phase four (from 1948 to the end of the AAIR) the continuous transmission and development of Islamic ideas and concepts across the region. In addition to this network, however, there were also separate pockets of African Americans influenced by Sunni Islam dispersed throughout the East and in California.

Interestingly, it was likely in California that one of the most important figures in the AAIR developed his ideas concerning how Islam should be connected to African-American culture. Wallace Fard, a man almost certainly of Afghan or at least Pashtun heritage, had probably encountered Islamophilic UNIA members while in San Quentin Prison in the mid-to-late 1920s. Upon his release in 1929, he capitalized on the Great Schism and was able to organize several of Detroit's former UNIA and MST members into an organization, called the Nation of Islam, based around doctrines that he had created. The themes and styles of his doctrines reflected many that were already present in the AAIR, including those of the MST and of Gurdjieff. His movement experienced a significant surge in the early 1930s, but, as the MST's Great Schism came to an end, so did the attraction to the NOI. For the twenty years after 1934, the NOI was one of the smallest AAIR organizations, never gaining over 800 members, and usually having fewer than 500. However, in the mid-1940s the NOI began undergoing a rebirth. After years of feeling singled out for persecution by the U.S. government, the NOI developed a strong sense of mission and began to proselytize more than other AAIR groups to the specific communities that would provide some of the most highly-motivated followers: young and imprisoned African Americans. The last section of this chapter explains how it was that the NOI, between 1954 and 1959, rocketed itself to a level of popularity unprecedented for an AAIR organization. It was largely through the NOI's 1940s transformation that it was able to develop the resources necessary to rise above other AAIR groups. It was also helped by certain structural changes in the social landscape, particularly the Civil Rights movement giving groups like the NOI more freedom and confidence to promote their message. At the same time, the other AAIR groups were failing to significantly increase

their numbers. The NOI's rise to dominance, then, was not as much due to its doctrines and activities—many of which could be found in other groups—as it was due to structural changes in the AAIR and the larger U.S. society as well as internal changes in the NOI's sense of mission and proselytization activities.

Chapter 8 concludes this dissertation by A) giving an overview and periodization of the major developments in the AAIR, B) returning to the four macro-level dynamics to examine how they both endured and changed in the process of the AAIR, and C) offering what I think are the key implications of this study. The Appendix presents tables, charts, timelines, and maps that summarize and make clear the data, dispersed throughout the rest of this dissertation, concerning the development of the AAIR—which will help to more firmly establish my claims about the relative sizes, diversity, and locations of the AAIR communities.

## **Chapter Two: Antecedents and Undercurrents: The Four Macro-Level Dynamics**

Since 1920, more African Americans have converted to Islam than any other ethnic group in the Americas or Western Europe.<sup>66</sup> In this chapter I identify the four major macro-level historical and cultural dynamics that preceded and contributed to this phenomenon. These dynamics are 1) the de- and re-territorialization of religion in the modern era, 2) “mystical” Islam in the West, 3) Muslims from abroad in the U.S. (both slaves and immigrants) and their interactions with non-Muslim African Americans before 1920, and 4) religion and the African-American struggle for dignity. Although it was all four of these macro-level dynamics that made African-American culture uniquely primed for its eventual unique embrace of Islam, I will devote a disproportionate amount of time to the second dynamic, “mystical” Islam in the West, because existing scholarship on the topic has not conveyed a number of important features about this tradition and its connection to conversion to Islam. The chapter will conclude with a “slow motion” look at an early figure who represented the confluence of these four dynamics, a man named

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<sup>66</sup> For estimates of numbers of Western converts over the years, see Ghayur, “Muslims in the United States”; Ghayur, “Ethnic Distribution of American Muslims”; Ihsan Bagby, *The American Mosque 2011* (n.p.: Council on American-Islamic Relations, 2012), 12-13; Stefano Allievi, *Les Convertis a l’Islam* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1998), 65-70; Jordi Moreras, “Muslims in Spain: Between the Historical Heritage and the Minority Construction,” *Muslim World* 92 (2002): 132; Stéphane Lathion, “Muslims in Switzerland: is Citizenship Really Incompatible with Muslim Identity?,” *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 28 (2008): 53; James A. Toronto, “Islam *Italiano*: Prospects for Integration of Muslims in Italy’s Religious Landscape,” *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 28 (2008): 62; Kate Zebiri, *British Muslim Converts* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2008), 42.

Rev. Dr. Prince de Solomon. De Solomon was important as both a predecessor and, as will be demonstrated in chapter 3, a contributor to the AAIR.

### **1. The De- and Re-territorialization of Religion in the Modern Era**

Since the late sixteenth century, religions have been able to travel across the globe at levels and in ways that are, for all intents and purposes, unprecedented in human history. The movement of religion in the modern era has primarily been fostered by the numerous developments in travel and communication technologies. Modern travel technology, for instance, has allowed for individual human beings to move at distances and rates unheard of in previous eras. In the process, people have transported their own religious beliefs to new lands. Frequently, travelers and the people they have met have been able to pick up and carry with them knowledge—in the forms of physical texts and re-told memories—about the religions they have encountered. This movement of religion has also been assisted by developments in communication technology, which have made it easier for texts to be reproduced, thereby increasing the number of copies of a text, which in turn increases the size of the potential audience of a text. To a great extent, then, religion in the modern period has no longer had to remain largely contained in one physical territory. It could be said, borrowing a term coined by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, that religion has become “deterritorialized.”<sup>67</sup>

But when Deleuze and Guattari use the term “deterritorialization,” they are also referring to another phenomenon. This unprecedented access to the world’s information gives humans the ability to interpret data and enact ideas in ways that were previously

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<sup>67</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, trans. Robert Hurley et al. (New York: Viking Press, 1997), *passim*.

impossible. For example, humans are now able to compare the religious texts of people from all corners of the Earth. And, if they so desire, they can rather easily combine elements from these texts to invent new religions. So, in addition to religions themselves traveling in unprecedented ways, interpretations and practices of religion also no longer have to be limited by traditional boundaries. This notion that symbols can now potentially be *arranged in an almost infinite number of ways* is the second meaning of deterritorialization.<sup>68</sup>

However, as Deleuze and Guattari admit, despite our ability to transcend many traditional interpretative and cultural limits, certain boundaries remain. Humans still do not have access to and control over all the existing information; vested interests, cultural dynamics, and power structures—even though they have changed over the centuries to adapt to modern conditions—still play major roles in circumscribing what can be legitimately thought and enacted. Deleuze and Guattari use the term “reterritorialization” to refer to the cultural boundary-creating process in the modern era.

It is important to know one other thing about de- and re-territorialization: they are not only products of technology; they are also deeply shaped by the larger developments that are, in fact, the very macro-level causes of the improvement of technologies. Indeed, de- and re-territorialization, according to Deleuze and Guattari, are so intimately tied to their physical and cultural environment—their ecology—that they cannot be seen as separate from it.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> It is for this reason that Deleuze and Guattari refer to the modern world as schizophrenic, a concept that suggests the constant outpouring of new symbol combinations.

<sup>69</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, 1-10.

Deleuze and Guattari developed the notion that de- and re-territorialization are connected to ecology by building off the work of Michel Foucault. They had originally been interested in Foucault's discussions (in *History of Madness* and *History of Sexuality: Vol. 1*) of the transformations—what Deleuze and Guattari would call reterritorializations—of “madness” and psychiatry in modern Western Europe.<sup>70</sup> Foucault had shown that the process of reterritorializing madness was not simply the act of a single dominant group desiring to discipline certain types of people, but rather part of a much deeper tendency affecting all parts of Western European society. What is more, in most of his major monographs Foucault showed that there were several different types of territorializations, all of which had similar traits, developing simultaneously in Western Europe. The trend included, among other things, an increased interest in and tendency for using technical thought (such as mathematics and taxonomies), an increased interest in “science,” and a growing sense that the *individual* was important because he or she possessed a soul that needs to be respected and valued (as opposed to the medieval view that human life was almost valueless)—in other words, the individual has dignity.<sup>71</sup> And, if one took a macro-level view one would see that these developments reflected clear historical eras.<sup>72</sup> These eras, according to Foucault, were the “Renaissance” (c. 1400-1600), the “Classical Age” (c. 1600-1800), and the “Modern Age” (since c. 1800). The

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<sup>70</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *passim*.

<sup>71</sup> See Michel Foucault, *History of Madness*. J. Khalifa, ed. and trans. J. Murphy and J. Khalifa (Abingdon, England: Routledge [1961] 2006) and *The History of Sexuality: Vol. 1*, trans. R. Hurley (New York: Pantheon Books, [1976] 1978). These themes were also emphasized in Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* and *Order of Things*.

<sup>72</sup> Foucault discussed these eras in almost all of his major monographs, beginning with *History of Madness*.

causes of the developments of these eras were not limited to trends in intellectual thought, dominant classes, or popular culture; they were deeply shaped by major historical events, such as the decimation of Europe's population by the bubonic plague, the development of modern sea-faring technology, the spread of book printing, and the increased use of modern forms of capitalism.<sup>73</sup> Deleuze and Guattari understood that all these factors were elements that significantly affected de- and re-territorialization.<sup>74</sup>

While, given the known orientalist biases of these three thinkers,<sup>75</sup> some might resist using their ideas for interpreting Islamic history, there have already been a number of fruitful attempts to employ them to understand the relation between Islam and the West. Edward Said famously combined Foucauldian and Gramscian views of power in his *Orientalism*, which, despite its many limitations, opened the door for critically examining the various dimensions of the West-Islam relationship.<sup>76</sup> More recently, Olivier Roy has applied the concept of deterritorialization to contemporary Islam in order to explain modern Islamism and Western Muslims' identities.<sup>77</sup> Neither of these authors, however, nor any others, as far as I am aware, highlights either the importance of ecology or

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<sup>73</sup> Deleuze and Guattari cite on several occasions *Order of Things*, which is Foucault's work that most directly examines the interconnectivity of the elements of each stage.

<sup>74</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, 299.

<sup>75</sup> For a discussion, see Ian Almond, *New Orientalists: Postmodern Representations of Islam from Foucault to Baudrillard* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007).

<sup>76</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978). For a summary of the limitations of Said's analysis, see Robert Irwin, *Dangerous Knowledge: Orientalism and its Discontents* (New York: Overlook Press), 277-304.

<sup>77</sup> Olivier Roy, *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

Foucault's historical eras. Because of this, a key connection to a well-known theorist of Islamic history has been missed.

In his posthumously-published *Venture of Islam* (1974),<sup>78</sup> Marshall Hodgson presented a groundbreaking view of Islamic history that fits very well with the theories of Deleuze and Guattari and Foucault. In writing his three-volume history of Islam, Hodgson, who died in 1968 likely never having read any of the three post-structuralists, attempted to free Western scholarship on Islam from its Western biases. To do this, he made several strong critiques and offered a few key intellectual tools. Besides pointing out the more blatant examples of Western-centered biases (such as distorting the size of Europe on maps to make it seem larger than other regions), Hodgson observes that a major source of academic bias has come from the belief that cultures and civilizations can be clearly demarcated and their core elements identified. This idea leads many to the conclusion that the rise and fall of cultures and civilizations can be attributed to their supposed core elements.<sup>79</sup> Along these same lines, he also criticizes, in a rather post-structuralist way, the use of structuralism (or, in its worst form, functionalism) by philosophers and philologists who attempt to reduce cultures to only a few sociological factors, such as social structure or economy.<sup>80</sup> While he does not propose eliminating altogether the identification of trends and continuities, he argues that scholars must resist the temptation to reduce history to these elements. Instead, as Hodgson demonstrates throughout his book, scholars should look to a region's ecology—both social and

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<sup>78</sup> Marshall G.S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, 3 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974).

<sup>79</sup> Hodgson, 1: 28-41.

<sup>80</sup> Hodgson, 2: 359.

physical—and how it is impacted by the various forces (also social and physical) in the rest of the world.

Hodgson’s stress on ecology enabled him to masterfully situate Islamic history within broader world history.<sup>81</sup> He, for instance, was able to show that the rise of Islam in the first millennium A.D. can largely be attributed to the Muslim attainment of power in a location (which Hodgson calls the “Nile-to-Oxus” region) ideally situated between Europe, Eastern Asia, South Asia, and Africa. As economies, technologies, and philosophies were developed in each of these separate regions, the Nile-to-Oxus was the one best able to access and capitalize on the others’ developments. Ecology also goes a long way in explaining the decline of Baghdad in the tenth century and the subsequent rise of the “*ayan-amir*” system that characterized the Nile-to-Oxus region in the first half of the second millennium A.D.<sup>82</sup>

Hodgson’s use of ecology also led him to what he thought was a unique periodization of the development of Western culture. He proposed that the traditional tendency to identify the beginning of the modern era at around the year 1500 did not account for how much and the rate of development the West had at that point compared to other regions. It was only around 1600, he argued, that the West entered a period he called the “Western Transmutation,” in which it began to surpass the Islamic lands. And it was around the year 1800 that the West entered into a new phase, the “Technical Age,” in which technicalistic thought dominated. Consistent with his critiques of Western

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<sup>81</sup> On the uniqueness of Hodgson’s ecologically-based world-historical view, see the reviews of *Venture* by Albert Hourani, Frederick Denny, Richard Bulliet, and Richard Martin.

<sup>82</sup> On the *ayan-amir* system, see Hodgson, 2: 62-69.

scholarship, Hodgson asserted that the development of these periods was not due to certain essential elements of Western culture. It was, instead, due to ecological (social and physical) changes, such as the increasing contact and sharing between societies, the raising of the levels of control of materials on a worldwide level, and the increasingly destructive capabilities of modern armaments, which forced people into urban areas and to develop capitalistic means to create the kind of wealth necessary to produce more of their own weapons.<sup>83</sup> Furthermore, Hodgson says, during each of these periods, the intellectual, cultural, and spiritual tendencies of Western Europe transformed in ways that adapted to the newly developing ecologies, such as by increasingly giving importance to the individual's psychology and social position (both of which supported the idea of the individual's dignity), science, technical knowledge, rationality, and capitalism.<sup>84</sup> Hodgson adds that while the major modern transformations happened initially and primarily in the West, because they were grounded in deep world-wide historical tendencies, they were not exclusive to the West. So, as they eventually impacted the other parts of the world, similar cultural transformations began to occur in those places.

Hodgson's view of major trends in modern history and his periodizations are thus very similar to Foucault's. And, by recognizing this, it becomes clear how Deleuze and Guattari can be applied to give insights into Islamic history. In short, de- and re-territorialization are not limited to the West—they are very much *part of Islamic history*. This is significant because observers of African-American Islam sometimes emphasize a

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<sup>83</sup> Hodgson, 3: 176-204.

<sup>84</sup> Hodgson, 3: 188-195.

normative/irregular dichotomy when discussing the relationship between the forms of Islam practiced by Muslims in Muslim-majority lands and those by African Americans. This frequently has contributed to debates over the religious legitimacy of African-American Islam. While it certainly cannot be denied that some forms of Islam are much more dominant than others, by including de- and re-territorialization as significant parts of Islamic history, attention can be turned away from questions of religious authenticity and legitimacy—questions which belong, in my opinion, more to the realm of theology than history—and instead focus on *how and why Islam has changed* in the modern world.<sup>85</sup>

As will be shown in this dissertation, the history of Islam in the modern West, and in the AAIR in particular, largely revolves around deterritorialized Islam and its reterritorialization in the West. Therefore, the use of these concepts helps explain a number of things about the AAIR. First of all, they give us insight into why the forms of Islam promoted during the AAIR varied greatly and frequently bore little resemblance to the dominant forms practiced and believed in by Muslims in Muslim-majority lands. These concepts also shed light on why African-American Islam often blended various forms of Islam—this was an inevitable outcome of the encountering of the diverse manifestations of Islam in the U.S. In fact, there were a number of cases in which immigrant Muslims were themselves influenced by African-American forms of Islam. In

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<sup>85</sup> As Richard Bulliet, who has done influential work on early conversions to Islam, has pointed out, one of the greatest benefits of the study of religious conversion is that it helps us understand social change; see Richard W. Bulliet, “Introduction: Process and Status in Conversion and Continuity,” in *Conversion and Continuity*, eds. Michael Gervers and Ramzi Jibran Bikhazi (Ontario: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1990), 5.

the end, then, the concepts of de- and re-territorialization help explain how and why unique forms of Islam have emerged in the U.S.

In addition, as will be demonstrated throughout the course of this dissertation, by combining the concepts of Deleuze and Guattari with Hodgson's emphasis on ecology and ecological shifts, one can more easily see why the reterritorialization of Islam in the U.S. has neither happened overnight nor taken on a single form. Any single reterritorialization is the product of multiple, ongoing, and competing minor de- and re-territorializations, with some having more of an impact than others. In the next two sections, I explore major de- and re-territorializations of Islam that played important roles in preparing the way for the AAIR.

## **2. "Mystical" Islam in the West**

One of the most influential reterritorializations of Islam in the West has been the Western creation of a tradition that I call "mystical" Islam. This tradition, still strong today, dates probably to the twelfth century, and was one of the most important influences for the AAIR. This section's discussion is twice as long as those of the other three dynamics because, though several scholars have already noted the connection of this tradition to African-American Islam, they have generally failed to appreciate its complexity and how deeply-rooted it is in Western culture. Given the importance of the "mystical" Islam tradition in the AAIR, it is helpful to have a deeper understanding of the topic.

## “Mystical” Islam

I use the term “mystical” in quotation marks because the way Islam has been perceived in this tradition has not always been clearly defined and has been influenced by disparate traditions that, though they might all be identified as “mystical,” are typologically distinct. There are at least five types of minor traditions that feed into the Western image of “mystical” Islam.<sup>86</sup> The tradition that is most often connected with “mystical” Islam today is what is frequently referred to as mysticism. Mysticism, as it is typically understood, is the acquisition of non-discursive knowledge (i.e., knowledge that cannot be taught through words), usually done through learned rituals.<sup>87</sup> In Islam, this tradition is frequently called *tasawwuf*—Sufism. However, despite the popularity of Sufism today, there are almost no known instances of early modern Christian Western Europeans studying under a Sufi sheikh, nor is there evidence that Western Europeans had Islamic texts dealing either explicitly or exclusively with Sufism prior to the nineteenth century.<sup>88</sup> Mysticism, then, was just one, and for a long time a rather minor, element in the “mystical” Islam tradition.

Two of the minor traditions in the “mystical” Islam tradition have to do with magic: one is the type of magic that claims to affect changes in the physical world and

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<sup>86</sup> My distinguishing between types of “mystical” religion has largely been inspired by Szonyi, *John Dee’s Occultism*.

<sup>87</sup> For a helpful discussion of the technical definition of mysticism, particularly as it relates to both the acquisition of non-discursive thought and the Islamic tradition, see Peter Adamson, “Non-Discursive Thought in Avicenna’s Commentary on the *Theology of Aristotle*,” in *Interpreting Avicenna: Science and Philosophy in Medieval Islam*, eds. Jon McGinnis with David C. Reisman (Boston: Brill, 2004), esp. 88.

<sup>88</sup> See Michel Chodkiewicz, “La reception du soufisme par l’occident: conjectures et certitudes,” in *The Introduction of Arabic Philosophy into Europe*, eds. Charles E. Butterworth and Blake Andree Kessel (New York: E.J. Brill, 1994), 136-149.

the other is magic that claims to bring one closer to god. The first of these two distinct minor traditions, magic used to affect changes in the world, contains within it two sub-types: “natural magic”—magic that was to some extent accepted by a significant number of medieval and early modern Western thinkers as scientific (astrology, optics, etc.)—and what has been pejoratively labeled “black” magic—the use of talismans, amulets, incantations, and number symbolism as well as talking to various spirits and/or demons. Both types were written about by Muslims and Arabic-language texts on the subject had a significant influence on the study and practice of them in the West, as I will discuss in the next sub-section. The second magical tradition was that of exaltation—performing rituals or other practices to bring one closer to god. This is perhaps most popularly associated with alchemy (which claims, in its more occult manifestations, that one can purify one’s soul to attain a position closer to the divine), but there were also a number of other practices written about by Arabic authors that claimed to give the user exaltation.

The fourth tradition that feeds into “mystical” Islam is often assumed to be intrinsic to medieval and early modern magic—the “organic” view of the universe. This view, typically associated with Plato and Plotinus, regards the universe as an interconnected whole in which events that happen on earth can be influenced by both events in the celestial sphere as well as the four elements (air, water, earth, fire). This was in fact the dominant view of the world in the West until around the seventeenth century when many scientists began to break from it, stressing a “mechanical” view of the universe. It needs to be made clear here, however, that a belief in an organic view of the universe did not necessitate a belief in magic. Many people believed that although

humans were part of an organic system and were influenced by celestial bodies and the four elements, they could not themselves control the physical world through rituals. Conversely, while magic (both types) often relied on the organic view of the universe, it did not require a belief in it. In fact, Arabic texts on magic—including those that reached the West—often did not explicitly endorse such a view. Only a few notable works, such as the *Picatrix* (discussed below), articulated the belief that all forms of magic were connected to an organic universe. Another point that needs clarifying here is that many people in the post-Descartes era started to subscribe to a somewhat hyper-rationalist idea that, whether one subscribed to beliefs in magic or not, any belief in an organic universe was equivalent to having a superstitious or "mystical" view.

The final minor tradition that contributed to the Western idea of "mystical" Islam was that of gnosticism. Gnosticism may be defined as discursive religious knowledge (as opposed to mysticism's non-discursive knowledge) that is claimed to have been hidden from the masses. Usually, gnostic teachings state that people unknowingly have within them dignity and some divinity, and that after a person or community learns about their true nature, this knowledge will lead to one or more of the following outcomes: salvation in the afterlife, improvements in one's earthly life, or the attainment of divine powers.<sup>89</sup> Like magic, gnostic beliefs do not require a belief in an organic universe, though these two traditions have certainly often been found in connection with each other. In both the Islamic world and the early modern West, gnostic beliefs were primarily associated with

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<sup>89</sup> Christopher Stead, "Gnosticism," in *Concise Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Florence, KY: Routledge, 2000), 316.

the Hermetic tradition, which also usually included a belief in an organic universe and the various forms of magic.

Indeed, in both the Islamic world and late medieval/early modern West (and in late antiquity as well), these five traditions were usually associated with one another. To be sure, though, each of these traditions could be and were sometimes used without belief in the others. Sometimes only two or three of these traditions were emphasized, and sometimes people's beliefs in each tradition varied between contexts and times.

Some scholars have labeled this matrix of beliefs various ways, such as "esotericism," "metaphysical religion," "magic," "superstition," "pseudo-science," "harmonial religion," or "scientific religion." Each of these labels has its benefits, but each also has its downsides, particularly because each label tends to imply an emphasis on one element in the tradition above all others. For instance, the term "esotericism" suggests the hidden, or gnostic element, while the term "metaphysical" emphasizes the organic view. I have chosen to use the term "mystical" precisely because of its connotation of the element of mysticism. As will be shown, by the time the AAIR began, Sufism had already started playing a more prominent role in the U.S. view of "mystical" Islam, and during the AAIR there was a real influence from Sufi-tinged teachings. In addition, because critics of Western "orientalism" have sometimes preferred the poorly-defined term "mystical" to describe one of the ways the West frames "oriental" religions,<sup>90</sup> I believe my use of the term will help bring together scholarship that

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<sup>90</sup> See, especially, Richard King, *Orientalism and Religion* (New York: Routledge, 1999).

examines the influence of Arabic "mystical" texts on early modern Europe with scholarship that looks at Western "orientalism."

Before addressing such scholarship directly, two more points need to be made. First is that belief in "mystical" religion does not necessarily entail a rejection of modern science. Modern, Cartesian science did not simply replace "mystical" thought in one fell swoop—in fact, a number of famous early modern scientists simultaneously held Cartesian-type beliefs and various "mystical" beliefs.<sup>91</sup> Even today, belief in any one of the various "mystical" traditions does not necessarily entail a rejection of Cartesian science; many people continue to believe in the truth of both. Both ways of ways of thinking are shaped by the world's complex ecological (social and physical) forces and are not simple antitheses of each other. Indeed, as has been explained, some of the same forces that were encouraging the development of modern science and the idea that individual humans can understand nature were also creating the conditions necessary for people to believe that they could use magic and that the individual was worthy of dignity. The second point, then, is that no matter the relationship between modern science and "mystical" religion, the interest in "mystical" religion—including "mystical" Islam—should be regarded as a tradition intimately connected to the history of people adjusting to become *modern persons with dignity*.

#### Understanding the Western Interest in "Mystical" Islam

It should be acknowledged up front that, as Said observes, this promotion of "mystical" Islam by the West was at least partially influenced by the Western desire to

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<sup>91</sup> Brian Vickers, introduction to *Occult and Scientific Mentalities in the Renaissance*, ed. Brian Vickers (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 6-16.

dominate and colonize Muslim-majority lands.<sup>92</sup> By framing Islam as mystical or magical, the West, with its purported rational-scientific perspective, was able to see itself as having evolved past superstition and therefore as the stronger society, thereby justifying its taking on the paternalistic role of colonizer.<sup>93</sup>

However, this does not explain why in the early modern West “mystical” Islam was frequently added to, or used to support, Christian and Jewish “mystical” traditions. The key for understanding this is recognizing, as Malini Johar Schueller has demonstrated, that the West has developed multiple (and sometimes conflicting) “orientalisms.”<sup>94</sup> While we might attempt to generalize views of Islam in the West, gender, political, and social contexts play a major role in the kinds of views certain Westerners have of Islam. And, as Susan Nance points out, not all Western societies that have had distorted or unfavorable images of Islam have had an interest in colonizing, or even simply dominating, Islamic lands.<sup>95</sup> In some cases, a distorted image of Islam was used by Westerners who had little connection to Islam in order to simply come to terms with their own ideals. By taking an interest in, for instance, the stories of indulgence, indolence, luxury, and magical self-transformation in the *Arabian Nights*, nineteenth-century Americans were able to internalize the desires and goals fostered by their

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<sup>92</sup> See Said, esp. 206.

<sup>93</sup> Richard King offers an excellent analysis using this perspective, though his focus is on Hinduism, not Islam. See his *Orientalism and Religion*.

<sup>94</sup> Malini Johar Schueller, *U.S. Orientalisms: Race, Nation, and Gender in Literature, 1790-1890* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998), 5-8.

<sup>95</sup> Susan Nance, *How the Arabian Nights Inspired the American Dream, 1790-1935* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 2-7.

consumeristic, capitalist society.<sup>96</sup> In other cases, the Muslim-majority region was idealized by Westerners who were unhappy with their lives in the West. They believed—and sometimes justifiably so—that Islamic society was stronger, was wealthier, and offered more freedom and opportunities to its people than the West.<sup>97</sup> They romanticized life in Muslim-majority lands, believing that the lands provided for individuals who went there a magical transformation from a poor and oppressed life to one of strength, wealth, dignity, and freedom. This idealization of Islamic society was in fact so prominent in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries that a few hundred thousand Western Europeans became “renegades,” leaving Europe for North Africa and the Levant where they converted to Islam and integrated into the local culture.<sup>98</sup>

Perhaps the most important reason that the West saw the development of an image of a “mystical” Islam, however, is the fact that, beginning in the twelfth century, the West’s own explorations into “mystical” thought have frequently been influenced by Muslim writers and Islamic elements. After Alfonso VI’s 1083 reconquest of Toledo, the northernmost Islamic stronghold in Western Europe, Christian intellectuals slowly began traveling to the city, which was already well-known as a center of scientific learning.<sup>99</sup> There, in the second half of the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, a major effort was

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<sup>96</sup> Nance, *Arabian*, 11-50.

<sup>97</sup> This was particularly true in late-sixteenth-century England. See Nabil Matar, *Islam in Britain: 1558-1685* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 14-15, 21-72.

<sup>98</sup> See Bartolome Bennassar and Lucile Bennassar, *Les Chrestiens d’Allah: L’histoire extraordinaire des renegats XVI-XVII siecles* (Paris: Perrin, 1989).

<sup>99</sup> Marie-Thérèse d’Alverny, “Translations and Translators,” in *Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century*, eds. Robert L. Benson and Giles Constable (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), 421-462; Charles Burnett, “The Coherence of the Arabic-Latin Translation Program in Toledo in the Twelfth Century,” *Science in Context* 14, no. 1/2 (2001): 249-288.

made to translate Arabic works into Latin, ultimately leading to the production of the vast majority of Arabic translations that would be known to Western Europe for the next four centuries. While most of the translations made in Spain were of texts dealing with science, mathematics, and Greek philosophy, a number of the translations were concerned with magic: astrology, alchemy, and divination.<sup>100</sup> Copies of these translations, along with translations of other Arabic “mystical” texts from Italy, began spreading throughout Western and Central Europe and played a key role in the flourishing of “mystical” thought during the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Renaissance.<sup>101</sup>

Already by the thirteenth century, major Western thinkers, such as Roger Bacon and Albertus Magnus, were very familiar with the Arabic “mystical” tradition. This interest was continued by the principal Renaissance theorists of magic—including Marsilio Ficino, Pico della Mirandola, Cornelius Agrippa, Paracelsus, John Dee, and Elias Ashmole—who all had knowledge of a number of magic-related texts translated from Arabic.<sup>102</sup>

Through these writers and the translated books that they read, the Arabic “mystical” tradition had a major influence on several key elements of the Western “mystical” tradition. For instance, the *Picatrix* (the Latin version of the *Ghāyat al-Ḥakīm*) was one of the most popular magic books during the Renaissance and served as the

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<sup>100</sup> Astrology was sometimes understood, by both early Arabic and medieval Latin writers, as part of astronomy, and, therefore, a legitimate science.

<sup>101</sup> David Pingree, “The Diffusion of Arabic Magical Texts in Western Europe,” in *La Diffusione delle Scienze Islamiche nel Medio Evo Europeo*, ed. B. Scarcia Amoretti (Rome: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, 1987), 57-102; Robert Halleux, “The Reception of Arabic Alchemy in the West,” in *Encyclopedia of the History of Arabic Science*, ed. Rashdi Raheed, vol. 3 (NY: Routledge, 1996), 963-984.

<sup>102</sup> References to the knowledge of translations of Arabic “mystical” texts are dispersed throughout most of the major studies of these authors’ writings.

primary model of a text that could bring all the various magic sciences together into a somewhat coherent scheme.<sup>103</sup> Westerners also relied heavily on Arabic sources dealing with talismans and amulets. But the most well-known influence of Arabic “mystical” texts was in the fields of astronomy/astrology and alchemy; many of the most popular sources used in these fields were Arabic translations,<sup>104</sup> and Arabic writers like Abu Ma’shar and Jabir (Geber) remained icons in their fields through the seventeenth century.<sup>105</sup>

### “Mystical” Islam and Early Modern Secret Societies

Arabic “mystical” works were also important in the development of the secret societies that would maintain the “mystical” tradition in Western Europe after its public decline following the English Restoration in 1660. The first verifiable “mystical” secret society movement was that of the Rosicrucians in the first half of the seventeenth century. Prior to the seventeenth century, European occultists were essentially loners, reading, writing, and practicing their magic without claiming membership in any “mystical” organization. But, beginning in the 1610s, a number of small books were printed that discussed a “brotherhood of the Rosy Cross” and its founding member, Christian Rosencrutz, who supposedly had traveled to Arabia in the fourteenth century to obtain “mystical” knowledge. It is likely that both Rosencrutz and his brotherhood were

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<sup>103</sup> David Pingree, “Some of the Sources of the *Ghāyat al-Ḥakīm*,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 43 (1980): 1-15.

<sup>104</sup> Halleux; Lee Stavenhagen, trans., *A Testament of Alchemy; Being the Revelations of Morienus* (Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press, 1974); Eugenio Garin, *Astrology in the Renaissance: The Zodiac of Life*, trans. Carolyn Jackson and June Allen (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983), *passim*;

<sup>105</sup> Garin, 16-21; William Newman, “Arabo-Latin Forgeries: The Case of the *Summa Perfectionis* (with the Text of Jabir ibn Hayyan’s *Liber Regni*),” in *The “Arabick” Interest in Seventeenth-Century England*, ed. G.A. Russell (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994), 278, 286-288.

fabrications. The creators of Rosencrutz perhaps drew on the tradition of Artepheus, a mysterious figure known as a medieval “mystical” sage who, it was said in as early as the thirteenth century, gained his knowledge through travel to the Orient—though in reality he may have been a Muslim “mystical” writer.<sup>106</sup> And while it is likely that no Rosicrucian brotherhood had actually existed prior to the printing of these books, their publishing caused great excitement in Europe and a number of individual writers began claiming to be members of the brotherhood.

The reasons for this Rosicrucian “furore,” as it was called, have been recently detailed by Susanna Akerman.<sup>107</sup> Akerman demonstrated that Arabic astronomical and astrological texts, which suggested that there was great millennial significance in a number of astronomical events in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, were at “the heart of” what “triggered” a number of occultists and their patrons to believe that a new era was about to be ushered in by a “mystical” Protestant brotherhood across Europe. Whatever the true importance of these astronomical events were, historical hindsight shows us that the political, social, and religious upheavals during this period were in fact deeply connected to the globalizing forces—such as the growth of Europe’s long-distance seafaring, the spread of modern armaments and capitalism, the development of the Atlantic slave trade, and the influx of gold from the Americas—that

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<sup>106</sup> Nicholas H. Clulee, “At the Crossroads of Magic and Science: John Dee’s Archemastrie,” in *Occult and Scientific Mentalities in the Renaissance*, ed. Brian Vickers (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 61, 69 n. 30.

<sup>107</sup> Francis Yates, with her *Rosicrucian Enlightenment*, presented the first major English-language study of the phenomenon, but subsequent criticisms of her work have led to a reevaluation of the “furore.” Akerman’s book (*Rose Cross over the Baltic: The Spread of Rosicrucianism in Northern Europe* (Boston: Brill, 1998) is perhaps the best study to come out in recent years of the seventeenth-century events.

were ushering in the modern world. But the affects of these types of deep historical forces were not seen then as clearly as they are perceived now, and, as a result of the influence of the astronomical theories, the patrons encouraged the publishing of these Rosicrucian texts and took new political and military actions in order to change the state of affairs in Europe.<sup>108</sup>

After a few years, the furore was quelled, but the desire for secret societies and societal transformation remained, so several occultists formerly interested in the Rosicrucian movement began seeking out Masonic lodges, which they believed had preserved important “mystical” knowledge because of European masonry’s own tendency to claim that its interest in science and mathematics was transmitted to it from a number of mystically-inclined Old Testament wise men and Hermes Trismegistus, who was regarded at the time as both the “mystic” par excellence and as having the oldest and purest wisdom in the world.<sup>109</sup>

In the late seventeenth century, due to both political repression and the rise of Cartesian science, the practice of “mystical” traditions was pushed underground. “Mystical” writings, particularly works on the various types of magic, were for the most part no longer accepted as legitimate works of science, and there was now a decreased willingness to seek out the more difficult-to-obtain sources, such as those translated from Arabic. Meanwhile, though the number of people who were not actual stonemasons

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<sup>108</sup> Akerman, 238, 214.

<sup>109</sup> See David Stevenson, *The Origins of Freemasonry: Scotland’s Century, 1590-1710* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984); Margaret C. Jacob, *Living the Enlightenment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Robert Freke Gould, *Gould’s History of Freemasonry throughout the World*, vol. 1 (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1935).

joining Masonic lodges was growing, Masonry—particularly in Britain—was becoming less and less associated with the “mystical” and more with Deism, modern sociability, civic ideals, and political subversion.<sup>110</sup> As a result, there was a rather steep decline in Western familiarity with “mystical” knowledge from Arabic sources. So, while some of the Arabic/Islamic-influenced traditions remained, such as alchemy, astrology, and the Artephius/Rosencrutz story of traveling to the Middle East for “mystical” knowledge, their Arabic origins were now at best only legends and the “mystical” Islam tradition became rather vague, being detached from its text- and practice-based origins.

#### The Transformation of Western Interest in “Mystical” Islam in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries

During the eighteenth century, interest in the “mystical” Middle East was rekindled by the publication of the *Arabian Nights*.<sup>111</sup> At this time, however, the “mystical” Islam image was on a popular, entertainment level and few people who enjoyed the *Arabian Nights* became sincere students of “mystical” Islam.<sup>112</sup> In fact, during this century and into the first years of the nineteenth, serious Western discussions of Arabic/Islamic “mystical” religion were almost non-existent.

As the nineteenth century progressed, however, this began to change due to several factors. First was the eruption of Western interest in Sufism. As mentioned above,

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<sup>110</sup> Marsha Keith Manatt Schuchard, “Freemasonry, Secret Societies, and the Continuity of the Occult Traditions in English Literature” (PhD diss., University of Texas at Austin, 1975), 180-183; Jacob, 29-56.

<sup>111</sup> See Saree Makdisi and Felicity Nussbaum, eds. *The Arabian Nights in Historical Context: Between East and West* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

<sup>112</sup> Maxime Rodinson, *Europe and the Mystique of Islam*, trans. Roger Veinus (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1991).

there had been some Western European awareness of the existence of Sufism prior to the nineteenth century, but there are no known instances of early modern Europeans studying under a sheikh, nor is there evidence that Western Europeans had Islamic texts dealing either explicitly or exclusively with Sufism.<sup>113</sup> Indeed, Ibn Tufayl's *Hayy ibn Yaqzan*, which was perhaps the most influential Islamic philosophical text in the West during the early modern era, was not recognized as connected to Sufism despite it being largely shaped by Sufi concepts.<sup>114</sup> But in the 1810s, the first popular translations into European languages of Sufi poetry began appearing in Germany.<sup>115</sup> When the famous Goethe (who was, in addition to being a Romantic writer, a Freemason and occultist) published in 1819 an essay on Oriental poetry that included discussions of Hafiz and Rumi, Sufism was rocketed into the consciousness of the Western intelligentsia. Then, in 1856 and 1859, William Rounseville Alger's *Poetry of the East* and Edward Fitzgerald's *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám* popularized the Sufi poets for English-speaking audiences.<sup>116</sup>

One of the reasons *Hayy ibn Yaqzan* and, when they were discovered by Westerners, other Sufi texts were so popular in the West was the attractiveness of the Sufi aim of improving the individual's—as opposed to society's—closeness with God. This goal found a receptive audience in the modern West where, as Hodgson and Foucault

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<sup>113</sup> See Chodkiewicz.

<sup>114</sup> See Samar Attar, *The Vital Roots of European Enlightenment: Ibn Tufayl's Influence on Modern Western Thought* (Plymouth, UK: Lexington Books, 2007); G.A. Russell, "The Impact of *The Philosophus Autodidactus*: Pocockes, John Locke, and the Society of Friends," in *The "Arabick" Interest in Seventeenth-Century England*, ed. G.A. Russell (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994), 224-265.

<sup>115</sup> Mark Sedgwick, "The Reception of Sufi and Neo-Sufi Literature," in *Sufis in Western Society: Global Networking and Locality*, eds. Ron Geaves et al. (New York: Routledge, 2009), 181-182.

<sup>116</sup> For a discussion, see Leigh Eric Schmidt, *Restless Souls: The Making of American Spirituality* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2005), 82-85.

(who both followed Durkheim) observed, because of the urbanization and technicalization of modern life, a growing importance was being given to the individual.<sup>117</sup> Sufism, then, was the form of Islam that resonated the most with Western audiences. And because Sufism's mysticism could fit nicely into the vague image of "mystical" Islam that had been shaped by both the serious magic tradition and the popularity of the *Arabian Nights*, the increased interest in Sufism was helping to reinvigorate that Western image of a "mystical" Islam. This image was soon solidified with Edward Bulwer-Lytton's extremely popular "mystical" Oriental novel *Zanoni* (1842). So, by the mid-nineteenth century, at least in the U.S., favorable views of Islam were primarily found among publications dealing with "mystical" religions.<sup>118</sup>

Meanwhile, the deterritorialization of religion was significantly transforming religious identities and ideas in the West. As Westerners began to learn for the first time about Hinduism and Buddhism, and as knowledge about the religions of antiquity and early Christianity spread, the West started producing new religions, new theories of religion, and Western converts to non-Christian religions.<sup>119</sup> Interestingly, however,

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<sup>117</sup> Also see Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989).

<sup>118</sup> See Bowen, "Scientific Religion."

<sup>119</sup> Because the literature on this subject is immense, here I will identify the works that have been particularly helpful for my understanding of the period. Schmidt, *Restless Souls*; Bradford J.M. Verter, "Dark Star Rising: The Emergence of Modern Occultism, 1800-1950" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 1998); Jocelyn Godwin, *The Theosophical Enlightenment* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994); Catherine L. Albanese, *A Republic of Mind and Spirit: A Cultural History of American Metaphysical Religion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007); David Robinson, *The Unitarians and the Universalists* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1985); Robert C. Fuller, *Mesmerism and the American Cure of Souls* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982); Bruce F. Campbell, *Ancient Wisdom Revived: A History of the Theosophical Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980); Stephen Gottschalk, *The Emergence of Christian Science in American Religious Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973); Carl T. Jackson, *Vedanta for the West: The Ramakrishna Movement in the United States* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994); Thomas A. Tweed, *The American Encounter*

despite both this religious transformation and the simultaneous revival of interest in “mystical” Islam, very few Westerners actually converted to Islam during the nineteenth century<sup>120</sup>—Buddhism was far more popular and influential. The reasons for this are not fully understood, but there are probably at least three major contributing factors. One is that before the late eighteenth century Westerners had almost no knowledge of the religions of East and South Asia. Prior to that time, then, Islam had little competition for the attention of Westerners interested in Oriental religions—but after the turn of the century Islam found itself as merely one of several. Another factor was that India, the region with which Buddhism was largely associated in Western minds, had been, for the most part, successfully subdued by Westerners. As Said and Richard King demonstrate, the fascination with the “mystical” Orient was in many ways dependent on the colonization and dominance of the region associated with that mysticism. Because India was the most dominated, its religions were seen as the truest form of the pre-modern religion.<sup>121</sup> Therefore, those Westerners who were interested in “mystical” Oriental religions would be more drawn to those from India.

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*with Buddhism 1844-1912* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992); Mary Ann Clawson, *Constructing Brotherhood: Class, Gender, and Fraternalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989); Mark C. Carnes, *Secret Ritual and Manhood in Victorian America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).

<sup>120</sup> The largest group of Muslim converts was the few hundred in Liverpool in the 1890s. Alexander Webb’s 1890s U.S. Muslim missionary effort, the second most popular Islamic conversion movement in the West in the nineteenth century, probably gained no more than 100 converts, and probably less than fifty. See Stefano Allievi, *Les Convertis à l’Islam* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1998), 270-271; Ron Geaves, *Islam in Victorian Britain: The Life and Times of Abdullah Quilliam* (Leicester, UK: Kube Publishing Ltd., 2010); Ali Köse, *Conversion to Islam: A Study of Native British Converts* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1996); Umar F. Abd-Allah, *A Muslim in Victorian America: The Life of Alexander Russell Webb* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); Brent D. Singleton, “Brothers at Odds: Rival Islamic Movements in Late Nineteenth Century New York City,” *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 27 (2007): 473–86.

<sup>121</sup> See King.

This, however, does not explain why Hinduism was not nearly as popular for Westerners as Buddhism. It is a particularly perplexing issue when it is recognized that nineteenth-century Westerners were aware of the fact that Hinduism was indeed older than Buddhism. Jocelyn Godwin has suggested that the disproportionate interest in Buddhism was largely attributable to its unique notion of Nirvana—“nothingness” or “annihilation.” This concept was appealing for those whose were interested in non-Christian religions because these religious radicals were predisposed to the rejection of all religious dogma in favor of a “mystical” system that allowed for, using the term of Delueze and Guattari, constant deterritorialization. Truth, for them, was beyond not only doctrine, but all human concepts; therefore, a religious system that poses the idea of nothingness as its very goal would be the most attractive.<sup>122</sup> Islam could not claim this and was therefore not as popular.

#### Freemasons, Muslim Converts, and “Mystical” Islam in the Nineteenth Century

In this environment, then, only those Westerners who had particularly strong motives for embracing Islam—or at least the symbols of Islam—would do so. Perhaps, for some, it was the desire to distinguish oneself from among the waves of Westerners who were showing interest in Oriental religions. In other cases, converts to Islam had established relationships with Muslims either in the West or while abroad; the strengthening of affective bonds with people of a different religion has been recognized as a key contributing factor for conversion.<sup>123</sup> In addition, there was one particular

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<sup>122</sup> Godwin, 322-331.

<sup>123</sup> This was most famously brought to light in John Lofland and Rodney Stark, “Becoming a World-Saver,” *American Sociological Review* 30 (1965): 864-873.

organization that, because of its unique background, showed a disproportionate interest in Islam.

The Freemasons, as I noted above, were the primary inheritors of the medieval and Renaissance “mystical” tradition. After Western “mystical” religion was forced underground starting in the late seventeenth century, the freedom to learn about and practice “mystical” traditions had become severely limited, so people sought out secret networks for access to the “mystical” world. Because of its early ties to the “mystical” tradition, in the eighteenth century Freemasonry—despite the fact that most individual Freemasons were in fact turning away from Freemasonry’s “mystical” roots—“became increasingly the repository of the whole occultist [i.e., ‘mystical’] and antiquarian *mélange*.”<sup>124</sup> Due to the secrecy of Freemasonry in the eighteenth century, there is not enough available information to say conclusively whether it had maintained any awareness of the “mystical” books translated from Arabic. However, there is so little evidence to support this theory that it seems highly unlikely. If the Arabic “mystical” tradition did in fact influence eighteenth-century Freemasonry in a significant way, it was most likely through a vague sense that Masonic history and teachings could be traced back to the “Orient.” While for most Masons this “Orient” conjured up the image of a pre-Christian (and thus pre-Islamic) Levant that was influenced by Egyptian and Hebrew religion and philosophy, some Masons may have believed that Islam had been an

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<sup>124</sup> Schuchard, 174.

inheritor of the original Freemasonic teachings. Perhaps, then, Goethe's Masonic influences were partly what had inspired him to praise the Sufi poets.<sup>125</sup>

Because of their Deistic beliefs, Freemasons also sometimes took the position that they would be open to Muslims joining their lodges.<sup>126</sup> Nevertheless, because the few Muslims living in Europe and the U.S. rarely even attempted to join Masonic lodges, this openness was almost never put into practice in the West. It did, however, come into play when Masonic lodges were established in regions with large numbers of Muslims. By the mid-nineteenth century, local Muslim elites (largely because they could afford to pay the requisite dues) began joining, desiring to access the modern sociability and social networking offered by the fraternities. Several lodges began to be formed with a large number of Muslims and the Qur'an replaced the Bible as the holy book used in the Muslim lodges' ceremonies. This was followed, particularly in the Ottoman regions, by local Muslim Masonic brothers reinterpreting the Masonic genealogical myths in ways that would affirm the importance of their own religion. A variety of narratives were produced that placed Islam and Islamic figures at the heart of the Masonic tradition.<sup>127</sup>

Sufis—particularly Bektashis—were especially drawn to Freemasonry, which had several parallels to their traditions.<sup>128</sup> By mid-century, a number of Ottoman Bektashis

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<sup>125</sup> Goethe's understanding of Islam was significantly influenced by the German orientalist Hammer-Purgstall, who proposed the theory that the Islama'ilis transmitted Masonic knowledge to Europeans.

<sup>126</sup> Jacob, 66, 70.

<sup>127</sup> Thierry Zarcone has written numerous books and articles on this subject. See especially his *Mystiques, Philosophes et Francs-Maçons en Islam* (Paris: Institut Français d'Études Anatoliennes d'Istanbul, 1993).

<sup>128</sup> See Zarcone, *Mystiques, passim* and, for an English-language summary of his main thoughts on the subject, see Thierry Zarcone, "Gnostic/Sufi Symbols and Ideas in Turkish and Persian Freemasonry and Para-masonic Organizations," in *Knowledge of the Heart: Gnostic Movements and Secret Traditions:*

had attracted the attention of Western Freemasons who were living in the Middle East. Some, such as John Porter Brown, a dragoman for the U.S. legation in Constantinople, were even initiated into the Muslim lodges.<sup>129</sup> Brown published his discovery of these Sufi Freemasons, as did fellow American Freemasons Robert Morris and Henry R. Coleman, thereby making the American Freemasonic public aware of this phenomenon of Muslim—and Sufi—Masonry.<sup>130</sup> At the time, American Freemasons, following the trend begun by French Masons in the eighteenth century, were increasingly taking an interest in the growing literature on Oriental religions and the “mystical” tradition, and some had already begun claiming that Masonry was deeply connected to other “mystical” religions.<sup>131</sup>

The wave of connecting Freemasonry to the already popular Sufi/“mystical” Islam image meant that Islam could take on new, deeper levels of significance for Masons. It is therefore not surprising that the Muslim converts in Liverpool—the largest Western Muslim convert community in the nineteenth century—were very much interested in Freemasonry.<sup>132</sup> In the U.S., meanwhile, Albert Leighton Rawson—an

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*Transactions of the Eighth International Conference 4 & 5 November 2006*, ed. Robert A. Gilbert (Hersham, UK: Lewis Masonic, 2008), 117-131.

<sup>129</sup> Zarcone, *Mystiques*, 222-225.

<sup>130</sup> John P. Brown, *The Dervishes; or, Oriental Spiritualism* (London: Trubner and Co., 1868); Robert Morris, *Freemasonry in the Holy Land* (New York: Masonic Publishing Company, 1872); Henry R. Coleman, *Light from the East. Travels and Researches in Bible Lands in Pursuit of More Light in Masonry* (Louisville: Henry R. Coleman, 1885), 264-265.

<sup>131</sup> Bowen, “Scientific Religion,” 319.

<sup>132</sup> Geaves, 34, 62, 109, 119, 125, 322n; Köse, 14–16. The leader of the group, Abdullah Quilliam, was himself involved in a number of Freemasonic lodges over the years, and, beginning in around 1902, several Liverpool Muslim converts joined a para-masonic organization led by Quilliam named the Ancient Order of the Zuzimites; see the group’s journal, *The Crescent*.

associate of the Liverpool Muslims and one of the main proponents of the Islamic propagation effort led by the convert Alexander Webb—was a Freemason who had shown great interest in Islam, and had even tried to establish Islam-themed para-Masonic organizations in the U.S.<sup>133</sup>

In the 1880s, a decade before Webb’s mission began, Rawson was also a key player in the development of the Ancient Arabic Order Nobles of the Mystic Shrine, commonly known as the Shriners. The Shriners were organized in the 1870s as a white Masonry-affiliated group that emphasized an Islamic identity. While the true origins are still not conclusively known, Shriner tradition tells us that the group was established in the early 1870s in New York by a number of Masons, and perhaps a non-Mason but respected actor who had recently traveled in the Near East and Europe and claimed to have been initiated into an ancient Bektashi-connected Masonic order. Members, known for donning fezzes, often wore various Arab- and Egyptian-inspired clothing, frequently used Arabic writing, quoted from the Qur’an, spoke of devotion to Allah, occasionally took Islamic-sounding names (in addition to adopting the title “Noble”), and gave their meeting halls (“temples” and “mosques”) Islamic-themed names (such as “Mecca,” “Osman,” and “Crescent”). An early history of the Order stated, however, that the Shrine “does not advocate Mohammedanism as a sect, but inculcates the same respect to Deity here as in Arabia and elsewhere, and hence the secret of its profound grasp on the

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<sup>133</sup> Perhaps the most complete discussion of Rawson’s connections to Islam is given in Nance, *Arabian Nights*, 92-97. Nance, however, without offering any evidence besides her inductions, strongly asserts that Rawson’s promotions of Islam were almost completely driven by a desire for personal profit. We do not know Rawson’s personal motives, but they were probably, similar to those of most people, mixed.

intellect and heart of all cultured people.”<sup>134</sup> This “Islamic” identity was restricted to when the Shriners were participating in overtly Shriner activities; it did not generally spill over into all areas of life.

It is not known whether the Shriner origin story was a complete fabrication, but it is generally accepted—even by Shriner historians—that in the 1870s the Shriner leaders were conscious of fictional elements in their story and had in fact employed them as a way of emphasizing the Islamic identity for less religiously devout reasons: they were interested in promoting the image of Islam in order to appeal to popular conceptions of Muslims as exotic, indolent, and indulgent. Apparently, for these early leaders and many of the 100,000 adherents by the turn of the century, the Shrine was primarily a site for relaxation, play, socialization, and indulgence in food, wine, and fantasy.<sup>135</sup> Rawson was responsible for rewriting the Shriner rituals in the 1880s to make them sound more exotic and authentic, which resulted in the rapid growth of the organization. This last fact suggests that, while some scholars point out that the Shriners have generally seen their “playing Eastern” as an intentionally silly farce, some early members, who themselves had little knowledge about Islam and may have been among the Freemasons who were developing an interest in Islam, may have been seriously attracted to the Order’s Islamic stories and symbols. The Shriner origin story, rituals, and costume certainly resonated with the “mystical” Islam tradition.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> William B. Melish, *The History of the Imperial Council Ancient Arabic Order Nobles of the Mystic Shrine for North America 1872 - 1921*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Cincinnati: The Abingdon Press, 1921), 38.

<sup>135</sup> Fred Van Devanter, *Parade to Glory* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1959).

<sup>136</sup> For a fuller discussion on this topic, see Bowen, “Scientific Religion.”

In any case, no matter how much more attractive it had become since the eighteenth century, particularly for Freemasons and those people exploring other “mystical” and Oriental religions, Islam had failed to take hold in the West. Alexander Webb’s Islamic movement floundered after only three years and converting fewer than 100 people. Besides the small Sufi movement centered around Inayat Khan in the early 1910s,<sup>137</sup> there would be no other successful Islamic conversion movement in the U.S. until 1920. “Mystical” Islam was the most attractive form of Islam in the U.S., but until a group of people had enough incentives to overcome the cultural barriers to embracing it, “mystical” Islam—and the sense of dignity it could promote—would, for all intents and purposes, remain a dormant form of Islamic identity in the U.S.

### **3. Muslims from Abroad and their Interactions with Non-Muslim African Americans before 1920**

The de- and re-territorialization of religion includes more than the dispersal, mixing, and re-imagining of religious doctrines and symbols. A significant element is the physical movement of people from various religious backgrounds into new locations. In order to understand how religions become reterritorialized, it is important to take into account the context in which carriers of religion travel, the culture into which they settle, and the new relationships they built with both coreligionists who came from different homelands and with people of different religions.

In the U.S. before 1920, there were two major groups of Muslims who had come from abroad: enslaved African Muslims and Muslims who immigrated by their own free

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<sup>137</sup> See Elisabeth de Jong-Keesing, *Inayat Khan* (London: Luzac & Co. Ltd., 1974), 86-107. It should be made clear that Inayat Khan’s movement, though Sufi, did not consider itself exclusively Islamic.

will. Enslaved Africans had been arriving in the land that would become U.S. in small numbers for perhaps 250 years, but particularly since the early eighteenth century.<sup>138</sup> However, because of slave owner and trader attempts to reduce communication between enslaved people as a way of preventing the making of plans for escape or rebellion, people who spoke the same language and shared the same culture, and thus co-religionists, were often sold to different owners, preventing the continual reinforcement of religious traditions. The effect was exacerbated by the fact that enslaved peoples were able to bring few if any texts or religious objects from their homelands that might have served as other mediums for religious transmission. This ultimately led to the almost complete disappearance of Islamic practices among enslaved people and their descendants in the U.S. by the late nineteenth century.<sup>139</sup>

However, before it had fully dissipated, there were some instances of transmission of Islam and of possible conversions of non-Muslim slaves to Islam. Evidence for this, still, is little and suggestive at best, primarily because there are few written accounts from any enslaved Muslims in the U.S. However, given that Muslim slaves often had relatively (for an enslaved person in the U.S.) high levels of education, cultural training, and strong moral convictions, possessed an air of respectability, were in many cases given leadership roles and thus more privileges, and sometimes were granted freedom, conversion to Islam

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<sup>138</sup> See Allan D. Austin, ed., *African Muslims in Antebellum America: A Sourcebook* (New York: Garland Pub., 1984); Allan D. Austin, *African Muslims in Antebellum America: Transatlantic Stories and Spiritual Struggles* (New York: Routledge, 1997); Sylviane Diouf, *Servants of Allah: African Muslims enslaved in the Americas* (New York: New York University Press, 1998); Michael A. Gomez, *Black Crescent: The Experience and Legacy of African Muslims in the Americas* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 13, 18-20, 128-35, 144-52; Kambiz GhaneaBassiri, *A History of Islam in America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 15-94.

<sup>139</sup> Gomez, 144-52; GhaneaBassiri, 63-73; Jackson, 39, 123.

may have been an attractive choice for non-Muslim slaves who could have seen conversion as a means to improve their position or access to things in the world.<sup>140</sup> It should be noted, however, that these converts did not all embrace the same forms of Islam. Because the slave trade brought to the U.S. Muslims from very different geographical and sectarian provenances, the Islam of the enslaved—and thus that of the converts they influenced—was itself very much deterritorialized.<sup>141</sup>

One story of conversions centers around Ibrahim Abdul Rahman, the enslaved son of an African Muslim chieftain, who was freed in 1828.<sup>142</sup> Abdul Rahman's manumission was based on the belief that he had converted to Christianity, and he was subsequently taken by a Christian group on a lecture tour of the U.S. in order to gain support for colonizing Africa. Literate in Arabic and possessing strong speaking abilities, he was originally brought to white churches where he impressed the congregations, thereby increasing their support for colonization. But he soon stirred "religious controversy everywhere. He relished the opportunity to question Christianity by arguing with religious leaders and insisted Islam was the only true religion." White churches of course stopped allowing him to come, so he took to preaching to African Americans and became widely known and respected among the circles supporting black independence. There are reports that some African Americans who saw and heard Abdul Rahman "began to recall

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<sup>140</sup> Gomez, 173-182.

<sup>141</sup> GhaneaBassiri, 63-73.

<sup>142</sup> Abdul Rahman has been the subject of several academic writings. For a useful introduction to his life, see Allen, *Transatlantic Stories*, 65-84.

their own Islamic religious backgrounds. Some publicly reclaimed their African-Muslim names, invoking the wrath of local whites, who branded them as imposters.”<sup>143</sup>

There were likely also other converts on the Georgia Sea Islands, which had probably the highest concentration of enslaved Muslims in the U.S.<sup>144</sup> Enslaved non-Muslims may have had found certain material advantages, or at least more self-respect, through conversion to Islam when living among, or seeing Muslims who had what they may have considered better lives. Others may have married Muslims and taken on the practices of their spouses, and it is possible that some were drawn to a spiritual element to which they may have perceived Islam as giving access. Interestingly, there is also evidence that some whites may have even taken on partial Islamic identities due to the influence of enslaved Muslims.<sup>145</sup>

There are no known instances, however, of either Muslim slaves from Africa or the converts they made surviving into the 1900s. The Muslim community that did last into the twentieth century and beyond was that of Muslim immigrants. Unlike the enslaved Muslims, these immigrants started arriving in significant numbers only in the later nineteenth century.<sup>146</sup> At first, Muslims, like other immigrants, primarily lived and interacted with those of the same ethnicity. As time passed and the desire to connect with

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<sup>143</sup> Dannin, 20-21.

<sup>144</sup> Gomez, 156.

<sup>145</sup> Bowen, “Scientific Religion,” 318.

<sup>146</sup> See Smith, 50-54; Adele Linda Younis, “The Coming of the Arabic-Speaking People to the United States” (PhD diss., Boston University, 1961); GhaneaBassiri, 9-12; Amir Nashid Ali Muhammad, *Muslims in America: Seven Centuries of History (1312-2000)* (Beltsville, MD: Amana Publications, 2001), 3-22. For a discussion of Muslims who may have come to the Americas before the arrival of Columbus, see Abdullah Hakim Quick, *Deeper Roots* (London: Ta-Ha Publishers, 1996), chapter 2.

other Muslims increased, efforts were made to establish Islamic institutions. The early Muslim immigrants hailed from all parts of the Islamic world and therefore their early U.S. communities sometimes contained very diverse Islamic beliefs and practices and, because there were only a few Muslim organizations and formally-trained Muslim religious leaders were extremely rare in the U.S., early immigrant Islamic beliefs and practices were not standardized.<sup>147</sup> Throughout the U.S. at this time, then, one could often find Muslims from a variety of provenances joining together, either downplaying or not criticizing each others' sectarian commitments and religious particularities of their homelands, adding into Islamic activities American customs (such as expressing patriotism for the U.S. and having coed prayers and dances), and bringing in converts.<sup>148</sup> Prior to the passing of the Hart-Cellar immigration act of 1965, Islam in America took very diverse forms, and was only in the beginning stages of reterritorialization.

Despite the openness and diversity of the early immigrant Muslim community, particularly before 1920, immigrant Muslim interaction with African Americans took place on a rather small scale.<sup>149</sup> In many cases, non-black Muslim immigrants picked up

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<sup>147</sup> Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad and Adair T. Lummis, *Islamic Values in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 20.

<sup>148</sup> For example, see Liyakat Takim, *Shi'ism in America* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 15–17; Karen Isaken Leonard, *Muslims in the United States: The State of Research* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2003), 11; Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, “The Shaping of Arab and Muslim Identity in the United States,” in *Immigration and Religion in America*, eds. R. Alba, A. J. Raboteau, and J. DeWind (New York : New York University Press, 2009), 250–257.

<sup>149</sup> On the complex relationships between early Muslim immigrants and African Americans, see, for example, Abdul Jalil Al-Tahir, “The Arab Community in the Chicago Area, A Comparative Study of the Christian-Syrians and the Muslim-Palestinians” (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1952), 120-124; Atif Amin Wasfi, “Dearborn Arab-Moslem Community: A Study of Acculturation” (PhD diss., Michigan State University, 1964), 176-177; Lawrence Oschinsky, “Islam in Chicago: Being a Study of the Acculturation of a Muslim Palestinian Community in that City” (MA thesis, University of Chicago, 1947), 25-26.

the racist mentality that was popular in the U.S. and this led to avoidance of African Americans outside of business interactions. Nevertheless, sometimes Muslims did develop social and even religious relationships with African Americans. And there were even a handful of cases of immigrant Muslims—usually Indian men—marrying African-American women.<sup>150</sup>

As far as is currently known, besides perhaps Rev. Dr. Prince de Solomon (discussed at the end of this chapter), no immigrant Muslim directly proselytized to African Americans before 1920. However, at least one immigrant from this period endorsed the idea that African Americans should convert to Islam: Mohammad Barakatullah. Barakatullah was an Indian Muslim scholar and revolutionary whose many accomplishments have unfortunately been left out of most histories of Islam in the U.S.<sup>151</sup> After spending several years in England where he was an important member of the Liverpool mosque, he arrived in the U.S. in 1899 after communicating with Albert Leighton Rawson, Alexander Webb, and other American Muslims.<sup>152</sup> Making his living

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<sup>150</sup> See Karen Leonard, *Making Ethnic Choices* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992); Vivek Bald, “Hands Across the Water: Indian Sailors, Peddlers, and Radicals in the U.S. 1890-1965” (PhD diss., New York University, 2009).

<sup>151</sup> There are only a few English-language in-depth discussions of Barakatullah’s life, and we still know very little about his time in the U.S. See Shafqat Razvi, “Mawli Barkatullah Bhopali (A Revolutionary Freedom Fighter in the Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century),” *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society* 37, no. 2 (1989): 139-158; M. Irfan, *Barkatullah Bhopali*, [“liberal”] trans. S. Iftikhar Ali (Bhopal, India: Babul Ilm Publications, 2003); Sayyid `Abid `Ali Vajdi al-Husaini, *Maulana Barkatullah Bhopali: Inqilabi Savanih* (Bhopal: Madhyah Pradesh Urdu Akademi, 1986); Ayub Khan, “The History Column: An Indian Muslim Revolutionary in America,” July 2, 2009, [http://twocircles.net/2009jul01/history\\_column\\_indian\\_muslim\\_revolutionary\\_america.html](http://twocircles.net/2009jul01/history_column_indian_muslim_revolutionary_america.html) (accessed August 21, 2012). I also rely on a translated chapter from an Urdu-language biography on Barakatullah.

<sup>152</sup> In 1895, Barakatullah wrote to Rawson that he was intending to come to the U.S. to lecture and build a mosque. However, he was not able to make the trip until 1899 when he was invited by Webb, and encouraged to go by other Indian Muslims who knew Webb. See al-Husaini, 107; Irfan, 41-43; and the letter to Rawson, dated 4/19/1895, which is contained in the John A. Lant Papers, Missouri History Museum. I would like to thank Brent Singleton for informing me about this letter.

as a writer and a teacher, Barakatullah planned (though ultimately failed) to construct a mosque and he lectured and wrote on Sufism during his years in New York.<sup>153</sup>

Passionately committed to India's independence, Barakatullah attempted to form alliances with various political parties and ethnic groups throughout the world in order to build a coalition strong enough to overthrow colonial powers.<sup>154</sup> On at least one occasion, Barakatullah compared the treatment of Indians in British India to slavery,<sup>155</sup> so it is clear that he was able to recognize the similar oppression of black Americans in the U.S. His views on the plight of African Americans were also almost certainly influenced by the Muslim convert communities in both Liverpool and New York, both of which were very critical of the U.S.'s treatment of the community.<sup>156</sup> In 1903, Barakatullah sent a letter to the editor of the *New York Tribune*, writing that, because there was no racism in Islam and, after centuries, Christianity had

failed to soften the heart of the white and ameliorate the condition of the black, it is time that Islam should have a chance to try its influence over the negro race of

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<sup>153</sup> "Church and Religious News and Notes," *New-York Tribune*, July 4, 1908, 8. This news article indicates that both Barakatullah and Alexander Webb participated in the same summer-long interreligious conference, which raises the possibility that Webb maintained his ties with Barakatullah after the latter's arrival in the U.S. It is notable that while in the U.S., Barakatullah was sometimes billed as "Swami Barakatullah" (see, e.g., the "Swami Barakatullah" advertisement in the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* on March 28, 1903, 14)—it is not known if he had chosen this Hindu title himself or if it was given to him by promoters, who, following the American tendency at the time, thought of all Indians—whether they were actually Hindus or not—as "Hindoos."

<sup>154</sup> "The English in Thibet," *Irish World*, June 18, 1904, 1; "Hindoos Greet Bryan," *Wilkes-Barre Times*, August 31, 1906, 1; "The Ominous Strength of China," *Macon Telegraph*, January 14, 1907, 5.

<sup>155</sup> "Hindoos Treated as Slaves," *Irish World*, December 12, 1903, 2.

<sup>156</sup> See copies of Quilliam's *The Crescent* and Webb's *Moslem World*; both consistently ran articles criticizing the U.S. treatment of African Americans. While Webb and Quilliam may have retained some racist views, their thoughts on race were undeniably far more progressive than those of mainstream whites at the time.

the South. When once a unitarian [i.e., rejecter of the Trinity] and total abstinent—for Islam forbids the use of alcohol in any shape and form—the negro will have no reason to envy his white fellow citizens; nay, he will feel a sense of superiority in his simple faith and sober conduct. As Islam in its pristine purity was democratic and progressive, the negroes of the United States democracy will become a model Moslem community in the world, and there is no wonder if in course of a short time the plea may be changed into “the educated blacks should act as teachers, the whites as pupils.”<sup>157</sup>

Unfortunately, the extent of Barakatullah’s impact on pre-1920 African Americans is unknown. The only evidence I have been able to find is a brief editorial comment on Barakatullah’s view of African Americans and Islam made in a Washington, D.C. African-American newspaper: the writer flippantly dismissed the idea as simply another unreasonable proposal for the uplift of African Americans.<sup>158</sup>

It seems that prior to 1920, the idea that African Americans should convert to Islam was largely falling on deaf ears. In 1909, Barakatullah left the U.S. and did not return again for any significant period of time until 1927, when he came a few months before his death. During this second stay in the U.S., which was, notably, in the early years of the AAIR, Barakatullah affiliated himself with Marcus Garvey and various African-American leaders, though it is unknown if he was promoting Islam at that time. That Barakatullah’s real impact on African-American culture probably only occurred in the 1920s reflects the fact that during the years between his stays in the U.S., African-American culture had undergone a dramatic transformation that was contributing to the

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<sup>157</sup> Mohammad Barakatullah Maulavie, “White and Black in the South,” *New-York Tribune*, May 3, 1903, 11.

<sup>158</sup> *Colored American*, November 28, 1903, 6.

emergence of the AAIR and making American blacks significantly more receptive to men like Barakatullah.

#### **4. Religion and the African-American Struggle for Dignity**

Throughout these first two chapters I have emphasized the notion of dignity and shown that it has been fostered by at least two distinct sets of historical dynamics. First are the several macro-level historical forces pushing people into modern, urban settings where the individual and individualistic technical thought are valued much more than the family and non-technical thought. In addition, throughout history there have been a number of bursts of cultural florescence—periods that can be called “renaissances”—in which dignity is frequently emphasized and connected with “mystical” traditions. Sometimes, such as during the early modern period in Europe, both dignity-promoting dynamics—the renaissances and the macro-level forces of modernity—appear simultaneously, which makes for a very pervasive desire for dignity at the time.

There is, however, another important force that has led to a widespread struggle for dignity in modern times: the enslavement of ten to twelve million Africans in the Americas and the post-slavery oppression of their descendants. The desire to free themselves from their difficult conditions and regain a sense of full humanity is a trait that runs so deep in African-American religious culture that it is, in some ways, that religious culture’s defining characteristic.<sup>159</sup> It would not be until the AAIR, however,

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<sup>159</sup> In his overview of African-American religion, Albert J. Raboteau emphasizes three themes that define the African-American religious experience: “the interweaving of African religious themes with Christianity, the challenge of African Americans to slavery, and the two-century quest for freedom...”; Albert J. Raboteau, *Canaan Land: A Religious History of African Americans* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), ix. “Freedom,” in this context, refers to both freedom from institutional slavery and post-slavery oppression; it is, in other words, the desire for full humanity, or dignity. In his study of African-American religion from 1865 to 1902, Edward L. Wheeler characterizes the ex-slave as primarily

when all three types of dignity-promoting forces—modernization, “mystical” traditions in the West, and African-American religious culture—would make a strong connection. When they did connect, however, Islam became another important ingredient in the mix. To understand how and why this confluence emerged when it did, in the third decade of the twentieth century, it will be necessary to give some background on the African-American struggle for dignity, particularly its religious aspects, in the years leading up to and immediately after 1920.<sup>160</sup>

After emancipation in 1865 and the fourteenth Amendment’s granting blacks U.S. citizenship in 1868, there was a widespread feeling among African Americans that they would finally gain equality and dignity in the U.S. This, of course, would not come easy, as Southern white resistance soon overcame northern attempts to improve the economic and social conditions for black Americans. If the race was to succeed in opposing white supremacy, it would have to come together and work through the institutional means available to it.

In the late nineteenth century, the only institution that African Americans consistently controlled was the black church. The church therefore was the center of African-American religious, social, *and* political life at the time. Freed from the constrictions of forced labor, thousands of black men took to pulpits, and most of the

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desiring to achieve “dignity,” “a better and truer self,” and “equality and full humanity in America”—all of which are presented as essentially the same thing (Edward L. Wheeler, *Uplifting the Race: The Black Ministers in the New South 1865-1902* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1986), xi.

<sup>160</sup> This section has been primarily influenced by the following works: Edward L. Wheeler, *Uplifting the Race*; Milton C. Sernett, *Bound for the Promised Land: African American Religion and the Great Migration* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997); Carole Marks, *Farewell—We’re Good and Gone: The Great Black Migration* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989); Gayraud S. Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1972); Baer.

leading ministers began preaching “uplift”—the notion that African Americans could and should strive for moral elevation, intellectual development, the improvement of physical conditions, and spiritual exaltation.<sup>161</sup> It was a message that mixed the intense spirituality of “that Old Time Religion” (conservative, but intensely emotional American Protestantism) that black Americans had been picked up through Southern white influence with liberal progressive themes of social justice. The uplift preachers, as they might be called, believed that the development of economic self-sufficiency, education, and upright moral living were the key ingredients to achieving the long sought-after dignity. To some degree, too, as Theophus H. Smith has argued, this post-slavery religiosity also had an element of magic—of the personal and social transformation/exaltation type, which promoted the idea that African Americans could change themselves so they could have more power in the world.<sup>162</sup> But as Jim Crow laws became more entrenched and white violence towards African Americans became more intense, hopes of improving the condition of the race began to subside and the black church turned more and more inward, focusing less on societal change and more on personal morality.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> Wheeler, esp. xiii.

<sup>162</sup> Theophus H. Smith, *Conjuring Culture: Biblical Formations of Black America* (Cary, NC: Oxford University Press, 1995).

<sup>163</sup> Lewis Baldwin, “Revisiting the ‘All-Comprehending Institution’: Historical Reflections on the Public Roles of Black Churches,” in *New Day Begun: African-American Churches and Civic Culture in Post-Civil Rights America*, ed. R. Drew Smith (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 28-29.

In as late as 1910, around ninety percent of African Americans still lived in the South, and most were in rural communities.<sup>164</sup> But with white racist violence rising and a growing sense of frustration over the inability to improve their lives, African-Americans were increasingly wanting an escape route out of their current conditions. A few dozen small all-black towns were established on the outer edges of the South, and some individuals who had completely lost hope for black integration in U.S. society continued the push for emigration to Africa, a notion that had reached its first peak in the first half of the nineteenth century. The vast majority who would leave the South, however, were the hundreds of thousands of unskilled laborers who traveled to the Northern cities where they were drawn by promises of employment and opportunities for black Americans that could never be imagined under Jim Crow. With the onset of the First World War and the resulting loss of a major portion of the Northern white labor pool to the draft, African Americans began fleeing the South in droves to fill the many factory positions now opened to them.<sup>165</sup>

Life in the urban North exposed African-American migrants to a host of new experiences, both positive and negative. On the one hand, they were packed into disease-infested, crime-ridden slums; liquor, illicit drugs, and prostitution were now readily available, leading to a deterioration of morality; many could not find work; and racism—though much less violent than it had been in the South—continued to be a dominant factor in their daily lives. On the other hand, urban centers provided opportunities for

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<sup>164</sup> Milton C. Sernett, *Bound for the Promised Land: African American Religion and the Great Migration* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 17.

<sup>165</sup> See Sernett and Carole Marks, *Farewell—We're Good and Gone: The Great Black Migration* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989).

networking, learning, and career advancement that were unthinkable in the South.

African Americans also were now meeting educated blacks, immigrants from a variety of races, and even some liberal whites. Despite continuing to inhabit the lowest rung in the American social order, African Americans' worlds were being opened in ways that took them—at least their imaginations—far beyond the old rural limits to the ever-expanding world of modern deterritorialization. Plus, there were now more sources for money, as black urban neighborhoods could support small black-run businesses and whites began to visit and support black clubs, black entertainers, and, in a few cases, black literary and visual artists.

Migration to the urban North meant, in addition, that African Americans had to adapt to a more modern sense of self. Disconnected from traditional social and support networks that were grounded in a settled agrarian lifestyle, they were forced to learn to survive as laborers-for-hire, which makes *individuals* more mobile and thus less able to create stable support and social networks. In an urban setting, the individual is also more responsible for acquiring his or her own technical skills and negotiating daily life. Even if one is “plugged into” a tightly-connected community, such as a church, modern urban living generally forces people to think of themselves in more individualistic ways. As I have shown others have argued, this life tends to promote the development of a notion of human dignity.

It was therefore during World War I—which itself was inspiring oppressed groups throughout the world to fight for freedom—when these new modern dynamics were beginning to seriously impact African-American life, that a tremendous change was

beginning to take place. By 1918, as Milton C. Sernett observes, “a new consciousness” had arisen in African-American culture.<sup>166</sup> The U.S. black perspective had within a decade shifted from rural to urban and the old hope in finding dignity was being rekindled by the new sense of self and a strong feeling of possibility that was coursing throughout the northern black ghettos. African-American life was on the cusp of a dramatic transformation. The conditions were, basically, perfect for a renaissance.

“The Harlem Renaissance” is the term that is typically used to describe the cultural florescence in northern African-American life in the 1920s, particularly that which was based in the Harlem neighborhood of New York City.<sup>167</sup> Though Harlem did not have the largest black population in the North, its closeness to the cosmopolitan power of lower Manhattan and the fact that it had such a heavy concentration of not just common African Americans, but also of African-American artists and writers, help make it the center of black culture by the 1920s. Some argue, however, that the term “Harlem Renaissance” fails to capture not only the geographic breadth and diversity of the African-American cultural florescence in that period—which certainly was not strictly limited to the borders of Harlem—but also its true essence. For these scholars, the terms “Negro Renaissance” or “New Negro Renaissance” are preferable because (in addition to them actually being more common in the 1920s) they do not bound this African-

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<sup>166</sup> Sernett, 3.

<sup>167</sup> The most influential study on the Harlem Renaissance is Nathan I. Huggins, *Harlem Renaissance* (New York: Oxford University Press, [1971] 2007). I have relied on Huggins’ work as the primary guide for my understanding of the period.

American renaissance to one particular city and they stress the principal theme at the heart of the cultural florescence: rethinking the “negro” identity.<sup>168</sup>

After the Southern black ministers had failed to fully “uplift” their people in the late nineteenth century, a number of black intellectuals and leaders began taking a new course of action: explicitly redefining black identity in a way that would transform the mindstates of African Americans and whites to inspire both groups to give black Americans dignity. The “New Negro” became the well-known term used by these leaders; it connoted the ideas that African-Americans were modern people, that they had come from a great and respectable past, and that they deserved equality, respect, and safety. Many of the principal Harlem Renaissance intellectuals were “New Negroes” themselves and they, in accord with this identity, promoted black progress, the study of black history, the connecting with black people all over the world, and the hope that their efforts would lead to the equal treatment of all African Americans.<sup>169</sup>

However, not every black leader during the Harlem Renaissance agreed with this hope of integration with white society. As mentioned above, over the years there had been a number of African Americans who doubted there could ever be true equality for U.S. blacks because white racism was so strong. And a handful had even supported the idea that African Americans should simply leave the U.S. for Africa, their “homeland.” With each passing year since emancipation, white America not only failed to grant

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<sup>168</sup> George Hutchinson, introduction to *Cambridge Companion to the Harlem Renaissance*, ed. George Hutchinson (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 1-2; Jeffrey C. Stewart, “The New Negro as Citizen,” in *Cambridge Companion to the Harlem Renaissance*, ed. George Hutchinson (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 13.

<sup>169</sup> Stewart, “The New Negro as Citizen,” 13-27.

African Americans equality, but was also increasingly more violent towards blacks: the number of lynchings and race riots were still growing in 1920, and in fact the 1920s is sometimes identified as the tail end of the “nadir of race relations” in the U.S. It is little wonder, then, that black resentment towards whites and desire to leave the U.S. was on the rise at the same time as African Americans were developing new modern identities.

No black leader was able to capture the emigration sentiment better than Marcus Garvey. Garvey first stepped foot in New York City in 1916 and soon made Harlem the headquarters of his United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), a black nationalist organization that he had originally formed in his home country, Jamaica, in 1914. A highly charismatic speaker and effective organizer, Garvey, by 1920, had made the UNIA the largest and perhaps the most influential mass movement in the history of African Americans. His rapid and impressive success was primarily due to his ability to, as E. David Cronon expressed it, “put into powerful ringing phrases the secret thoughts of the Negro world,”<sup>170</sup> particularly the idea that “black skin was not a badge of shame but a glorious symbol of national greatness.”<sup>171</sup> African Americans, in other words, were part of large black “nation” that deserved its own land, just like any other nation. Therefore, he argued, African Americans should move “back to Africa” and establish economic and social independence from whites.

In his speeches and in the pages of his newspaper, the *Negro World*, he also urged his audience to obtain “knowledge of yourself,” by which he meant African Americans

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<sup>170</sup> E. David Cronon, *Black Moses: The Story of Marcus Garvey and the United Negro Improvement Association* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), 4.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*

should realize that they have the faculty necessary for understanding all things and therefore the ability to shape their environment and ultimately to “produce all that [they] need... for ... happiness and civilization.”<sup>172</sup> When African Americans know themselves, according to Garvey, they will work together for this cause and identify with impressive black individuals and cultures throughout history.<sup>173</sup> This assertion that African Americans were inherently intelligent and capable and should identify with great black civilizations and figures was a similar strategy to the one used by many of the uplift ministers and the New Negro intellectuals, though for the most part neither of these groups emphasized political nationalism or even complete separation from whites. Garvey’s message, therefore, resonated with those who had been exposed to the other African-American improvement traditions while taking them a step further. He even, more so than the other black-improvement leaders, encouraged dressing in ways that

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<sup>172</sup> In a speech given sometime before 1925, Garvey explains it thus: “May I say something to you to give you a true knowledge of yourself and life, so that the same glory and success obtained by other men who understand themselves may be yours? Man in the full knowledge of himself is a superb and supreme creature of creation. When man becomes possessor of the knowledge of himself, he becomes master of his environment, the captain of his own ship, the director of his own destiny, the accomplisher of his own ends. Man should understand himself because man is full of knowledge and this knowledge is a gift of nature. When Mother Nature created man, she deprived him of nothing. He was given the faculty of understanding all things around him. And this faculty for understanding has not been taken away from him. None of his senses have been taken away from him. So there is no excuse for the black man in lacking the knowledge that man has used to beautify the world and produce all that he needs for his happiness and civilization. Look the world over, and whatever you see in it that is pleasing to man, contributing to man’s comfort, to his needs, and to his satisfaction—it is but the work of man, man blessed with the knowledge of himself and the understanding of all things around him. If you are able to live with the knowledge of yourself and with the greater knowledge of nature, you must know what is good and what is not, you must know what is finite, you must know that which is material, physical, and otherwise is at your disposal to create or otherwise use. ... You must acquire an understanding of yourselves!” See “Marcus Garvey Interview, Mr. Garvey Speaks about His Trial and Persecution,” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T4pTnxobKUs>, accessed December 4, 2012.

<sup>173</sup> E.g., Marcus Garvey, “Hon. Marcus Garvey Warns Negroes against Big Concentrated Effort to Destroy the U.N.I.A.,” *Negro World*, May 9, 1925, 1.

would emphasize African-American distinctness and dignity: leaders in his organization were given Masonry-inspired uniforms that signified the legitimacy of the black “nation.”

During this first third of the twentieth century, interest in developing new black identities was in fact starting to pick up steam generally. With cosmopolitan urban life exposing African Americans to the numerous cultures and ideas of the world and the modern sense of self, African Americans were now more than ever before encountering and negotiating deterritorialization. It was during the Harlem Renaissance, then, that there was a significant rise in black identification with other “nations” throughout the world (particularly those of other colonized peoples)<sup>174</sup> and attempts to change some of their strongest identity markers, such as by joining new religious groups. In fact, 1920s African-American culture witnessed a significant increase in “mystical” religion, black individuals claiming to be prophets or gods on earth, and the taking on of non-traditional and even non-Christian religious identities.<sup>175</sup>

One of the contributing factors to this transformation of religious culture was the failure of the black Church to successfully “uplift” all African Americans, which produced increasing disillusionment with traditional Christianity. Occasionally, then, African Americans began joining (and sometimes forming their own break-off groups of) Jewish communities and many of the newer white religious movements, such as spiritualism, Christian Science, and Theosophy.<sup>176</sup> In some cases, white promoters of

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<sup>174</sup> Michel A. Chaney, “International Contexts of the Negro Renaissance,” in *Cambridge Companion to the Harlem Renaissance*, ed. George Hutchinson (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 41-54.

<sup>175</sup> See Baer.

<sup>176</sup> Baer, 114; Rolf Swenson, “A Metaphysical Rocket in Gotham: The Rise of Christian Science in New York City, 1885-1910,” *Journal of Religion and Society* 12 (2010), available at

alternative religions—such as Lauren William DeLaurence, the owner of a popular mail-order business that sold “mystical” books, and H. Spencer Lewis, who led the Rosicrucian group named the Ancient Mystical Order Rosae Crucis (AMORC)—began intentionally reaching out to African-Americans, who were seen by them as either simply a new market with disposable income or a legitimate population to which to proselytize.<sup>177</sup> It is notable that many of the people who promoted alternative and “mystical” religions to African Americans during this period frequently employed “oriental” themes, such as using robes, veils, turbans, stars and crescents, and Masonic-Egyptian symbols, in their dress and advertisements.<sup>178</sup> These themes were likely used because linking their religions to the tendency in the Western “mystical” tradition to see the “orient” and Islam as being a particularly well-connected to “mystical” truth added an air of authenticity and the sense of dignity that these themes entail.

It was in this context—of religious experimentation, deterritorialization, black nationalism, modern urbanization, the “Negro Renaissance,” a history of black uplift, and

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<http://moses.creighton.edu/JRS/2010/2010-7.html>; "Members Rap Proposal for Colored Scientist Church," *Los Angeles Sentinel*. March 14, 1935, 1; Robert Fikes, Jr., "The Triumph of Robert T. Browne: The Mystery of Space," *Negro Educational Review* 49, no. 1-2 (1998): 3-7; Mitch Horowitz, *Occult America: The Secret History of How Mysticism Shaped Our Nation* (New York: Bantam Books, 2009), 143-146 ;

<sup>177</sup> On DeLaurence, see W.F. Elkins, "William Lauron DeLaurence and Jamaican Folk Religion," *Folklore* 97, no. 2 (1986): 215-218; Carolyn Morrow Long, *Spiritual Merchants: Religion, Magic, and Commerce* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2001), 189-93; Horowitz, 137. As for Lewis, I have found advertisements for his AMORC in African-American newspapers from as early as 1926, and I suspect that they may go back even further; see the AMORC advertisements in the *New York Amsterdam News* in the 1920s.

<sup>178</sup> Horowitz, 128-129; Nance, 144; Curtis, *Islam in Black America*, 52-61; Baer, 22, 86-94; Long.

of a continued search for dignity—that Islam would emerge as a significant player in African-American culture. But before this embrace of Islam could be successful, someone had to start to bring together all four of the major macro-level dynamics that were necessary for Islam to thrive in a Western community.

**The Intersecting of the Four Macro-Level Dynamics: A “slow motion” look  
at Rev. Dr. Prince de Solomon**

It is likely that African-American Islam, in the form that it would appear in the AAIR, can in many ways be traced back to a single figure, a “Dr. Suleiman,” who represents the conjoining of the four major dynamics, a confluence that both foreshadowed and helped shape the AAIR. Very little is known about this man; tracing his activities has proven a rather difficult task as a consequence of the fact that over the years he went by different names and gave somewhat conflicting stories about his background and identity. A recent study,<sup>179</sup> however, has laid out strong circumstantial evidence to show that prior to the 1920s this “Dr. Suleiman” was known as Dr. Prince de Solomon and possibly Rev. Doctor P.D. Solomon. All three of these rather rare names can be traced back to individuals who all shared a number of traits: A) all lived in the Mid-Atlantic region in the early twentieth century; B) all claimed to have been black African immigrants from Egypt, and Rev. P.D. Solomon and Dr. Suleiman claimed specifically to have originally been from the Sudan (which was part of Egypt at the time); C) all claimed to be religious officials (e.g., reverend, minister, etc.); D) all claimed to be “doctors” of some sort; E) it appears that all claimed to have mysterious, secret

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<sup>179</sup> Bowen, “Abdul Hamid Suleiman.”

knowledge about religion and Africa; F) all claimed the title or name of “prince”; and G) all claimed some ties to Islam. Given this evidence, while it cannot be said with absolute certainty, there is very good reason to believe that all three names were used by a single individual. This final section of this chapter, building off of the work in the previously mentioned study, traces the known activities of “Rev. Dr. Prince de Solomon” before the AAIR began. His actions and the themes he employed in his self-promotion reveal, if nothing else, that the four macro-level dynamics discussed in this chapter were already starting to come together by the early twentieth century.

In December 1905, a black man going by the name of Rev. P.D. Solomon, D.D., L.L.D. (Doctor of Divinity, Doctor of Laws)<sup>180</sup> appeared in Washington, D.C. where he was attempting to encourage the U.S. government to establish a program to enable all African Americans to move to near the Niger River in West Africa.<sup>181</sup> There, he hoped, African Americans “could form a colony of their own, govern themselves, and live together as a tribe or nation.”<sup>182</sup> He reportedly had a meeting with Senator John T. Morgan and desired to discuss the issue with President Theodore Roosevelt. Apparently impressing the local African-American community, he was appointed as a representative

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<sup>180</sup> In most newspaper accounts from the period, Solomon’s claimed doctorates (the D.D., L.L.D.) are not listed. However, they do appear in the description of him in Colored Baptist Convention of the State of Maryland, *Minutes of the Ninth Session of the Colored Baptist Convention of the State of Maryland Held with the Union Baptist Church Baltimore, MD., Wednesday, Thursday & Friday June 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup>, 1906* (Baltimore: The “Owl” Print, 1906), 14.

<sup>181</sup> “Exodus to Africa Plea of Colored Minister,” *Washington Times*, December 17, 1905, 4; “Washington,” *The Appeal*, December 23, 1905, 2; “Send the Black Back to Africa,” *Duluth News-Tribune*, December 27, 1905, 2.

<sup>182</sup> “Exodus to Africa.”

of Rev. Simon P.W. Drew's National Negro Baptist Evangelical Convention<sup>183</sup> and he made a number of speeches for various black Christian congregations.<sup>184</sup> In June 1906, at Maryland's annual Colored Baptist Convention, after giving two well-received speeches, he sold several books of unknown content to the Convention's interested attendees.<sup>185</sup> Solomon, who boasted he could speak "twenty-two languages and dialects of Northern Africa, Asia, and Europe," also entertained his black audiences with biblical analysis, various hymns (including one in an unknown African language), and "details about the mysteries of 'Darkest Africa.'"<sup>186</sup>

Though Solomon's message and stories were probably what most interested his audiences, the background he claimed likely also aroused the curiosity of many. Solomon, first of all, told listeners that he was a prince of the "Madingo" tribe (presumably the Malinke, or, more commonly, the Mandinka or Mandingo) and was originally from the Sudan, though the last place he had resided in Africa was in Alexandria, Egypt.<sup>187</sup> "Prince Solomon," as one newspaper called him, also claimed British ties, saying he was in the U.S. "at the instigation of England ... [whence he had] a

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<sup>183</sup> "Knows Many Languages," *Washington Post*, December 23, 1905, 12. On Rev. Simon P.W. Drew (who was definitely not the same person as Drew Ali), see A.B. Caldwell, ed., *History of the American Negro, Washington, D.C. Edition, Vol. VI* (Atlanta: A.B. Caldwell Publishing Co., 1922), 67-70, available online through the African American Biographical Database. I would like to thank Martha Davidson, who has written about some of Rev. Drew's activities, for her assistance in helping me find information about the man.

<sup>184</sup> "Knows Many Languages"; "Sunday Services in the Churches," *Washington Post*, December 23, 1905, B4; "Items on the Wing," *Washington Bee*, January 13, 1906, 5.

<sup>185</sup> "Colored Baptists," *The Sun* (Baltimore), June 10, 1906, 7; Colored Baptist Convention of the State of Maryland, 11, 14.

<sup>186</sup> "Knows Many Languages"; "Exodus to Africa."

<sup>187</sup> While the Malinke have traditionally been primarily located in West Africa, some Malinke have lived in the western region of what is today recognized as the Sudanese state.

number of letters and credentials.”<sup>188</sup> In addition, he asserted that he had come from a very unique religious background. Born a Muslim and trained as a “priest” (presumably a scholar, jurist, or Sufi sheikh), he then converted to Judaism and, for fifteen years, served as a rabbi. Finally, he converted to Christianity after discussing religious issues with an American missionary.

After his 1905/1906 appearance, there is no trace of Solomon until, perhaps, 1908 when it was reported that “[a] colored man who called himself ‘Prince Solomon’” was working as a “doctor” in Philadelphia. This Prince Solomon, who claimed to have learned how to practice medicine in Egypt, was convicted for using false pretenses and practicing medicine without a license after selling as medicine a concoction of gin, water, and various roots.<sup>189</sup>

It appears that by 1909/1910, Solomon, probably in an attempt to avoid further legal trouble, had left Pennsylvania and was residing in New York City. In the 1910 census a Prince De Salomon or De Solomon—who may have gone as P.D. Solomon—is listed as a lodger at a building in the twelfth ward of Manhattan. Here he is described as a single, forty-six-year-old black African who had immigrated in 1908; he was literate in English and in the column titled “occupation” is written the phrase “own income.”<sup>190</sup> In October 1909, “Dr.” Prince de Solomon, along with a Rev. R.R. Mont and a Rev. Robert Passley, spoke at a New York City political meeting held at a place called the

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<sup>188</sup> “Exodus to Africa.”

<sup>189</sup> “‘Prince Solomon’ Goes to Jail,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 18, 1908, 5.

<sup>190</sup> Ancestry.com, “1910 United States Federal Census” [database on-line], Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2006, (accessed August 6, 2011).

“Clubhouse.”<sup>191</sup> Then, on February 3, 1910, the Dr. Prince de Solomon and a Rev. Robert B. Mount (perhaps the same person as Rev. R.R. Mont?) incorporated an African-American Masonic lodge by the name of Mecca Medina Temple of Ancient Free and Operative Masons.<sup>192</sup> On February 20, a news brief indicated that a Henry Ratteray of Long Island City was made the director of the organization.<sup>193</sup> There is almost no information about de Solomon’s co-leaders: I have not been able to identify Henry Ratteray and, while there are a few newspaper references to a Robert B. Mount, none indicate any Masonic ties or other helpful clues.

The appearance of this group, however, is very interesting. First of all, its references to the Islamic world are reflective of P.D. Solomon’s claimed religious background. And it is notable that after this point there are few reports about an African “Reverend” Solomon in the U.S.—from then on the references are mostly to a “Doctor” and “Prince” Solomon. P.D. Solomon, it seems, was perhaps slowly shedding his Christian identity.

But the title of this organization also reflects Masonry’s interest in Islam at the time. It is therefore also possible that the Mecca Medina Temple was a Shriner-like group. The African-American Shriner movement was founded in Chicago by John G.

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<sup>191</sup> “Political Meetings,” *Evening Post* (New York), October 28, 1909, 7. Rev. Passley would make the news again in 1912 when it was reported that the reverend, who was the pastor of the Zion Methodist Church at 134<sup>th</sup> St. and 5<sup>th</sup> Ave., was arrested after it was learned that he was promising inmates in a local prison that, for a fee, he could free them by influencing the courts. “Charge Pastor with Graft,” *New York Herald*, March 13, 1912, 6; “Arrest Pastor in Tombs on Graft Charge,” *Evening Telegram*, March 12, 1912, 7; “Preacher Arrested for Fraud,” *Daily People*, March 13, 1912, 2.

<sup>192</sup> “Negro Free Masons,” *The Sun* (New York), February 4, 1910, 2; “Negro Free Masons Incorporate,” *New Brunswick Times*, February 4, 1910, 2.

<sup>193</sup> “Long Island Directors,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, February 20, 1910, 2. In Bowen, “Abdul Hamid Suleiman,” Ratteray’s name is mistakenly written as “Ratleray.”

Jones in 1893 and had been an immediate success.<sup>194</sup> Jones himself was a frequent creator of break-off Masonic organizations, and the black Shrine, which borrowed most of its rituals and regalia from its white counterpart, was just another one of his Masonic schemes. Organizing fraternal orders, particularly for African Americans, was an appealing route for individuals who wanted to make a profit off of member dues and other charges. Because of this, once it was recognized that the black Shriner orders were relatively popular, a number of men started their own competing black Shriner groups.<sup>195</sup> De Solomon's Mecca Medina Temple may have simply been one more break-off designed to capitalize on the popularity of the black Shriner movement.

Some scholars have tried to suggest that Islam had a special importance for African-American Freemasons by pointing to the history of Muslims and Islam involved in their organization.<sup>196</sup> This involvement, however, did not mean that Islam was put to the forefront in a serious way. For instance, Jones and later black Shriners, like their white counterparts, insisted that African-American Shriners were not Muslims, but were simply inspired by Islamic themes.<sup>197</sup> If De Solomon's group, however, was promoting conversion to Islam, particularly if that idea was combined with his earlier position that

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<sup>194</sup> The most authoritative and complete account of the black Shriners remains Joseph A. Walkes, Jr., *History of the Shrine: Ancient Egyptian Arabic Order Nobles of the Mystic Shrine, Inc. (Prince Hall Affiliated) A Pillar of Black Society, 1893-1993* (Detroit: Ancient Egyptian Arabic Order Nobles of the Mystic Shrine of North and South America and Its Jurisdictions, Inc. (P.H.A.), 1993).

<sup>195</sup> Walkes, 49-55.

<sup>196</sup> E.g., Robert Dannin, *Black Pilgrimage to Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 18-25.

<sup>197</sup> See Jones's *The Secret Ritual of the Secret Work of the Ancient Arabic Order of Nobles of the Mystic Shrine* (Washington, D.C.: The Imperial Grand Council of the Ancient Arabic Order of Nobles of the Mystic Shrine, 1914), 8. Most of Jones's ritual book, including the section discussing the fact that Shriners were Christians, was borrowed word-for-word from a white Shriner ritual book. Also see "Shriners Reject Alleged Fake African Envoy," *Afro-American*, September 15, 1922, 4.

African Americans should move to Africa, it certainly would have been uniquely attractive for those entertaining new conceptions of the African-American identity and mission.

But it does not seem that the Mecca Medina Temple was successful. After its incorporation, De Solomon appears in newspapers only intermittently for the next ten years. A 1913 news brief indicates that Prince De Solomon was being arraigned on a complaint from his wife, Lulu, who said he had threatened to murder her. Lulu insisted that she would not return to their home if she knew her husband was not in jail, so De Solomon promised to authorities that he would stay away from her.<sup>198</sup> In 1915, a “Prof. P. De Solomon”—who claimed, like Rev. Dr. P.D. Solomon, that he was Sudanese and could speak around twenty-one languages—was in Pennsylvania where he spoke in front of a spiritualist mediums organization.<sup>199</sup> Then, in 1916, “Rev. Solomon, a prince from Egypt” gave a lecture at a black church in Bridgeton, New Jersey.<sup>200</sup>

The last known appearance of an African Prince Solomon in the U.S. comes in 1920. The census from that year (recorded in January) lists a Dr. Prince D. Solomon, a single, black, fifty-year-old Arabic-speaking Egyptian. His profession is listed as “minister” and he was residing as a boarder in the town of Mercer, Pennsylvania.<sup>201</sup> That July, in Youngstown, Ohio, just thirty miles away from Mercer, a Mecca Medina Temple

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<sup>198</sup> “Threatened His Wife,” *Poughkeepsie New York Daily Eagle*, February [25?], 1913, [8?].

<sup>199</sup> N.C. Johns, “Spiritualism,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, May 15, 1915, 2.

<sup>200</sup> “A.M.E.,” *Bridgeton Evening News*, May 27, 1916, 4.

<sup>201</sup> Ancestry.com, “1920 United States Federal Census” [database on-line], Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2006, (accessed August 6, 2011).

of A.F. & A.M. filed for incorporation.<sup>202</sup> While this organization had a slightly different name than the one used by De Solomon’s 1910 group in New York (instead of “Ancient Free and Operative Masons,” it was A.F. & A.M., which stood for “Ancient Free and *Accepted* Masons”—which was a more common Freemasonic organization title), the similarity between the two names is still suggestive.

Despite 1920 being the last known appearance of the African “Doctor” or “Prince” Solomon, it was not the last known mention of a Mecca Medina Temple. Nor was it the last appearance of a man with many of Solomon’s traits and titles. In fact, a “Doctor” “Prince” *Suleiman*, a self-professed Muslim Mason and occultist from Egypt and the Sudan, would eventually be claiming to have at one point personally incorporated in New York City a Mecca Medina Temple of Ancient Free and Operative Masons. This “Dr. Suleiman”—who was almost certainly the same person as Rev. Dr. P.D. Solomon, Prince Solomon, and Dr. Prince De Solomon—would become a key player in the early years of the AAIR.

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<sup>202</sup> Ohio Secretary of State, *Annual Report of the Secretary of State to the Governor and General Assembly of the State of Ohio*, compiled by Harvey C. Smith (Springfield, OH: Kelly-Springfield Printing Company, 1921), 41.

### **Chapter Three: The Birth of the AAIR, 1920-1925**

In most histories of African-American Islam, New York City plays a rather small role prior to Malcolm X's arrival in Harlem in 1954. The major early African-American-majority Islamic groups in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s—the Ahmadiyya Movement, the Moorish Science Temple, and the Nation of Islam—were primarily concentrated in the northern Midwest, specifically Chicago and Detroit. While there has been some recognition of early manifestations of African-American Islam in the five boroughs, New York City has largely been seen as a minor outpost. But now that I have established the importance of De Solomon/Suleiman—the figure discussed at the end of chapter 2, who had come to New York City at least as early as 1909 and would live there for most of the 1920s—there is now a strong connection between the city and the early Islamic Renaissance.

As it turns out, from 1920 to 1925 Islamic themes and identities flourished among African Americans in New York City, particularly in Harlem. While early 1920s Chicago would have a greater number of African Americans who formally converted to Islam, there were probably more African-American sympathizers of Islam in New York City during that period. Plus, almost all of the African-American Muslims in early 1920s Chicago were connected to a single form of Islam, the Ahmadiyya sect, while New York City had a much greater variety of manifestations of Islam, many of which would go on to appear throughout the AAIR, significantly contributing to the period's Islamic

diversity. But what most makes early 1920s New York City important for the AAIR is that it was largely through the impact of Harlem—which, at the time, was known as the “capital of the Black world”<sup>203</sup>—and one of its most influential organizations, the United Negro Improvement Association, on the rest of the U.S.’s African Americans that Islam came to be seen as a legitimate and authentic symbol for them. As will be demonstrated, the impact of Harlem and its UNIA on the AAIR was significant enough that it puts in a new light the neighborhood’s famous epithet from the Harlem Renaissance: “Mecca of the New Negro.”<sup>204</sup>

### **1920-1921: Beginnings**

During the summer of 1920, a dark-skinned man wearing a black robe and green turban walked along the streets of New York City handing out large cards containing, on one side, his photograph and, on the other, a condensed lesson in basic Islamic principles.<sup>205</sup> His name was Mufti Muhammad Sadiq, and he was a missionary for an Indian Islamic sect known as the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam. Sadiq had arrived in New York several months earlier, but had been detained by immigration officials for seven weeks while he tried to convince them that Islam—contrary to what they believed and what the U.S. had officially outlawed—does not require polygamy. Upon his release in April, Sadiq set up an office on Madison Avenue where he stayed until he relocated to

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<sup>203</sup> On Harlem’s influence over broader African-American culture during that period, see Huggins, 13-18.

<sup>204</sup> This phrase was coined and popularized on the cover the March 1925 issue of *Survey Graphic*, edited by Alain Locke.

<sup>205</sup> This description is given in M[uhammad] Yusof [sic] Khan, “Some of our Missionaries,” *Muslim Sunrise* 42, no. 4 (1975): 14.

Chicago in the following October.<sup>206</sup> Sadiq was an educated, articulate, and tireless promoter of Islam: he published a magazine, talked to people in the street, and was constantly giving lectures and sending out hundreds of letters to various individuals and groups throughout the country.

At first, Sadiq, who also promoted Islamic unity among the U.S.'s many immigrant Muslim communities, focused his proselytization efforts on whites, but, after both frequently experiencing religious rejection from the white community and enduring much racism himself, he began to direct his efforts towards African Americans. Similar to Barakatullah, Sadiq insisted that, unlike in Christianity, there was no racism in Islam, and that it promoted equality and peace for all people. The Ahmadi sect had also been influenced by the mystical tradition in Islam, Sufism,<sup>207</sup> and so Sadiq highlighted “mystical” religious views,<sup>208</sup> which may have appealed to the converts attracted to his Oriental mystique. Sadiq bestowed upon his new converts Muslim names, taught them Islamic principles and Arabic, and encouraged wearing Islamic-style clothing—all things that would help give his followers new identities that were not associated with African-American culture. For the converts, this produced pride in a new self-image, and in some cases whites treated black Americans who appeared to be Muslim better than they treated other African Americans.

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<sup>206</sup> Turner, 116-18. For several months in 1921, Sadiq moved to the Muslim community near Detroit. During this period, an African-American Ahmadi convert, Bro. Yaqub, was actively promoting Islam in Chicago and persuaded Sadiq to return there; see Khan, “Some of our Missionaries,” 14.

<sup>207</sup> See Yohanan Friedmann, *Prophecy Continuous: Aspects of Ahmadi Religious Thought and its Medieval Background* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).

<sup>208</sup> Sadiq occasionally noted in his magazine spiritualistic and esoteric events or doctrines.

Sadiq's presentation of Islam was apparently very attractive. He was probably the most successful Muslim proselytizer in the U.S. before 1925, converting around 700 people, mostly African-American, before returning to India in late 1923.<sup>209</sup> Little is known about what took place in the New York City Ahmadi community in the 1920s, but when Sadiq departed from the city in the fall of 1920, he left the converts in charge.<sup>210</sup> In 1927 it was reported that the New York group had around 125 members, and was being led by a black Muslim.<sup>211</sup>

Sadiq, however, was not the only Muslim in New York City in the early 1920s. By this time, the city was home to probably one or two thousand Muslims immigrants.<sup>212</sup> Like the Muslim immigrants throughout the U.S., though most of them were Sunni, they represented very diverse backgrounds, in terms of both ethnicity and religious beliefs and practices that were specific to their homelands. A few mosques had been established by this point, but New York's Muslims had not completely settled into ethnic and sectarian enclaves, and intermingling with each other and outsiders was still common.<sup>213</sup> In fact, many non-Muslims were not only welcomed into the community, but were, in some

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<sup>209</sup> "New Converts," *Moslem Sunrise* 2, no. 2&3 (1923): 191; "Dr. Sadiq," *Moslem Sunrise* [2], no. 4 (1923): 268.

<sup>210</sup> *Moslem Sunrise* 1 (October 1921): 36.

<sup>211</sup> A.T. Hoffert, "Moslem Propaganda," *The Messenger* 9 (May 1927): 141.

<sup>212</sup> Unfortunately, estimates from the period vary widely, from as little as 500 to as many as 18,000. In 1926, one observer estimated there to be around 900 Muslims in Yonkers alone. But a few estimates from the 1940s and 1950s place the number in New York City only at a few thousand. See H.J. Katibah, "Moslems of City Celebrating Pious Feast of Ramazan," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, April 18, 1926, 10C; Mary Caroline Holmes, "Islam in America," *Moslem World* 16 (1926): 265; "Moslems Observe Bairam Fete Here" *New York Times* May 10, 1930, 6; "First U.S. Moslem Mosque Planned," *Binghamton Press* (New York), June 6, 1933, 17; "Arab-World in New York," *Moslem World* 37 (1947): 81; "U.S. Tour Shows Ties of 2 Faiths," *New York Times*, April 5, 1956, 34.

<sup>213</sup> See, e.g., "Moslems Observe"; Katibah.

cases, proselytized to.<sup>214</sup> For instance, Sheikh Salih Ahmad Al-Kateeb, an imam from Jerusalem who led the mosque at 65 Washington Street, printed and distributed an English-language tract entitled “What is Islam?”<sup>215</sup> And in 1926, it was reported that a Muslim from Madagascar was the “missionary in charge” of New York’s Muslim activity and had been “working solely among the Negroes in Harlem, but ha[d] not succeeded in making converts to any extent, and thus far has been unable to open a mosque.”<sup>216</sup>

Despite the latter missionary’s failure, however, New York’s African Americans were definitely becoming more familiar with the Muslim immigrants at this time, particularly African ones. In one case, a Tunisian Muslim, one Mohammed Ali, had been promoting Islam in the U.S. since the 1890s and in 1924 married Fanny Wise, an African-American actress from New York.<sup>217</sup> Probably the most famous black Muslim in New York City in the early 1920s, however, was the Senegalese “Battling” Siki, an international boxing star living in New York.<sup>218</sup> His success in the ring against white fighters made Siki the pride of Harlem; one could frequently find him in the pages of both the *New York Times* and Garvey’s *Negro World* newspaper. Though a heavy drinker and somewhat disillusioned with religion, Siki’s Muslim roots were often mentioned in the press and he maintained contact with New York’s small Senegalese Muslim

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<sup>214</sup> E.g., see Samuel Zwemer, “Mohammedan Missionary Methods” *Methodist Review* 114 (1931): 370.

<sup>215</sup> Katibah; “Islam in New York City,” *Moslem World* 17 (1927): 199.

<sup>216</sup> Holmes, 265. It is possible that Holmes had incorrect information about this missionary’s homeland and that he was a person known to historical record, such as Satti Majid.

<sup>217</sup> “Actress Returns as Moslem Wife,” *New York Amsterdam News*, March 19, 1930, 9.

<sup>218</sup> See Peter Benson, *Battling Siki: A Tale of Ring Fixes, Race, and Murder in the 1920s* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2006).

community. Upon his death in 1925, newspapers reported that six Senegalese Muslims conducted an Islamic funeral for him immediately before he was given, at the insistence of his wife, a Christian service by Rev. Clayton Powell at Harlem's Abyssinian Baptist Church.<sup>219</sup>

There was in fact a growing African Muslim immigrant community in New York City, and its existence made it more likely that African Americans would have contact with African Muslims. Claude McKay, a well-known Harlem Renaissance writer, at one time met a Senegalese man who had, in the years following World War I, run a boarding house for various black Muslims in the city.<sup>220</sup> Somalis, in particular, probably had significant contact with African Americans, who reportedly admired the Somalis for their lack of sense of racial inferiority.<sup>221</sup> At the time, many of the city's Somalis—who were generally indigent sailors who had abandoned the British ships on which they had been employed—were coalescing around a figure named Satti Majid, a Sudanese Muslim missionary who was most likely beginning to meet some African Americans, though this cannot yet be said with certainty for the *early* 1920s, as will be discussed in chapter 6.

Another location of contact between African Americans and Muslims in early 1920s New York City was in Marcus Garvey's incredibly influential Harlem-based

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<sup>219</sup> "Hold Services for Slain Boxer," *Chicago Defender* (City ed.), December 26, 1925, 1; "2 Bullets in Back End Siki's Battles," *New York World*, December 16, 1925, 4.

<sup>220</sup> Claude McKay, *A Long Way from Home* (Piscataway: Rutgers University Press, 2007), 213-214.

<sup>221</sup> Ras Makkonnen, *Pan-Africanism from within*, ed. Kenneth King (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 75-76.

United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). By the beginning of the 1920s, worldwide the UNIA had probably over 80,000 official members and 100,000 non-registered believers; and its newspaper, the *Negro World*, had a circulation of at least 50,000.<sup>222</sup> New York City was particularly important for the UNIA at the time, not only because it was the site of the headquarters of the group, but also because, with its 30,000 Garveyites, it was the city in which Garvey had his largest following.<sup>223</sup> Indeed, in the early 1920s, New York's UNIA probably had more members than any other local African-American organization, making it the most influential African-American movement in the most influential city in African-American culture.

In the early 1920s, among the several thousand New Yorker Garveyites were a number of, what one researcher has called, "glorifiers of Mohammedanism."<sup>224</sup> Little is known about who exactly these individuals were, though they were most likely a very mixed group. Garvey's organization, first of all, was known to occasionally have some contact with immigrant and diplomat Muslims from the Middle East and South Asia.<sup>225</sup> There is also reason to think that some of these "glorifiers" were Caribbean immigrants; the UNIA disproportionately attracted Caribbean émigrés and the Caribbean, compared

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<sup>222</sup> Cronon, 45, 205. For a discussion of the estimates of the UNIA size during this period, see Cronon, 204-207.

<sup>223</sup> Cronon, 206.

<sup>224</sup> Edward Wolf, "Negro 'Jews': A Social Study," *Jewish Social Service Quarterly* 9 (June 1933): 317.

<sup>225</sup> E.g., "Big U.N.I.A. Meeting at Masonic Hall, Springfield, Ill.," *Negro World*, October 29, 1921, 3; "The Persian Consul," *Negro World*, September 19, 1922, 2. It is noteworthy that the Persian noted in the latter article, H.H. Topakyan, the Consul-General of Persia, had been affiliated with black nationalist groups at least as early as 1919, when he was associated with R.D. Jonas' League of Darker People; see *Magazine of the Darker Peoples of the World* [1] ([1919]), 3 (a copy of this magazine is contained in the *Correspondence of the Military Intelligence Division Relating to "Negro Subversion," 1917-1941* (Washington, D.C.: National Archives, 1986), microfilm project number M1440).

to the U.S., may have maintained a slightly stronger Islamic religious sense among the descendants of the enslaved.<sup>226</sup> It is possible, too, that some of these “glorifiers” were not born into Muslim families but rather appropriated the symbols of Islam because Garvey welcomed as members black, or at least dark-skinned, people who could lend his movement an exotic flare, and these individuals may have exploited this bias by claiming to be Muslim and wearing turbans, fezzes, and robes.

Nonetheless, the most influential “glorifiers of Mohammedanism” in the UNIA were the leading figures in the movement, including Garvey himself, who had been influenced by the work of Edward Wilmot Blyden, perhaps the most influential nineteenth-century champion of Africans and African-descended people. Blyden was one of the first major figures writing in English to endorse the idea that Islam, particularly compared to the Christianity practiced by whites, lacked racism and that it had been a boon to Africans because it promoted intellectual, social, economic, and religious development.<sup>227</sup> Since he ultimately believed that Christianity was still a superior religion, he did not recommend conversion to Islam for African Americans,<sup>228</sup> but Blyden was nevertheless popular among Muslim audiences and his work was promoted by the Liverpool Muslim converts who, from 1893 to 1908, frequently published pieces by and about Blyden and regularly criticized the U.S. treatment of blacks in their weekly

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<sup>226</sup> Gomez, 45-90; John O. Voll, “Muslims in the Caribbean: Ethnic Sojourners and Citizens,” in *Muslim Minorities in the West*, eds. Yvonne Haddad and Jane Smith (Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 2002), 267.

<sup>227</sup> See Hollis Ralph Lynch, *Edward Wilmot Blyden: Pan-Negro Patriot 1832-1912* (London; New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), 67-78 and Edward Wilmot Blyden, *Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race* (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press, 1967).

<sup>228</sup> Blyden believed that African Americans were blessed to have been given Christianity, even though it had been through slavery; see Lynch, 71, 79-80.

magazine that was distributed in the U.S.<sup>229</sup> Garvey, who had read Blyden's *Christianity, Islam, and the Negro Race*, referenced Islam and Muslims in his UNIA work, but, as he desired to keep the UNIA non-sectarian, like Blyden he did not endorse Islam as a religion that African Americans should embrace, and still favored Christianity.<sup>230</sup>

John E. Bruce, the man who helped Garvey establish himself in New York City and who was one of the leading members of the UNIA, had in fact been a long-time close friend of Blyden.<sup>231</sup> An ambitious race-conscious journalist and historian, Bruce had met Blyden in 1880 when both were working for the American Colonization Society. Although Blyden was twenty-four years Bruce's senior, the two shared a deep passion for Pan-Africanism and black independence, both were dark-skinned men suspicious of mulattoes, both placed great importance on African history, and both believed that black people should reject "old time religion" and attempt to insert pragmatism into their religious life. Bruce even repeated to UNIA members the popular idea endorsed by

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<sup>229</sup> See copies of the *Crescent*. It is noteworthy that Blyden may have been mentioned more times in the *Crescent* than almost any other contemporary figure; only the Liverpool Muslims' leader, Abdullah Quilliam, and Abdul Hamid II, the Ottoman ruler, were discussed more frequently. Despite the magazine being sold in the U.S., it is highly unlikely that the *Crescent* was influencing African Americans; we have no proof that African Americans had been reading the *Crescent* and the magazine's primary audience was the group of educated middle-class white Muslims and Muslim sympathizers who were associated with Webb—while these people were certainly progressive in terms of their views on race, they were not known to associate with African Americans. It is also unlikely that Dusé Mohamed Ali, a British Muslim who would in the 1920s have an impact on African Americans, had read the *Crescent* during its run—his biographer, Duffield, notes that Dusé was somewhat agnostic or at least uncertain about religion prior to the 1910s.

<sup>230</sup> See Robert A. Hill, ed., *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers*, 11 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), *passim*; Curtis, *Islam in Black America*, 51.

<sup>231</sup> On Bruce, see Ralph L. Crowder, *John Edward Bruce: The Legacy of a Politician, Journalist, and Self-Trained Historian of the African Diaspora* (New York: NYU Press, 2004).

Blyden that Islam lacked racism. But, like Blyden and Garvey, he does not appear to have endorsed Islam outright.<sup>232</sup>

Towards the end of 1921, however, another figure connected to the UNIA would do just that. Dusé Mohamed Ali,<sup>233</sup> a British Muslim of Egyptian-Sudanese descent, arrived in the U.S. in October with the intention of establishing Pan-African banking and trading companies.<sup>234</sup> Dusé had originally made a name for himself as a Pan-Africanist with his *In the Land of the Pharaohs* (1911), a nationalist history of Egypt.<sup>235</sup> He then created the Pan-Africanist periodical *African Times and Orient Review*, for which Bruce (a close friend) contributed articles and Garvey worked while he lived in London in 1913. Through his writings, editing, and work with Muslim organizations in London, Dusé, who had probably long been familiar with Blyden's work, was the first notable person to go beyond Blyden's endorsement of Islam for *Africans in Africa alone*, and instead connect the struggles of *black people throughout the world* with those of *all Muslims and Asians*.<sup>236</sup> His coming to the U.S., then, was a significant event for the history of the AAIR. Within a month after arriving, he began lecturing both on the African-American intellectuals' circuit and to UNIA audiences. Because of his reputation and international connections, as well as his publishing and activist experience, by early 1922 Garvey had

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<sup>232</sup> Curtis, *Islam in Black America*, 51; Crowder, 13-15.

<sup>233</sup> The best source on Dusé's life remains Ian Duffield, "Dusé Mohamed Ali and the Development of Pan-Africanism 1866-1945" (PhD diss., Edinburgh University, 1971).

<sup>234</sup> "Arrived on the Steamship Celtic," *Afro-American*, October 21, 1921, 1; "Dusé Mohammed Ali," *The Times* (Batavia, NY), November 5, 1921, 9. See also Duffield, 650 n. 1.

<sup>235</sup> *In the Land of the Pharaohs* was largely a paraphrased plagiarization of three other books.

<sup>236</sup> Duffield, 422-426, 516-528.

made Dusé a regular contributor to the *Negro World* and head of the UNIA's African Affairs department.<sup>237</sup> Through these positions in Garvey's movement, Dusé was able to increase the amount of attention the UNIA—and through it African-American culture generally—would give to Muslims. Dusé's joining the UNIA, then, was one of the principal factors contributing to the explosion of the UNIA and New York City's interest in Islam—their Islamophilia<sup>238</sup>—between 1922 and 1923.

### **1922-1923: The Peak of Islamophilia in the Harlem Renaissance**

January-April, 1922

In the first half of the 1920s, African-American Islamophilia reached its greatest peak in 1922-1923. In the Midwest, hundreds of black Americans were turning to Islam under Muhammad Sadiq. In New York City, meanwhile, Islam was becoming, more than ever, a hot topic among the Garveyites, and it was successfully attracting converts into both the local Ahmadiyya group and, as will be discussed below, an Islamic organization, the Caananites Temple, which also had a number of converts in nearby Newark. African-American Islamophilia was so strong during these two years that subsequently, after the

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<sup>237</sup> Duffield, 661. In addition to Garvey and Bruce, another leading UNIA member, William H. Ferris, held a great deal of respect for Dusé, which probably further helped Dusé obtain his UNIA position. It is unknown exactly when Dusé began working with the UNIA, but by late November of 1921 he had given a lecture about Africa to a UNIA audience in Harlem (see "Mr. Dusé Mahomet Ali, Famous Egyptian Author and Editor, Gives Instructive Lecture on 'Africa' to Liberty Hall Audience," *Negro World*, December 24, 1921). The earliest *Negro World* article by Dusé that I have been able to identify is from March 25, 1922.

<sup>238</sup> I am using the term Islamophilia here to distinguish an interest in Islam from an interest in a generalized "orient," which is usually referred to as "orientalism." There have been a number of scholarly discussions of African-American orientalism, particularly surrounding the 1920s black nationalists (see especially Bill V. Mullen's *Afro-Orientalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), and while I think this interest in Islam was definitely related to and part of that trend, we do not see a rise in popular African-American groups that claim a vague "oriental" identity—what we see is a tendency to stress "Islam" above all other symbols. The specific interest in Islam, then, needs to be distinguished in the scholarly literature so that we may gain a better understanding about how Islam in particular was used by AAIR-era African Americans.

departure of its main early promoters, Islam could survive as an attractive symbol for African Americans until new leaders were able to give that symbol even greater power.

The wave of relatively intense Islamophilia began in late January 1922, when Garvey gave a speech in which he compared the UNIA's leaders to the founders of Christianity and Islam, Jesus and Muhammad. Garvey's point was that both figures should be models for the UNIA heads and even rank-and-file members, as they had strong faith and, despite making incredible sacrifices and undergoing great difficulties, they endured until their time of triumph. Muhammad was a particularly important model, not only because of Islam's success in spreading across a large region, but, perhaps more importantly, because he had led his followers towards "the great light of liberty."<sup>239</sup>

On March 25, two significant items appeared in that week's *Negro World*. The first was the premiere of Dusé's "Foreign Affairs" column, which was dedicated to news about anti-colonial movements taking place around the world. For the six months that Dusé wrote this weekly column, he, notably, only explicitly identified Muslims on occasion. However, during this period, likely due to Dusé's influence, the *Negro World* saw a rise in the number of news articles discussing anti-colonial or resistance activities in Muslim-majority lands, particularly Turkey and Egypt—a trend that was continued through the next year. The *Negro World* also began, on occasion, printing photographs of Muslims from around the world.<sup>240</sup> Of course, not every reader was fond of Dusé's pro-Muslim influence. Islam received some criticism in the *Negro World* during this

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<sup>239</sup> Hill, *Garvey Papers*, 4: 467.

<sup>240</sup> E.g., "Newly Elected President of the Jahluriyeh Republic of the Riff," *Negro World*, April 29, 1922, 3; "The Second Indian Muslim Deputation," *Negro World*, May 20, 1922, 5.

period,<sup>241</sup> and the Bureau of Investigation (the predecessor to the FBI) found Dusé's presence in the UNIA somewhat troublesome because of his affiliations with various international anti-colonial movements.<sup>242</sup>

The other important piece in the March 25<sup>th</sup> issue was a letter written by Lucius C. Lenan-Lehman or "Luco C. Lenaryi," a self-proclaimed "Mullah, Imam of Islam, Egyptian Soudan."<sup>243</sup> Lucius informed the UNIA that he believed that the organization was "Allah's answer" to colonialism in Africa. At the time of his writing this letter, though, Lucius was living several thousands of miles away from Africa—in California's San Quentin Prison, to be exact. Lucius, who was serving a life sentence for first degree murder, had an extremely questionable past; over the years, while living in southern California, he had several run-ins with the law, and although he probably came from somewhat humble beginnings in the West Indies, he was known to claim many different prestigious backgrounds. In fact, it was only in the early 1900s that Lucius, an extremely intelligent and confident opportunist, started to regularly claim to be a Muslim from Anglo-Egyptian Sudan.<sup>244</sup> At that time, he had connected himself to the religious experimentation of early twentieth-century Los Angeles and used an Egyptian Islamic identity to act as an authority for oriental knowledge. Lucius, therefore, had been a source of Islamic influence for Angelenos—many of whom were probably black—before being

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<sup>241</sup> E.g., Thomas H. Spencer, "Defense of Christianity and Christendom," *Negro World*, October 21, 1922, 5.

<sup>242</sup> See, Hill, *Garvey Papers*, 4: *passim.*, esp. 630.

<sup>243</sup> Lucius C. Lenan-Lehman, "U.N.I.A. Answer to Allah's Prayers—Egyptians," *Negro World*, March 25, 1922, 8. The letter is dated February 27, 1922.

<sup>244</sup> For a more complete account of his life, see Patrick D. Bowen, "'The Colored Genius': Lucius Lehman and the Californian Roots of Modern African-American Islam," *Culture* 8, no. 2 (Spring, 2013).

sent to San Quentin in 1910, and most likely continued to be an influence while incarcerated there.<sup>245</sup>

The significance of Lucius' pro-Garvey Muslim presence in San Quentin will be taken up again at the end of chapter 6, but his 1922 letter is significant in its own right. It, first of all, appears to be the first of only a few clear examples in the *Negro World* of someone *explicitly* combining a commitment to Islam with a commitment to the UNIA. Lucius' letter represents, then, the increasing connection between Islam and the UNIA in the early 1920s. Another reason is that it was published just shortly before a similar connection was made by the UNIA's rival, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). In April 1922, the NAACP announced that it had received a letter from a Sudanese Egyptian who praised the organization's work and desired to become a member.<sup>246</sup> Lucius's letter to the UNIA, then, also marked the beginning of a growing sense of alignment between black Muslims and African-American empowerment organizations *generally*. While there is not enough evidence to determine whether the author of the NAACP letter was Lucius,<sup>247</sup> it is interesting that, like a number of the Muslim figures who have appeared so far, both of the letters' authors claimed a Sudanese-Egyptian background.

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<sup>245</sup> San Quentin's African Americans had become very committed to the UNIA by 1924; see the section on California in chapter 6.

<sup>246</sup> "Egyptians in Sudan Line up with N.A.A.C.P.," *Chicago Whip*, April 15, 1922, 2.

<sup>247</sup> In the news article accompanying the NAACP letter, it is indicated that the letter came from the Sudan or some other part of Egypt—and not San Quentin—but I am not certain that this provenance was accurately reported.

Perhaps not coincidentally, just two weeks after Lucius's letter was printed, another Sudanese-Egyptian Muslim would appear in the pages of the *Negro World*. This time, the man's name was "Dr. Abdul Hamid"; he claimed to be from Khartoum in the Sudan, as well as a "96 degree Mason and a Shriner."<sup>248</sup> Accompanied by his private secretary, one Clarence Kane, Hamid was the guest of honor at a gathering of prominent black Freemasons on April 7<sup>th</sup>. This meeting had made it into the *Negro World* because a number of influential Garveyites were in attendance, and were in fact among the most prominent people at the dinner—John E. Bruce, Dusé Mohamed Ali, and Arthur A. Schomburg, a friend of both Bruce and Dusé. Because of the significance of this meeting, it will be necessary to pause for a moment to go into more detail about these particular Garveyites and the specific connections between them, Freemasonry, the UNIA, and Islam.

#### Freemasonry, the UNIA, and Islam

To begin, it is necessary to clarify to what extent Marcus Garvey and his affiliates were personally involved with Freemasonry. Garvey himself, while he had technically become a Mason, was not a devoted one. For Garvey, Freemasonry and fraternal lodge culture generally were useful because they added to the UNIA an exotic and a prestigious flare. Nathan I. Huggins observes that Garvey employed of Masonic-like regalia, organization, and performances because they offered African Americans tangible and visible evidence that they were truly part of an exiled nation. By doing this, Garvey was

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<sup>248</sup> "Dr. Abdul Hamid of Egypt Guest of Harlem Masons," *Negro World*, April 8, 1922, 2. It should be pointed out that Turner (p. 95) is the first scholar to report about this meeting, but not only are there a few small though crucial errors in his transcription of the news article, Turner also is not aware of who Dr. Abdul Hamid is and the role he would play in the future of African-American Islam.

able to convince African Americans of their own dignity—which is precisely, in Huggins’s opinion, Garvey’s genius. Later, this use of Masonic symbols would be imitated by the emerging African-American Muslim groups.<sup>249</sup>

Garvey also utilized Freemasonry as a model for the UNIA honorary orders, such as the Knights of the Nile. One of the men “knighted” into this order had in fact been the same man responsible for Garvey becoming a Mason: John E. Bruce,<sup>250</sup> the same Bruce who had been both one of Garvey’s staunchest supporters as well as a long-time associate of Blyden and Dusé. This Islam- and Masonry-tinged network of connections—Garvey, Bruce, Blyden, and Dusé (Dusé was not known to be a Freemason, though was in the Order of the Elks)—also included another important black figure from early twentieth-century black New York City, Arthur Alfonso Schomburg.

Bruce had been a Freemason since the late nineteenth century, and it was through his Masonic affiliations that he had met Schomburg, a black nationalist (though mulatto himself) bibliophile originally from Puerto Rico.<sup>251</sup> Schomburg had been a member of New York City’s El Sol de Cuba Lodge, Number 38, which had been established by Cuban and Puerto Rican exiles.<sup>252</sup> Ambitious, he rose through the ranks of the Lodge and in 1911 was elected its Master. By this time, the Lodge’s membership had shifted to be predominantly African-American and West Indian, and Bruce had joined.<sup>253</sup>

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<sup>249</sup> Huggins, 42-43.

<sup>250</sup> Cronon, 69.

<sup>251</sup> Crowder, 115.

<sup>252</sup> Elinor Des Verney Sinnette, *Arthur Alfonso Schomburg, Black Bibliophile & Collector: A Biography* (New York: New York Public Library; Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1988), 26.

<sup>253</sup> *Ibid.*

Sharing many interests, Bruce and Schomburg became close friends and labored for the same causes until Bruce's death in 1924. Schomburg had started the Negro Society for Historical Research, which Bruce was able to bring Dusé into in the 1910s, and he was also, like Dusé and Bruce, familiar with Blyden's work. Both Bruce and Schomburg were very active in Freemasonry: in 1918 Schomburg had become the Grand Secretary of the Grand Lodge of the State of New York and both men edited Masonic journals.<sup>254</sup> In fact, it was Bruce and Schomburg *together* who convinced Garvey to become a Freemason.<sup>255</sup> The two also were staunch defenders of black Freemasonry against white accusations of illegitimacy. It is this last issue, the challenge to the legitimacy of black (i.e., Prince Hall) Freemasonry, that would lead the two men to toy with, even more than they had before, the idea of Islam.

During the 1910s and 1920s, white Masons and Shriners were frequently suing their African-American counterparts with the charge of illegally imitating the white fraternities. Though the courts often found in favor of the African-American groups' right to start their own orders, the possibility that they could lose their fraternal organizations was a major threat for black Americans as these groups were some of their primary sources of insurance and other welfare and social supports, civil society, and race pride. Because of this, individuals and groups offering authentication of the legitimacy of the Masonic and Shriner orders were sometimes brought forth to help defend them.

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<sup>254</sup> *Ibid.*, 26-27. Bruce was the editor of *Masonic Quarterly Review*.

<sup>255</sup> Crowder, 157. Schomburg had been a supporter of Garvey and had even contributed articles to *Negro World*, though he never became an official UNIA member, see Sinnette, 124.

It seems that 1922 was a year during which black Masons and Shriners were particularly motivated to find outside support. In that year, there was a large spike in the number of Masonry-related stories reported in the *Negro World*, probably due to Schomburg and Bruce trying to bolster support for the orders. And, interestingly, that spring, Caesar R. Blake, Jr., the leader of the black Shriners, was expressing support for the Ahmadis, perhaps as a way of trying to entice them to defend the Arab/Islamic origins—and therefore the legitimacy—of the black Shriner organization.<sup>256</sup> Bruce and Schomburg, who had ties to the black Shriners and were knowledgeable about Islam, may have believed that an African Muslim Mason like “Dr. Abdul Hamid” could potentially be a useful resource.

#### Dr. Abdul Hamid Suleiman and the Caananites Temple<sup>257</sup>

With this background in mind, it is understandable why Bruce, Dusé, and Schomburg met with “Dr. Abdul Hamid.”<sup>258</sup> Though the outcome of this April meeting is not known, it seems likely—because Dr. Hamid is not, in any available documents that I have seen, ever again mentioned by the three Garvey affiliates<sup>259</sup>—that Dr. Hamid ultimately had little influence on these particular men. But his failure in April did not

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<sup>256</sup> See Bowen, “Abdul Hamid Suleiman,” 16-17. The Ahmadis, in fact, had probably initiated contact. In the autumn of 1921, Muhammad Sadiq, the popular Ahmadi who had been proselytizing to African Americans, sent out 500 letters to Masonic lodges throughout the country in order to promote Islam (see *Moslem Sunrise* 1 (October 1921): 37). His reasons for doing so are unknown, but because when he first came to the West he was part of the Muslim community in England, it is likely that he had learned about the interest in Masonry among the converts there; see Bowen, “Scientific Religion,” 324.

<sup>257</sup> See Bowen, “Abdul Hamid Suleiman” for a longer discussion and citations of most of the relevant primary sources.

<sup>258</sup> Dusé may have also been brought to authenticate Dr. Abdul Hamid’s claimed Sudanese-Egyptian background.

<sup>259</sup> However, I would encourage researchers who have access to the letters written by Bruce, Schomburg, or Dusé to see if they can find any remarks about their meeting with Suleiman.

mean that he would abandon his efforts at reaching out to black Americans to form a Pan-African fraternal organization. Likely motivated by his ability to arrange such a meeting, by the following August, Dr. Abdul Hamid—now going as Dr. Abdul Hamid Suleiman or Prince Abdul Hamid Suleiman<sup>260</sup> and explicitly identifying his movement as both Islamic and Masonic—was negotiating with Caesar R. Blake, Jr. about bringing the black Shriners into his “Mohammedan Masonry.”<sup>261</sup>

It is highly probable that Dr. Abdul Hamid/Dr. Abdul Hamid Suleiman and Dr. Prince De Solomon/Rev. P.D. Solomon—the man discussed at the end of chapter 2—were one and the same. Not only did they share similar names (Solomon/Suleiman, Abdul Hamid/Abdul Hamid), they also used many of the same distinct titles (“doctor,” “prince,” ninety-six degree Mason) and claimed similar backgrounds (that they were from the Sudan and had been trained as Muslims “priests”).<sup>262</sup> Later, Suleiman even took credit for incorporating in New York a Mecca Medina Temple of Ancient Free and Operative Masons—the exact same name as the group Dr. De Solomon had incorporated. If Solomon/Suleiman had maintained the ideas he promoted in the early 1900s, his 1920s discourse would have also resonated very well with Garvey’s, particularly the idea of moving African-Americans to Africa where they would “form a colony of their own,

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<sup>260</sup> There should be little doubt that “Dr. Abdul Hamid” was the same person as “Abdul Hamid Suleiman.” Both claimed to be 96-degree Masons from Khartoum, both met with black Masons and Shriners in 1922, both were in Harlem in 1922, and, both used the title “Dr.”

<sup>261</sup> See Bowen, “Abdul Hamid Suleiman.” Suleiman also dubiously claimed that he was a key witness to a number of state- and national-level Supreme Court trials involving the legitimacy of African-American Freemasons. In the records that I have seen concerning these court cases, there no mention of any African Freemason or Shriner who had come to testify for either side.

<sup>262</sup> See Bowen, “Abdul Hamid Suleiman.”

govern themselves, and live together as a tribe or nation.”<sup>263</sup> If Solomon/Suleiman was able to successfully make the goals and symbols he promoted seem to be the same as Garvey’s, he could have borrowed the reputation of the UNIA to boost his own credibility.

It seems that Solomon/Suleiman was in fact able do this. By the following summer, the fez-wearing Suleiman had initiated a popular Islamic movement known as the “Caananites” [sic] Temple, which was based primarily in Newark but also reportedly had other chapters, including one in Harlem, where Suleiman lived.<sup>264</sup> He claimed that he was “bringing into closer religious harmony the Negro, Turkish and Syrian Moslems”<sup>265</sup> in the U.S. and stressed “the fact of the absolute equality of races and genuine brotherhood under Mohammedanism, as in opposition to the well-known attitude of white Christians.”<sup>266</sup> Sulieman was, in short, promoting both Pan-Islamic unity, similar to Sadiq and Dusé, as well as the idea, shared by these men and the Garveyites, that Islam had no color line. He was also probably, as indicated by the report of his meeting with UNIA-connected Masons, endorsing a Pan-African identity, particularly one that centered around Egypt and the Sudan. In the other available evidence, while it does not indicate what exactly Suleiman preached, there are several clues that suggest that his “Mohammedan Masonry” ideas were based on doctrines that he himself had invented by

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<sup>263</sup> “Exodus to Africa.”

<sup>264</sup> It is unknown if this was Harlem, the borough in which Suleiman resided, or even if it truly existed at all.

<sup>265</sup> Bowen, “Abdul Hamid Suleiman,” 25.

<sup>266</sup> Bowen, “Abdul Hamid Suleiman,” 2.

combining “mystical” and Islamic elements<sup>267</sup> and he may have—perhaps because he was aware of the interest in Islam promoted by the UNIA—added Garvey-like components to his message.

Suleiman’s movement therefore represented a convergence of most of the different Islamic elements that were gaining popularity in black New York City in the early 1920s, such as immigrant (especially African) Muslims, “mystical” Islam, and, perhaps, Pan-African/black nationalist thought. Indeed, it is highly probable that his success in attracting people in the New York-Newark region was directly attributable to his affiliation with these elements. April 7, 1922 is thus perhaps the date of the birth of the specifically black nationalist-leaning Islamic dynamic that would later gain its greatest prominence with the NOI.

Abdul Hamid Suleiman had gained a following of perhaps a few hundred by the fall of 1923 when he was convicted for the rape of an underage daughter of two members of this group—a charge he consistently denied.<sup>268</sup> What happened to Suleiman’s movement afterwards remains unclear. Today, Moorish Science Temple historians possess what is said to be a copy of an incorporation form, dated May 31, 1924, for “The Canaanite Temple, No. 1, Inc.”<sup>269</sup> However, though this document contains important information about this particular Canaanite Temple, it sheds little light on this group’s

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<sup>267</sup> See Bowen, “Abdul Hamid Suleiman,” *passim*.

<sup>268</sup> Suleiman was arrested in Newark on August 19, 1923 and was bailed out the next day; then on September 26, he was indicted by the Court of Oyer and Terminer and his case was handed down to the Court of Quarter Sessions in Essex County (NJ), which found him guilty; he filed his appeal in June, but on October 24, 1924, the New Jersey Supreme Court affirmed the Court of Quarter Sessions’ decision.

<sup>269</sup> While this document appears to be legitimate, I have not been able to find another version on file with the State of New Jersey.

connection to Suleiman or other figures in the AAIR. This Canaanite Temple, while located in Newark—the same city as Suleiman’s largest following—had its principal offices at a different address than Suleiman’s group. Also, none of the listed incorporator names have ever been identified to have a connection with Suleiman or other Islamic groups. Finally, though the principal purpose of this group was “religious worship and teaching of religion, Moslem of Islam,” none of the incorporators had Muslim names, which was not the case in Suleiman’s group or most other early African-American Islamic organizations.

It is likely that after Suleiman’s imprisonment another man, probably one of Suleiman’s former followers, would soon lead a successful revival of the Pan-Africanist/black nationalist, Pan-Islamic, mystical, Masonry-influenced movement that Suleiman had led. This man, named Noble Drew Ali, would add other elements, which will be discussed shortly, that were present in the early AAIR. Chapter 4 will explore in more depth Drew Ali’s likely connection to Suleiman as well as his own group, which was organized around 1925 in Chicago and would become one of the largest and most influential AAIR organizations: the Moorish Science Temple.

For unknown reasons, Suleiman, as far the evidence shows, did not join up with Drew Ali. He was released from prison by late 1927 and soon after returned to presenting himself as a prominent Freemason and occultist/fortune teller in New York.<sup>270</sup> He would not, it appears, form another successful Islamic organization. After 1934, when Suleiman was probably over eighty years old, there are no more traces of the man.

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<sup>270</sup> Suleiman may have been released as early as 1924, as there is a good possibility that he was the Muslim mystic going as Prof. Du JaJa in 1924 and 1925 (see below).

Islam and the UNIA's Committee for a Scientific Understanding of Religion<sup>271</sup>

August 1922 was an important time in the history of the AAIR. That month, it was reported that in Chicago half a dozen UNIA members had converted to Islam under the Ahmadi proselytizer, Muhammad Sadiq.<sup>272</sup> In Washington, D.C., Abdul Hamid Suleiman was making his first major connection with African-American Freemason and Shriner national leaders, who were holding their convention there from the 6<sup>th</sup> to the 12<sup>th</sup>.<sup>273</sup> In Harlem, meanwhile, the UNIA was hosting its month-long third international convention. On August 10<sup>th</sup>, Duse Mohamed Ali, in front of a large convention audience, made the inspiring but incredibly inaccurate claim that ninety-five per cent of African natives were Muslim.<sup>274</sup>

Then, on August 25<sup>th</sup>, “The Future of Religious Faith and Belief of the Negro” was the UNIA convention’s topic of the day. The goal of the day’s work was for members to consider revising the UNIA constitution’s position on religion. All of the several hundred UNIA delegates were encouraged to participate and soon the “lively and spirited” discussion turned into a debate over which religion was best for African-descended people. A number of clergymen argued for specific Christian denominations, while some delegates endorsed humanistic ideals such as Freethinking and Love, and a number of people suggested that the UNIA should adopt as its religion its own motto—

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<sup>271</sup> This section builds off of the research of Tony Martin in his *Race First*, 74-77.

<sup>272</sup> Roger Didier, “Those Who’re Missionaries to Christians,” *Chicago Defender* (Ntl ed.), August 19, 1922, 5.

<sup>273</sup> “The Sheriff of Mecca,” *Chicago Defender* (Ntl ed.), August 26, 1922, 9.

<sup>274</sup> “Knotty Point for Garvey in African Move,” *The Gleaner* (Kingston, Jamaica), August 21, 1922, 17.

“One Aim, One God, One Destiny.” However, “several” others, as the report of the convention indicates, made the case that, because Islam “was the religion of three-fourths of the people of the Negro race in the world, and as there had been found more Christian minded people among the Mahommedans than among professed Christians, [the UNIA] should seriously consider the adoption of [Islam].”<sup>275</sup>

In the afternoon, Garvey gave his opinion. Though he ignored the question of Islam and explicitly endorsed Christianity, he did not want to take a denominational stance because he felt this would serve to divide African-descended people. Instead, he encouraged “bring[ing]” to the race “a scientific understanding of religion” and suggested that the UNIA form a committee on religion

to confer with the leaders of the different denominations and call a great religious conferences [sic] to discuss the matter with the view to bring them into one great religious institution rather than having them fighting each other as was the tendency at the present time... This committee ... should study the matter from a scientific viewpoint and come back at the next convention with a program by which we could deal with the matter.<sup>276</sup>

“Scientific,” here, was used in the sense of having a critically analytical mind that rejects illogical ideas, and therefore was in keeping with the uplift notion that African Americans are intelligent and modern. A motion was made to form the committee and five men were appointed: three Christian reverends, an attorney, and Arnold J. Ford, a black Israelite from the Caribbean who worked as the UNIA’s choirmaster and bandmaster.

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<sup>275</sup> “Eason Expelled for Disloyalty,” *Negro World*, September 2, 1922, 12.

<sup>276</sup> *Ibid.*

The inclusion of Ford in this committee is significant for the connections he made between Islam and the UNIA. By 1922, Ford had already been influenced by the UNIA's "glorifiers" of Islam,<sup>277</sup> including Dusé and Bruce, with whom he had been in correspondence since at least 1917.<sup>278</sup> As a result of his various Islamic influences, Ford added a number of Arabic words and Islamic phrases into the hymns he wrote for the UNIA in the early 1920s.<sup>279</sup> He incorporated these hymns, as well as other Islamic elements (such as partaking in Ramadan), into two black Israelite groups that he led in the 1920s: the Moorish Zionist Temple and Beth B'nai Abraham, both of which had strong Pan-Africanist/black nationalist identities.<sup>280</sup> Ford, interestingly, was also a member of a number of black Freemasonic lodges that incorporated "oriental" themes during the 1920s, including one in front of which Suleiman had once lectured.<sup>281</sup>

With Ford on the religion committee, then, Islam would not be left out of the UNIA's discussion of religion. And in the fall of 1922, while Abdul Hamid Suleiman was making headlines in New York newspapers for his attempt to convert black Freemasons and Shriners to Islam, and while reports were spreading about an international Islamic convention in which Muslims were considering coordinating their anti-colonial activities with those of black people in the Americas,<sup>282</sup> the UNIA's own newspaper was dealing

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<sup>277</sup> Wolf, "Jews," 317.

<sup>278</sup> Burkett, 178.

<sup>279</sup> See Burkett, 36-37, 178; Arnold J. Ford, *The Universal Ethiopian Hymnal* ([New York]: Beth B'nai Abraham Publishing Co., [1926?]).

<sup>280</sup> James E. Landing, *Black Judaism* (Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 2002), 119-157.

<sup>281</sup> Bowen, "Abdul Hamid Suleiman," 22.

<sup>282</sup> "Musselmen to Hold World Convention," *Chicago Whip*, October 14, 1922, 3.

with Islam and questions of religion more than ever before. In September, the *Negro World* ran summaries of the events from the convention's last weeks, including the religion debate. Despite Dusé's last article for the newspaper appearing on the 9<sup>th</sup>, that month there was also an increase in articles dealing with independence and revolutionary movements in Muslim-majority countries, especially Turkey, and there was a growing sense that a "holy war" between Christians and Muslims was on the horizon.<sup>283</sup> In Garvey's opinion, though, whatever the outcome in Turkey or with freedom movements elsewhere, blacks should not fight blacks, no matter their religion—"The fight of the Negro is not with religion; the fight of the Negro is with political injustice. Those of us who are Christians still believe in the Christ, and those of us who are Mohammedans will stick to the faith of Mohammed, and no one shall divide us."<sup>284</sup>

In the September 30<sup>th</sup> issue of the *Negro World* there were several positive acknowledgements of Islam. Robert L. Poston, the UNIA Secretary-General, openly asked whether blacks should choose "the cross or the crescent."<sup>285</sup> While he was a committed Christian, he understood the grievances of Muslims and the Turks' antipathy towards the "arrogant European." Another column argued that a holy war between Muslims and Christians might in fact lead to greater justice in the world—and therefore

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<sup>283</sup> For example, "The Turkish Volcano," *Negro World*, September 23, 1922, 4; "Turkish Peace Terms Increase Fears of War," *Negro World*, September 23, 1922, 4; H.G. Mudgal, "Foreign Affairs," *Negro World*, September 23, 1922, 4; "Britain's Prestige Hard Hit by Turks, Says A.G. Gardiner," *Negro World*, October 7, 1922, 10; "The Turk Comes Back," *Negro World*, October 7, 1922, 10; Paul Bowerman, "Why You Think the Turk is 'Unspeakable'," *Negro World*, October 14, 1922, [5?].

<sup>284</sup> "Marcus Garvey Sends Message to Negro Peoples of the World on War Crisis," *Negro World*, September 23, 1922, 1.

<sup>285</sup> Robert L. Poston, "The Cross or the Crescent—Which?," *Negro World*, September 30, 1922, 4.

was to be supported.<sup>286</sup> A few pages later, one of Arnold J. Ford's Islam-tinged hymns appeared: "May be our sights proclaim,/ In Yahveh's [sic] sacred Name,/ 'Allah'—One God, One Aim, One Destiny."<sup>287</sup> In November, the newspaper ran a story containing basic information about the Kaaba; foreshadowing the NOI's doctrines, the editors emphasized the fact that the Kaaba was a "black stone," which, they implied, signified an important—perhaps a "mystical"—connection with African-American identity.<sup>288</sup>

The connections between Islam and the UNIA were still increasing through most of 1923. Garvey and the *Negro World* started off the year by taking the position that Moroccans and Algerians—Moors—were in fact "Negroes";<sup>289</sup> by singling out a group of Muslims as black, the UNIA greatly strengthened the likelihood that its followers would identify with Muslims, at least this particular group of black Muslims. In January, Muhammad Sadiq, the Ahmadi missionary, announced that between October and December he had given five speeches at UNIA meetings in Detroit—and had made about forty new converts from among them, including a former Christian minister who was appointed leader of the Detroit Ahmadi congregation.<sup>290</sup> Meanwhile, Abdul Hamid Suleiman had abandoned his efforts to convert black Freemasons and Shriners and had turned his attention to non-Masonic African Americans in Newark and New York City.

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<sup>286</sup> "What a Holy War Might Mean," *Negro World*, September 30, 1922, 4.

<sup>287</sup> Arnold J. Ford, "Potentate's Hymn," *Negro World*, September 30, 1922, 7.

<sup>288</sup> "'Black Stone of Mecca' Held in Great Veneration," *Negro World*, November 25, 1922, 6.

<sup>289</sup> "Are Moroccans and Algerians Negroes?," *Negro World*, January 20, 1923, 1. See also Rev. James M. Webb, "The Moroccans and Algerians are Negroes by Blood," *Negro World*, February 17, 1923, [9?]; Rt. Hon. Thos. W. Anderson, "Something of the Hamite," *Negro World*, May 12, 1923, 6.

<sup>290</sup> "Brief Report of the World in America," *Moslem Sunrise* 2, no. 1 (1923): 167.

In July, several periodicals ran stories about Suleiman's organization, and his intention to build a mosque in Harlem.<sup>291</sup> The idea that African Americans might convert to Islam to improve their position was even being pondered in the public press: the famous white writer and sympathizer of African Americans, H.L. Mencken, thought conversion to Islam might help mobilize Southern blacks so that they could defend themselves against the Ku Klux Klan, while a writer for the *Chicago Defender*, a black newspaper, thought that African Americans were not the group that needed to change their religion and morals—whites were.<sup>292</sup>

The summer of 1923, however, also marked a turning point in the AAIR due to the imprisonment of two key figures. One was Suleiman, who in August was arrested and charged with the rape of the daughter of two members of the Caananites Temple; he would soon be sentenced to serve an eighteen-month prison term. The second figure was Garvey. After being convicted of mail fraud in June and having his appeal denied, Garvey was arrested in July and not released on bail until September 10<sup>th</sup>.

With its leader behind bars and, as a result, internecine conflict in the UNIA increasing, the group felt that it should not hold its annual international conference, typically put on during August. This meant that the committee established to develop a scientific understanding of religion would not have its forum. The exact fate of this committee is not known—there is not even evidence that it had continued to function after the 1922 conference—and it was never again talked about in the pages of the *Negro*

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<sup>291</sup> See Bowen, "Abdul Hamid Suleiman," *passim*.

<sup>292</sup> See Bowen, "Abdul Hamid Suleiman," for the citations and a longer discussion.

*World*. But if there had been any chance for Islam to become the official religion of the UNIA, this committee was it. Its disappearance, therefore, ensured that a Garvey-influenced African-American Islam would have to find its organizational success outside of the UNIA.

Still, despite Garvey's incarceration and the loss of the committee, UNIA members did not suddenly forget about Islam—for some, it had become strongly connected to the hope of justice for the world's Africans and African-descended people. In August 1923, the *Negro World* ran an article again asking readers to consider the choice of "crescent or cross."<sup>293</sup> "El Islam," by the Jamaican UNIA leader J.A. O'Meally,<sup>294</sup> argued that Islam, because it lacked racial discrimination and taught the values of self-respect and unwavering brotherhood, "would be a wonderful spiritual force in the life of the colored races, uniting [them] in a bond of common sympathy[, ...] interest," and language (Arabic). O'Meally went on to explicitly encourage making Islam the religion of the UNIA, and pointed out that Islam was currently drawing numerous American blacks.<sup>295</sup>

In September, the *Negro World*—in an issue appearing a day before Bruce would give a speech to the Boston UNIA division on Islam's potential for helping anti-

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<sup>293</sup> J.A. O'Meally, "Crescent or Cross? A Negro May Aspire to any Position under Islam without Discrimination," *Negro World*, August 4, 1923, 2.

<sup>294</sup> On O'Meally, see Hill, *Garvey Papers*, 4: 950-951, n.1.

<sup>295</sup> O'Meally writes: "Within three months over 100 converts have been made to the cause of Mohammedanism in America." It is unknown of which organization(s)—the Ahmadis', Suleiman's, or another—he was aware.

colonialism in Africa<sup>296</sup>—printed yet another piece asking “Crescent or Cross?” in the headline.<sup>297</sup> This time, the pro-Islam argument was from a speech given in India by Sirojini Naidu, an Indian independence activist who would later develop ties with the UNIA.<sup>298</sup> That the *Negro World* editors had first come across the transcription of this speech in an Ahmadi periodical<sup>299</sup> reveals that the UNIA was still, at its highest levels, interested in Islam. In fact, in late August, when each UNIA division was holding their own convention in lieu of the international one, Muhammad Sadiq, the Ahmadi missionary, appeared as a guest at the Harlem conference.<sup>300</sup>

Sadiq, at the time, was preparing to return to India. After almost four years of missionary work in the U.S., during which time he made around 700 converts,<sup>301</sup> Sadiq was leaving the Ahmadi mission in the hands of new men who had learned of the benefit that could be had by aligning the Ahmadis with the UNIA. In October, the new Indian missionary in charge of the Ahmadis in the U.S., Muhammad Din, reprinted O’Meally’s “crescent of cross” article in the U.S. Ahmadi magazine<sup>302</sup> and explicitly said that Arabic

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<sup>296</sup> Randall K. Burkett, *Black Redemption: Churchmen Speak for the Garvey Movement* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1978), 152-156.

<sup>297</sup> Sirojini Naidu, “Crescent or Cross? The Greatest and Youngest of World Religions and its Mission to Humanity Told,” *Negro World*, September 8, 1923, 10.

<sup>298</sup> See J. Cambar Allen, “Mrs. Naidu, Noted East Indian Poetess, at Great UNIA Mass Meeting in Cape Town, South Africa, Lauds Principles and Leadership of the Association,” *Negro World*, May 17, 1924, 2.

<sup>299</sup> As explained in the first paragraph of the article.

<sup>300</sup> “U.N.I.A. Has Withstood the Wiles of its Enemies and is Sweeping the World,” *Negro World*, September 1, 1923, 3.

<sup>301</sup> “New Converts,” *Moslem Sunrise* 2, no. 2&3 (1923): 191; “Dr. Sadiq,” *Moslem Sunrise* [2], no. 4 (1923): 268.

<sup>302</sup> J.A. O’Meally, “Crescent or Cross? A Negro May Aspire to any Position under Islam without Discrimination,” *Moslem Sunrise* [2], no. 4 (1923): 263-264.

and Islam were the language and religion of African Americans' forefathers.<sup>303</sup> That same month, Paul Nathaniel Johnson (Sheik Ahmad Din), the most prominent and influential African-American Ahmadi at the time, took out an advertisement in the *Negro World* promoting Islam and an Ahmadi "Expose Book" that promised to "wake up" readers to the truth about the world's religions.<sup>304</sup> This book likely contained the Ahmadi claims about Jesus not dying on the cross and moving to India, and Din's assertion about African Americans' forefathers. Johnson would go on to turn Din's claim into a promise of black dignity that quickly spread across the Ahmadi-Garveyite channels: "Get back your language and your religion, and you won't be a Negro anymore."<sup>305</sup> Johnson's plans for black emancipation, however, were not limited to the symbolic; he had become very influenced by Garvey's message. Already by August 1923, in addition to teaching St. Louis's African Americans Arabic and about Islam, Johnson was telling them his hope that they would someday move with him to Africa, their "native land."<sup>306</sup>

Perhaps one of the most interesting pieces of evidence concerning the connections between the UNIA and the Ahmadis during the peak years of Islamophilia in the Harlem Renaissance comes to light in a report filed in 1923 by an agent for the Bureau of

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<sup>303</sup> "True Salvation of the American Negroes," *Moslem Sunrise* 2, no. 2 & 3 (1923): 184; "True Salvation of the American Negroes," *Moslem Sunrise* [2], no. 4 (1923): 266.

<sup>304</sup> "Don't Worry About the Bible," *Negro World*, October 20, 1923, 7.

<sup>305</sup> Dannin, *Pilgrimage*, 37; Noshir, "Pittsburgh," 30.

<sup>306</sup> "Colored People of St. Louis to Live in Africa," *Warsaw Daily Times and the Northern Indianan*, August 21, 1923, 4. In this article, Johnson claims to have one hundred converts under him, all of which were made within only six months.

Investigation.<sup>307</sup> Through the Bureau's investigation of Garvey, it learned that one Rev. James Walker Hood Eason possibly died at the hands of a Garveyite named Esau Ramus. Thomas L. Jefferson, the reporting agent, who was probably African-American, pursued this investigation by interviewing several UNIA members throughout Chicago and then met with a UNIA member who was a personal acquaintance of his, one Mrs. Robertson. What is notable here is that the agent knew Mrs. Robertson because both were members of the Ahmadi mosque in the city. Because the Freedom of Information Act records do not show evidence of an investigation of the Ahmadis in the 1920s,<sup>308</sup> it cannot be said with certainty whether or not Jefferson had joined the group at the instigation of the Bureau. However, it seems rather unlikely that an FBI agent at the time would choose to become in his private life a member of a group for which he was aware could have easily been—because of its affiliations with the UNIA—suspected of subversion. So, in my opinion, the chances are very good that the Bureau did indeed have him join the mosque. That would make it the earliest known instance of the FBI investigating—and infiltrating—an African-American Islamic group. It seems, then, that modern African-American Islam has been under government surveillance to some degree since its very beginnings. While its impact was barely felt in these early years, this phenomenon of government investigation of African-American Islam would later play an important role

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<sup>307</sup> Marcus Garvey Bureau of Information (FBI) file, Report filed by T[homas] L. Jefferson, 2/27/1923, Chicago file. Jefferson's name does not appear in the lists of Ahmadi converts published in the *Moslem Sunrise* in the early 1920s.

<sup>308</sup> An FOIA request to the FBI for files concerning the Ahmadis only produced records from an investigation conducted in the early 1970s. Also, there are no investigations of the Ahmadiyya movement identified in *Correspondence of the Military Intelligence Division Relating to "Negro Subversion," 1917-1941*.

in transforming African-American Islam into a genuine mass movement that would gain tens of thousands—if not hundreds of thousands—of believers.

### The Decline of Islamophilia

Despite the efforts of the Ahmadis to connect their group with Garvey's movement, the UNIA leadership's interest in Islam seems to have precipitously dropped off by the end of 1923 and stayed low through 1924. In fact, in 1924 the *Negro World* carried only one pro-Islam commentary,<sup>309</sup> while pro-Christian commentaries increased significantly. At the same time, among the handful of news articles it ran about Muslims, several focused on Muslim *disunity*.<sup>310</sup> The only consistent positive references to Islam in 1924 came from the pen of Ethel Trew Dunlap, who had several poems on various topics published in the newspaper between 1921 and 1925.<sup>311</sup> Beginning in December 1923 and continuing through 1925, a number of Dunlap's poems had Islamic themes,<sup>312</sup> a

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<sup>309</sup> "The Sauce of Islam," *Negro World*, December 27, 1924, 4.

<sup>310</sup> In the November 1<sup>st</sup> issue, in fact, there were three articles on the subject.

<sup>311</sup> On Dunlap, see Tony Martin, *Literary Garveyism: Garvey, Black Arts, and the Harlem Renaissance* (Dover, MA: Majority Press, 1983), 50-61; Amal Muhammad, "Dunlap, Ethel Trew," in *Black Women in America: Literature, Encyclopedia of Black Women in America*, ed. Darlene Clark Hine (New York: Facts On File, Inc., 1997). African-American History Online. Facts On File, Inc. <http://www.fofweb.com/activelink2.asp?ItemID=WE01&iPin=AFEBW0361&SingleRecord=True> (accessed July 5, 2012).

<sup>312</sup> Ethel Trew Dunlap, "Progress," *Negro World*, December 8, 1923, 6; Dunlap, "Tolerance," *Negro World*, December 8, 1923, 6; Dunlap, "Voices from Arabia," *Negro World*, January 12, 1924, 6; Dunlap, "El Islam," *Negro World*, May 24, 1924, 5; Dunlap, "El Islam's Call," *Negro World*, January 31, 1925, 4; Dunlap, "That Moslem Foe," *Negro World*, June 20, 1925, 9; Dunlap, "Allah's Garden," *Negro World*, July 11, 1925, 9.

phenomenon that was likely primarily the result of the influence of the black Ahmadi leader Paul Nathaniel Johnson, to whom she had dedicated her first Islam-tinged poem.<sup>313</sup>

In August 1924, the UNIA finally held its fourth international convention. While “religion” was made the subject of discussion again, no mention was made of the committee formed in 1922 and almost the entire discussion focused around Christian issues, particularly whether Jesus and Mary were black and “the idealization of God as a Holy Spirit without physical form, but a creature of imaginary semblance of the black race, being of like image and likeness.”<sup>314</sup> Towards the end of the session, Arnold J. Ford spoke up to “warn... the convention that it should be remembered that the majority of black men dwelt in Africa, and they were not Christians, but Mohammedans. [And t]he great need of the moment for the black man [was] education.”<sup>315</sup> Another delegate responded that because the convention was “dealing with religion, and not denominationalism,” the issue about the exact religion of Africans was not a relevant concern; the discussion about “religion” was then ended, and nothing more was said about Islam.

Outside of the UNIA, no single person was able to win as many African-American converts to Islam as Sadiq had from 1920 to 1923.<sup>316</sup> This was probably due to

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<sup>313</sup> See Dunlap, “Progress.” Interestingly, during this period Dunlap was living in southern California, not St. Louis, where Johnson lived. She therefore was likely corresponding with Johnson through the mail or at least reading his writings that appeared in the *Moslem Sunrise*.

<sup>314</sup> “Proceedings of Fourth International Convention,” *Negro World*, August 16, 1924, 2.

<sup>315</sup> “Proceedings of Fourth International Convention,” 3.

<sup>316</sup> Although the Ahmadis under Din reportedly recruited around 700 people (see Hoffert, “Moslem Propaganda,” 141), which would be equivalent to what Sadiq had brought in, during the Din era, Paul Nathaniel Johnson was probably responsible for bringing in a significant amount of these members. Also, the U.S. Ahmadi periodical, the *Moslem Sunrise*, whose existence represented both a large interested

a number of factors. First, Sadiq was unquestionably an exceptional missionary whose accomplishments could not be—and were not—easily replicated by Muhammad Din. Second, with the dissolution of the UNIA’s committee for a scientific understanding of religion and the organization’s decreasing cohesion after Garvey’s mail fraud conviction, Islam had lost much of the momentum it had gained in the African-American community in 1922-23. Finally, with Suleiman languishing in a New Jersey prison and Paul Nathaniel Johnson living in St. Louis—far from the main centers of African-American Islamic activity—no other obvious leader of an African-American Islamic movement remained.

### **The Harlem Gurdjieffians**

It was precisely in 1924, when this leadership vacuum for African-American Islam had developed, that a new Islam-tinged figure emerged with connections to New York’s black community. In January of that year, George Ivanovich Gurdjieff, along with thirty guests, arrived in New York on the *SS Paris*. Gurdjieff, an Armenian-born mystic who incorporated a wide variety of Central Asian religious traditions in his teachings, had, over the previous eleven years, become something of a sensation in Europe, and was now attempting to spread his teachings across the Atlantic. During the December before his arrival, A.R. Orage, a British editor who had previously worked with Dusé,<sup>317</sup> had

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audience and a dedicated and energetic missionary in charge, stopped publication for almost six years after its April 1924 issue, suggesting a decline in missionary success. Finally, reports of conversions and U.S. Ahmadi missionary activities seriously diminished after 1924. More on the Ahmadi growth after 1923 will be discussed in chapter 5.

<sup>317</sup> Orage had known Dusé in the early 1910s, prior to Orage’s interest in Gurdjieff-like ideas, when Orage played an important role in helping Dusé publish *In the Land of the Pharaohs* in 1911; but the two parted on bad terms soon after, and they did not keep in contact with each other over the years. It is unlikely that

been building American anticipation for Gurdjieff by contacting many influential figures in New York's literary scene. A prospectus advertising Gurdjieff-directed dance performances indicated that his work was inspired by various Sufi sources<sup>318</sup>—perhaps in an attempt to appeal to those New Yorkers interested in Sufism and “mystical” Islam. By the time of his ship's mooring, Gurdjieff had an intrigued audience waiting.

One of the people whom Orage had contacted was Jean Toomer, who found Gurdjieff and his message fascinating and decided to join the religious leader when he returned to his home in France in the summer of 1924. Born in 1894 into a middle-class mulatto family in Washington, D.C., Toomer became a race-conscious writer with a thirst for exploring and experimenting with philosophy, literary styles, and racial ideas.<sup>319</sup> In 1923, he published *Cane*, a stylistically innovative novel that delved into multiple topics surrounding African-American life in the South. *Cane* was immediately praised by critics, leading to Toomer becoming regarded as among the elite writers of any race during the period, and he was particularly respected among the African-American literati who were concentrated in Harlem.

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Orage knew that Dusé was in the U.S. at the time, and, even if he did, it is very unlikely that Orage would have contacted him. See Duffield, chapter 3, esp. 109.

<sup>318</sup> Anna Terri Challenger, “An Introduction to Gurdjieff's *Beelzebub*: A Modern Sufi Teaching Tale” (PhD diss., Kent State University, 1990), 13.

<sup>319</sup> On the connections between Gurdjieff, Toomer, and the African-American literati, see Jon Woodson, *To Make a New Race: Gurdjieff, Toomer, and the Harlem Renaissance* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1999); Charles R. Larson, *Invisible Darkness: Jean Toomer & Nella Larsen* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1993), esp. 34-55; Robert C. Twombly, “A Disciple's Odyssey: Jean Toomer's Gurdjieffian Career,” *Prospects* 2 (1976): 436-462; Paul Beekman Taylor, *Shadows of Heaven: Gurdjieff and Toomer* (York Beach, ME: Samuel Weiser, Inc., 1998); Langston Hughes, *The Big Sea: An Autobiography* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993), 241-243; Rudolph P. Byrd, “Jean Toomer: Portrait of an Artist, the Years with Gurdjieff, 1923-1936” (PhD diss., Yale University, 1985); Paul Beekman Taylor, *Gurdjieff's America: Mediating the Miraculous* (Cambridge, England: Lighthouse Editions Limited, 2004); Louise Welch, *Orage with Gurdjieff in America* (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982).

After studying with Gurdjieff in France in the summer of 1924, Toomer traveled to Harlem where, in early 1925, he started a Gurdjieff study group that was joined by several well-known black writers and artists, including Wallace Thurman, Aaron Douglas, Arna Bontemps, and Nella Larsen.<sup>320</sup> Though this Gurdjieffian community in Harlem only lasted a few years, it may have had a significant impact on Harlem's artistic thought. Jon Woodson, who has written on Toomer's Gurdjieffian influence in Harlem, claims that "Toomer's efforts in presenting the Gurdjieffian system to the writers of the Harlem Renaissance is one component in the *only* organized attempt to formally shape the ideology of the Harlem avant-garde; its *only* analog is the ... Garvey movement" (my italics).<sup>321</sup> Woodson argues that the artistic work of the members of Toomer's group ended up being heavily shaped by Gurdjieff's teachings.<sup>322</sup> Whatever the degree of influence of Gurdjieff on their work truly was, what is particularly notable about the Harlem Gurdjieffians is that they addressed issues that no other Gurdjieffian was talking about: white supremacy and, to an extent, the idea of race itself.

In order to better appreciate both the significance of the Harlem Gurdjieffians' efforts and why they are included in a study of Islam among African Americans, it is necessary to have some understanding of Gurdjieff's teachings, especially the likely Sufi influence on them, their major styles, and their basic message. It should first be pointed out that Gurdjieff never fully explained from where his teachings came. He told many

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<sup>320</sup> Bontemps only attended one meeting.

<sup>321</sup> Woodson, 36.

<sup>322</sup> While this may be true, Woodson's theory about these writers using codes to hide their influence and his approach for exposing this might fail to convince the skeptical. More work should be done into the biographies of these individuals to find more concrete evidence.

stories about his pre-Europe days, but they did not paint a full, clear picture and left many questions. A number of his followers have attempted (with varying skill and scholarly rigor) to reconstruct his past in order to understand it better, but there is still no undeniable proof about his early life.

Nevertheless, one of the most famous theories of Gurdjieff's influences was proposed by John G. Bennett, a British follower of Gurdjieff, who claimed that "Gurdjieff was, more than anything else, a Sufi..."<sup>323</sup> While Bennett's assertion has been questioned by more orthodox followers of Gurdjieff—largely because of their antipathy to the Sufi-influenced teacher Idries Shah with whom Bennett was aligned—textual analysis of Gurdjieff's writings reveal a strong presence of Sufi and Islamic elements. In his 1995 dissertation that critically examines Bennett's analysis of Gurdjieff, William James Thompson shows that Gurdjieff consistently used in his various writings (and presumably the speeches that his writings were based on) references to well-known Islamic figures and locations (especially Mecca, Afghanistan, and Naqshbandi Sufis in Bukhara).<sup>324</sup> Anna Challenger, in her dissertation, identifies other references to Islam (and Sufism in particular, especially the Sufi figure Nasreddin) and sees a Sufi influence in Gurdjieff's storytelling style.<sup>325</sup> Indeed, the Sufi elements in Gurdjieff's writing are so

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<sup>323</sup> John G. Bennett, *Gurdjieff: Making a New World* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 278.

<sup>324</sup> William James Thompson, "J.G. Bennett's Interpretation of the Teachings of G.I. Gurdjieff: A Study of Transmission in the Fourth Way" (PhD diss., University of Lancaster, 1995), chapter 4, 291-348.

<sup>325</sup> Challenger, 11-38. Michael Scott Pittman, in his own dissertation ("G.I. Gurdjieff: Textualization of Medieval Storytelling and Modern Teachings on the Soul" (PhD diss., Stony Brook University, 2005), for the most part follows Challenger's analysis on the topic of Sufi influences.

prevalent that some scholars have included Gurdjieff in their overviews of Sufism in the West and the U.S.<sup>326</sup>

One of the most notable features of Gurdjieff's storytelling technique—and one that is claimed to possibly be borrowed from Sufism—is his use of the absurd in order to surprise or confuse his audience so that they will “awaken” from their mental sleep. Stories with confusing events are common as are the use of neologisms and references to extraterrestrial beings and advanced technology. Ultimately, Gurdjieff's goal was to stimulate his audience with these features, thereby making them more open to his core theories about human life and the universe.

According to Gurdjieff, humans are losing their capacity for independent judgment, a condition he refers to as “inner slavery” because people are metaphorically chained to a way of thinking that makes it impossible to achieve a “normal” existence on Earth. A “normal” person is “balanced”—intellectually, emotionally, and instinctively—, is unselfish, understands the workings of the cosmos, can take burdens in the correct way, and always strives to attain a greater degree of what he calls Objective Reason. Objective Reason is having true understanding of the universe, which entails knowing that the universe operates according to cosmic laws, or “mathematics,” as Gurdjieff sometime referred to them.<sup>327</sup> The most important of these are the law of three (which states that all

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<sup>326</sup> See, for example, Jay Kinney, “Sufism Comes to America,” *Gnosis* 30 (Winter 1994): 18; Peter Wilson, “The Strange Fate of Sufism in the New Age,” in *New Trends and Developments in the World of Islam*, ed. Peter Clarke (London: Luzac Oriental, 1997), 180-181; David Westerlund, “The Contextualisation of Sufism in Europe,” in *Sufism in Europe and North America*, ed. David Westerlund (New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), 20. However, since 2005 the tendency has been to leave him out of overviews of Sufism in the West, as scholars have become more knowledgeable of immigrant orders.

<sup>327</sup> E.g., George Ivanovich Gurdjieff, *Gurdjieff: Views from the Real World* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co. Inc., 1973), 194.

events have a positive, negative, and neutral force) and the law of seven (which is that all processes in the universe occur in a pattern of intervals similar to those of the musical octave). In addition, all phenomena have vibrations, similar to sounds in an octave. Also, all phenomena and processes in the universe are connected, and only certain activities will contribute to the universe's perpetuation, while others contribute to its degeneration. Objective Reason can be gained by studying the laws/mathematics, which both show that one's purpose in life is to help perpetuate the universe and explain how to best go about doing this.

What Toomer and the other Harlem Gurdjieffians found so valuable in Gurdjieff's thought was that it offered a new vision of humanity; one that did not reduce individuals to their race and instead proposed that people should access their potentials to unselfishly help others and the world more generally. Gurdjieff's teachings, furthermore, resonated with some of the "mystical" currents that were reaching and inspiring African Americans at the time. Though it does not appear that the Harlem Gurdjieffians were particularly interested in the Islamic elements of Gurdjieff's teachings, they almost certainly had noticed them and to the extent that they were influenced by Gurdjieff's thought, Sufism had indirectly influenced them. The Harlem Gurdjieffians, then, were perhaps among the first Sufi-influenced people in the twentieth century to deal with questions about the position of African Americans. Their interest, furthermore, was an example of the intersection of the most important dynamics that were fostering the AAIR: "mystical" Islam, deterritorialized Islam (both the new, syncretic doctrines of Gurdjieff and the ties with a "Muslim" or "Sufi" immigrant), and a message of African-American uplift.

Ultimately, however, Gurdjieff's teachings did not have a significant—or at least an obvious—impact on the direction of African-American thought: the African-American Gurdjieffian community in New York and Chicago (where Toomer also spread the teachings) floundered after a few years and, as Woodson argues, those who did retain the Gurdjieff influence in their writings may have only shown it through coded language that very few outsiders could have picked up. Nevertheless, there would soon appear a new doctrine that shared some similar characteristics with that of Gurdjieff, such as references to Mecca and Muslim figures, discussions of “mathematics,” knowledge of people’s sleeping condition, the calling of the doctrinal study program as “work”/“labor,”<sup>328</sup> neologisms, tales of extraterrestrial beings and advanced technology, and other absurd phenomena and stories. In fact, as will be shown, this doctrine may have been influenced by the same general storytelling tradition of eastern Central Asia that influenced Gurdjieff. Still, despite these similarities, in the end this doctrine, which would be promoted by one Wallace D. Fard in Detroit in the early 1930s, was very different. It was explicitly Islamic and black nationalist, and it would go on to be one of the most influential doctrines in African-American Islam.

But in 1925, Fard’s doctrines were still five years away having a significant impact on African-American culture. And a number of developments would have to take place over the next few years before Fard’s ideas could be well-received, and, perhaps, even created.

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<sup>328</sup> Gurdjieff’s program was called “the Work,” while Fard referred his teachings as the “Labor Course” and his students as “Laborers.”

### **The Rif War and the Brief Revival of Islamophilia in 1925**

On February 8, 1925, Garvey was finally sent to prison for his mail fraud conviction and he would stay there until late 1927 when President Coolidge commuted his sentence on the condition that he be deported to Jamaica. In the meantime, lacking the physical presence of its leader, the UNIA struggled to maintain a unified membership, culminating in 1929 when it underwent a major schism, resulting in the emergence of two organizations using the title of UNIA. It was in the early stages of this period of its growing identity and leadership crisis that Islam was able to make one final resurgence within the central powers of the UNIA. This second period of Islamophilia would be very different than that during 1922 and 1923; the Ahmadis were no longer the UNIA's unquestioned allies and the focus on international Muslim anti-colonialism turned away from Turkey, India, and Egypt and towards Morocco and the Moroccans, whom had already, in 1923, been identified by the UNIA as "negroes." *Black* Muslims were now one of the UNIA's main sources of inspiration for black liberation.

Between 1920 and 1926, the Muslim Berbers of the Rif (northern Morocco) fought Spanish and French forces to regain Moroccan territory controlled by Spain.<sup>329</sup> Led by Abd el-Krim, the poorly-armed "Moors" were able to inflict serious damage on their European enemies, and thus led one of the most successful anti-colonial campaigns in the early twentieth century. Though they were finally overcome by the Europeans' superior armaments and manpower in 1926, the Moors' victories in the previous years had significantly inspired anti-colonialists and black nationalists throughout the world.

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<sup>329</sup> On the Rif War, see David S. Woolman, *Rebels in the Rif: Abd el Krim and the Rif Rebellion* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1968).

The Rif War had been noted in the *Negro World* on occasion in the early 1920s, but in 1925 readers of the newspaper were exposed to a major wave of articles on the subject. From May through December that year, almost every issue of the *Negro World* had at least one article dealing with, in some way, the Rif War, several issues ran three articles touching on it, and a handful of issues had six or more. The Rif War was also often the subject of major headlines in the paper that year. The presence of these articles and headlines helped ensure that readers stayed informed of the weekly events on the ground, the international political developments concerning peace talks, and the war's becoming a source of inspiration for anti-colonial movements throughout the world. The war was also discussed at most of the major UNIA conferences in Harlem in 1925, all of which were reported on in the *Negro World*. Meanwhile, in other cities, such as Oakland, New Orleans, and Remedios (in Cuba), news articles about the Moors' progress were read at UNIA meetings and speeches were made in support of Abd el-Krim and his efforts.<sup>330</sup> Commentaries in the *Negro World*, like the speeches at UNIA meetings, invariably supported the "gallant" Moroccans (who were frequently called "Moors"); compared the Moors' white European enemies to white oppressors throughout the rest of the world; criticized all U.S. aid to the European side of the war; encouraged African-American soldiers to refuse to fight against the Moroccans; and interpreted the Moors' success as a sign of an imminent world-wide anti-colonial revolution, particularly for

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<sup>330</sup> See, e.g., the division news briefs in the *Negro World* on September 5 and September 26, 1925.

black people. One man even proclaimed in a letter to the paper that, if it were possible, he would join up with the Moors to fight “for the freedom of his people.”<sup>331</sup>

The Moors of the Rif War had earned the admiration and allegiance of the UNIA to a degree far surpassing that ever given to any other Muslim group, and perhaps any other modern group at all. Through the UNIA’s influence, then, in 1925, the Moors became a powerful symbol of black liberation for African Americans. Even Duse Mohamed Ali—despite no longer being affiliated with the UNIA—was caught up in the widespread feeling that the success in North Africa, along with Muslim victories in other parts of the world, portended “the end of Nordic supremacy.”<sup>332</sup>

A number of scholars looking at African-American Islam have pointed to the history of “Moors” in America as an important cultural antecedent and possibly an influence for twentieth-century Islamic movements. The “Moor” had long been associated in the U.S. primarily with independent black Muslims who would not be subject to oppression. Seventeenth-century Virginia’s laws exempted Moors from slavery; Morocco, which was the country most associated with Moors, had been the first country to recognize the U.S. as an independent nation; enslaved black Muslims, who were sometimes called “Moors” even if they were not North African, often were seen as having more cultural capital and privileges than other slaves; and throughout the nineteenth century, Moors were frequently depicted in American arts as physically (and

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<sup>331</sup> James A. Fray, “He Wants to Go and Help the Riffs,” *Negro World*, July 18, 1925, 10.

<sup>332</sup> “Comments by the Age Editors on Sayings of Other Editors,” *New York Age*, March 21, 1925, 4.

sometimes morally) strong, free blacks.<sup>333</sup> It is also notable that in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the name and image of the Moor was sometimes utilized by the African-American Shriners.<sup>334</sup>

Perhaps this tradition was in the minds, or even in the sub-consciousnesses, of many 1920s African Americans, and of the *Negro World* editors specifically. However, because this eighteenth- and nineteenth-century tradition was *never* explicitly brought up in the *Negro World* in 1925 (and very rarely later), it cannot be proven that the tradition had an impact on the UNIA's interest in the Moroccans of the Rif War. The tradition about the Moor, as well as the "mystical" Islam dynamic and Muhammad Din's claim that African Americans' "forefathers" were Muslims who spoke Arabic (which might be seen as implying that they were originally North African), had the *potential* to feed into and strengthen the image of the Moors endorsed by the UNIA, but the UNIA itself was not responsible for merging these traditions with the current interest. Still, the promotion of the Moors by the UNIA in 1925 probably had a significant cultural impact on African Americans, and may have inspired others to combine the current interest with the other traditions. It is notable that 1925 is the precise year that two African-American religious organizations started explicitly employing the Moorish identity: the black Israelite

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<sup>333</sup> W.G.M., "Art. I.—The Laws of Virginia Relative to Slavery," *American Jurist and Law Magazine* 7, no. 13 (1832): 5; Gomez, 173-83; Timothy Marr, *The Cultural Roots of American Islamicism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 27-33, 293-94.

<sup>334</sup> On the use of the Moor image by African-American Shriners, see Walkes, 120-24. The members of this group sometimes were even referred to as "Moorish Nobles." See T. Cain, "Chips from the Quarries," *Afro-American*, 3 Jan. 1903, 4.

Moorish Zionist Temple led by Arnold J. Ford<sup>335</sup> and, as will be discussed in the next chapter, the Islamic organization known as the Moorish Science Temple. The leaders of these movements, it seems, harnessed the UNIA-created popularity and symbolic value given to the Moors and merged these with the American Moor tradition, the “mystical” Islam dynamic, the general UNIA-based African-American Islamophilia, and possibly Muhammad Din’s assertion.

Despite the UNIA not being directly responsible for bringing together these traditions with the group’s current interest in Morocco, during this period there was a more general revival of interest in things Islamic in the *Negro World*. Not only did three of Dunlap’s Islam-themed poems appear in 1925, but information about Islamic *culture* was being promoted more than ever before: stories ran on the history of the Moors’ past rule of Spain, the value given to Muslim sons in North Africa, the history of the Qur’an, and on the correct use of Arabic names.<sup>336</sup> One cultural issue was even debated in the paper: the position of women in Islamic society. After an article called the Muslim wife’s supposedly inferior role to the husband a “weakness” of Islamic society, Muhammad Din—in what was the only known appearance of an Ahmadi in the *Negro World* that year—wrote a letter defending Islamic polygamy as superior to the monogamy in

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<sup>335</sup> While the Moorish Zionist Temple claims to have been founded in as early as the 1890s, there is no direct evidence of its existence prior to 1925. Jacob S. Dorman, a scholar of black Hebrew groups, points out that New York’s Yiddish press was aware of virtually all other black Israelite groups in the 1910s and 1920s, yet they never noted the MZT before 1925. Email correspondence with the author, July 5, 2012.

<sup>336</sup> “When the Moors Ruled Haughty Spanish People,” *Negro World*, June 27, 1925, 2, 3; “Moslem Sons are Highly Valued in North Africa,” *Negro World*, December 26, 1925, 8; “‘Koran’,” *Negro World*, September 5, 1925, 9; Steven T. Byington, “Correct Use of Arabic Names,” *Negro World*, July 4, 1925, 7.

Christian lands.<sup>337</sup> This exchange was followed by two more comments on the subject.<sup>338</sup>

Finally, there was a revival of interest in news stories about revolutionary movements in other Muslim-majority lands, particularly in Turkey and Arabia; and there was even an article on Islamic “mystic orders” aiding these Muslim movements.<sup>339</sup>

Another interesting trend that saw significant growth in 1925 was the advertising for black Muslim mystics, who claimed the titles of “Arabian Mystics” and African “Mohammedan Scientists,” in New York newspapers and the *Negro World*.<sup>340</sup> Prior to the 1920s, though there had been several black mystics who took on vague “oriental” personas, those who, like Suleiman/Solomon, claimed a specifically Muslim identity were relatively rare, and were typically immigrant Muslims who had come to work in the “Streets of Cairo” exhibits that had become popular tourist attractions in several cities after the success of the exhibit of the same name at the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago. For example, in 1893, a Sudanese fortune teller, Mahomet Nour, made the papers when he arrived in New York City with 175 other Egyptians and Sudanese who were on their way to work at the Chicago exhibit.<sup>341</sup> Later, many of those Muslims, along

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<sup>337</sup> “Moslem Women the Basis of Moslem Weakness,” *Negro World*, September 5, 1925, 4; Mahamad [sic] Din, “Defense of Moslem Polygamy as against Christian Monogamy,” *Negro World*, October 3, 1925, 4.

<sup>338</sup> “Moslem and Christian Marriage Systems Contrasted,” *Negro World*, October 3, 1925, 4; Nolan G. Thomas, “The Spotlight,” *Negro World*, October 17, 1925, 5.

<sup>339</sup> “Mystic Orders Are Seen as Aiding Islam’s Fight,” *Negro World*, October 3, 1925, 2.

<sup>340</sup> See Susan Nance, *How the Arabian Nights Inspired the American Dream, 1790-1935* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 223-34; Jamie J. Wilson, *Building a Healthy Black Harlem* (Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2009), chapter 2, 31-58; Jacob S. Dorman, “The Black Israelites of Harlem and the Professors of Oriental and African Mystic Science in the 1920’s” (PhD diss., University of California-Los Angeles, 2004), esp. 174-193.

<sup>341</sup> “Pharaoh’s People off for Chicago,” *New York Herald*, April 6, 1893, 7; “Orientals at Ellis Island,” *New York Daily Tribune*, April 6, 1893, 12. Also see the ship manifest for the *Guidhall*, dated 4/11/1893,

with several who came afterwards, settled on Coney Island, where another “Streets of Cairo” was set up. The occasional news stories about the Coney Island Muslims frequently mentioned the African Muslim “whirling dervishes” and “priests,” who were portrayed as performing rather “mystical”—or at least exotic—rites.<sup>342</sup> These stories surely drew some curious people who wanted to lay their eyes on a genuine “mystical” Muslim. Later, in the 1920s, a handful of self-proclaimed “Hindu” mystics used Islamic references, such as to the Kaaba, Sufism, and Ali, in their public personas, exploiting the public’s lack of detailed knowledge about the differences between “oriental” religions.<sup>343</sup>

In 1923, however, probably due to the influence of the first wave of African-American Islamophilia, a new trend of self-promoting, overtly-Muslim mystics began to appear in New York City’s black newspapers. By far the most popular title, used by no fewer than five of these Muslim mystics, was “Mohammedan Scientist,” a name that resonated both with the tradition of identifying “mystical” Islam as a “science” as well as with Garvey’s call for a “scientific understanding of religion.”<sup>344</sup> Interestingly, though, as

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available on Ancestry.com. This date probably reflects when the passengers were finally released from Ellis Island; they had most likely arrived in New York on April 5.

<sup>342</sup> On the turn-of-the-century Coney Island Muslims, see “A Nubian’s Peculiar Funeral,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, July 25, 1896, 12; “Islam Rites at Coney,” *New York World*, July 26, 1896, 5; “Killed in the Streets of Cairo,” *Sun* (New York), December 8, 1896, 1; “Shooting Condemned Camels at Coney Island’s Streets of Cairo,” *New York World*, December 8, 1896, 2; “Coney Island’s Streets of Cairo,” *New York Herald*, July 19, 1896, 10; “Burial of a Mohammedan,” *New York Herald*, July 26, 1896, 5; “Coney Island Turks,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, January 24, 1897, 27; “‘Tom-Tom’ Player Weds,” *New York Herald*, August 3, 1897, 7; “Cleansing of Coney Island,” *New York Herald*, August 11, 1897, 14; “West Point Cadets Revel in ‘Midway’,” *New York Herald*, August 16, 1901, 6. Also see Charles Kennedy, “When the Streets of Cairo Met Main Street,” in *Music and Culture in America, 1861-1918*, ed. Michael Saffle (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1998), 271-298.

<sup>343</sup> Some examples of these include Hazrat Ismet Ali, who will be discussed in chapter 5, and Prince Ali, a magician and mind reader who was popular in Chicago and New York City in the 1920s and 1930s.

<sup>344</sup> The “Mohammedan Scientists” included Prof. Effiong, Prof. J. Du JaJa, Prof. K. Eyo, E. Udobio, and Amadu. In addition, there was Holy Moses who taught “Christian and Mohammedan Science,” Dr. Abd-el

far as I am aware, none of these mystics employed a “Moorish” identity—their Islamic image was generally framed in a vague African-“oriental”/“Muslim” style. Typically, these individuals would be pictured wearing some sort of turban or fez and a suit or a robe, and all usually were primarily sellers of spiritual services—such as fortune telling or healing—as opposed to promoters of religious doctrines.

The *Negro World* had been running advertisements for various “oriental” mystics since the early 1920s, but none of those who appeared in that paper were employing overtly Islamic themes until 1925. The closest these advertisements came to presenting what appeared to be a distinctly Islamic image before that year was in a single advertisement run in 1924 for a “Prof. Hassan Bey, Egyptian Scientist, Specializing in Oriental Tokens.”<sup>345</sup> Unlike the other “oriental” mystics, the fez-wearing Prof. Hassan Bey was a clearly presenting the image of a Turkish Muslim—the other “oriental” mystics in the *Negro World* looked to be either South Asian or of African descent, and therefore could rely on the public’s perception that Africa and South Asia were home to a number of different “oriental” and occult religions. In 1925, however, a “Mohammedan Scientist,” undeniably of African stock, appeared in the *Negro World*’s pages. This was Prof. J. Du JaJa, who ran his “Asia and Africa Remedy Company” out of Harlem. Du JaJa (whom may have in fact been Suleiman using an alias)<sup>346</sup> was probably the most

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Rahman el Adaros, Effendi who taught “Transcendent Science,” and Prof. Alpha Roktabija, an “Arabian Mystic Seer.” A check of the addresses and phone numbers given by these men suggests that none of them were the same person using different names.

<sup>345</sup> “Prof. Hassan Bey,” *Negro World*, August 30, 1924, 19.

<sup>346</sup> There are several clues that suggest this possibility. First is the fact that, although the pictures we have of Du JaJa from his advertisements are not the best, he does have some facial characteristics that are similar to Suleiman’s. Second, he is, like Suleiman, frequently depicted wearing a fez and thin wire-frame glasses.

well-known “Muslim” mystic in the period; his advertisement ran dozens of times in some of the most well-known black newspapers, such as the *New York Amsterdam News* and *The Pittsburgh Courier*, in 1925. In the UNIA’s newspaper, his advertisements appeared almost weekly that year and in many issues in the next; and he appears to have been the only overtly-Muslim mystic to advertise in the *Negro World* outside of 1927, which was probably the peak year for the “Mohammedan Scientists.”<sup>347</sup>

There is one other fascinating and suggestive appearance of a “mystical” Islam-influenced figure in the 1925 issues of the *Negro World*. On December 19<sup>th</sup>, the newspaper reported on a lecture that was to be given in New York by Inayat Khan, the Indian Sufi who had first come to America in 1910.<sup>348</sup> Khan had gained New Yorker followers during his first tour in the U.S. and established a Sufi Center in the city in the early 1920s. Documents and scholarship about Khan have indicated that Khan’s followers were mostly, if not exclusively, white; but the printing of this article in the

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Third, again like Suleiman, he claimed to be from Egypt and sometimes referred to the land of Canaan in his advertisements. Fourth, the address Du JaJa used in 1925, 142 West 129<sup>th</sup> Street, was only one block away from the address Suleiman used in 1922 and 1923, 143 West 130<sup>th</sup> Street. Fifth, Du JaJa (or his businesses) appeared, as far as I can tell, only from 1924 through mid-1927—which coincides with Suleiman’s unaccounted period in the 1920s. Sixth, Du JaJa, unlike the other mystics, *explicitly* connected “Africa” and “Asia”—something that Drew Ali would later do. Seventh, he explicitly identified himself as a “scientist.” The eighth piece of evidence is perhaps the most revealing: in the advertisements that frequently appeared in the *Negro World*, Du JaJa is pictured with his right hand resting on the center of his chest. This is a Masonic gesture; Suleiman, as I have shown, was a Mason, and Drew Ali was frequently depicted making that same gesture. There is, however, one significant piece of evidence that goes against the theory that Du JaJa was the same person as Suleiman: in Du JaJa’s 1925 declaration of intention for naturalization, it states that he is only twenty-seven years old, whereas in the early 1920s, Suleiman consistently claimed to be seventy-seven years old. Perhaps, though, the person recording the information on the declaration of intention mistakenly wrote a “2” when he should have written a “7.” We may never know.

<sup>347</sup> In 1927, the *Negro World*, like other popular African-American newspapers, saw a relatively large increase in the numbers of “Mohammedan Scientist” advertisements. During that year, one could regularly find advertisements in that paper for Prof. Effiong, Prof. Du JaJa (under the business name O8obo Herbo Company), Prof. K. Eyo, and Amadu.

<sup>348</sup> “Indian Philosopher here with Message,” *Negro World*, December 19, 1925, 5.

*Negro World* suggests that some African Americans—and not just the literary and artistic elites connected to Gurdjieff—were at that time taking an interest in Sufi-influenced movements. Early 1920s black New Yorkers, particularly those affiliated with the Garvey movement, were therefore being exposed to an incredibly diverse array of Islamic practices, cultures, and identities.

### **A Dream Deferred**

In 1926, however, the UNIA's Islamophilia significantly decreased. As the Moors' success in the Rif War, which would end with the Moors' surrender that year, began to look less and less likely, news articles and commentaries about war and other Muslims were dramatically reduced and now were almost never accompanied by a large headline in the first few pages of the *Negro World*. Meanwhile, Ethel Trew Dunlap's Islam-tinged poems were no longer being run and Prof. Du JaJa's advertisements appeared much more infrequently. Islam had failed to take hold as a viable faith *within* the UNIA community. In 1926, furthermore, Garvey and (probably) Abdul Hamid Suleiman were still imprisoned.<sup>349</sup> Meanwhile, Muhammad Din, the Ahmadi missionary, had returned to India the year before and no official missionary had yet come as a replacement. The Ahmadi movement, then, which had been up to this point the most successful African-American-majority Islamic organization, had begun declining (see chapter 5). The hopes of Islam's success among African Americans were, to a large extent, dwindling. In the famous words of the Harlem Renaissance poet Langston Hughes, the dream of mass conversion of African Americans to Islam had been deferred.

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<sup>349</sup> If Suleiman was not in prison and was in fact using an alias, then we can at least say that the "Abdul Hamid Suleiman" persona was not in the public eye.

But, as Hughes asks us, what happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up  
like a raisin in the sun?  
Or fester like a sore--  
And then run?  
Does it stink like rotten meat?  
Or crust and sugar over--  
like a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags  
like a heavy load.

*Or does it explode?*<sup>350</sup>

The answer to Hughes's question—at least as far as it could be applied to Islam in African-American culture—is that the dream did not dry up or run, it did not stink, and it did not crust over. It exploded.

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<sup>350</sup> Langston Hughes, "Harlem [2]," in *The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes*, ed. Arnold Rampersad (New York: A.A. Knopf: Distributed by Random House, 1994), 426.

## Chapter Four: The Moorish Science Temple

The man who most successfully capitalized on the UNIA's fascination with the Moors, the older American Moor tradition, the "mystical" Islam dynamic, the Ahmadi claim about African Americans' "forefathers" being Arabic-speaking Muslims, and the black Christian "uplift" tradition was, in 1925, living 700 miles west of New York City. Oral tradition tells us that during that year a man named Noble Drew Ali appeared in Chicago's African-American community. Standing atop crates in alleyways, he preached to passersby about his "mystical" powers and about black Americans' "true" religion, their *real* "old time religion": Islam.<sup>351</sup> African Americans, he said, were neither "black" nor "negro"; they were "Moors," descendants of the biblical Moabites and members of the El and Bey tribes. Moreover, he claimed, their suffering in the U.S. was the result of not knowing the truth of their origins. Drew Ali, a self-proclaimed prophet, had come to Chicago to "uplift" the "Moorish Americans" by reminding them of this truth, or, as he

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<sup>351</sup> This story comes from "I am Your Prophet," which was likely a fictionalized account of Drew Ali's early work in Chicago written by an unknown employee of the Works Progress Administration. This, as well as other relevant WPA writings, have recently been republished as Works Progress Administration, *Early Studies in Black Nationalism, Cults, and Churches in Chicago*, ed. Muhammed Al-Ahari (Chicago: Magribine Press, 2011), esp. 63-76. Drew Ali used the phrases "old time religion" and "uplift" in his group's catechism and main text, the *Koran Questions for Moorish Children* and the *Holy Koran of the Moorish Science Temple of America* ([Chicago]: Noble Drew Ali, 1927), esp. chapter XLVIII.

termed it, this “science.”<sup>352</sup> He soon amassed a small following and organized what was called at the time the Moorish Temple of Science.<sup>353</sup>

It is said that Drew Ali told his early Chicagoan followers that the symbol of Islam—the star and crescent moon<sup>354</sup>—would soon be clearly visible in the night sky and it would symbolize the rising of Islam in the West.<sup>355</sup> On the evening of December 18, 1925, the crescent moon did in fact appear next to what seemed to be a bright star over the Chicago sky,<sup>356</sup> reinforcing for his followers that they were both witness to and part of a great moment in history. It is a story that parallels the beginnings of the Rosicrucian “furore” in the late sixteenth/early seventeenth century, when European students of “mystical” Islam saw millennialistic significance in astronomical events. In both cases, however, the rise of the new “mystical” Islam-influenced movement was largely due to deep historical-ecological transformations that were shifting the dynamics of power, culture, and identity in Western society, opening the door for a greater influence of Islam on the West. Unlike in the seventeenth century, however, in the 1920s taking on an

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<sup>352</sup> In the nineteenth and early twentieth century “mystical” religions, “science” had many different meanings, one of which was “truth”; see Bowen, “Scientific Religion,” 313.

<sup>353</sup> “Moorish Leader’s Historical Message to America,” *Moorish Guide*, September 28, 1928, 2. In this article, Drew Ali writes that the MST was “organized” in Chicago in 1925. This date was confirmed in 1928 by the leader of the MST temple in Richmond; see “Police Put ‘Prophet’ in Jail for Preaching Race Sedition,” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, May 21, 1928, 1, 8.

<sup>354</sup> The Ottoman Empire popularized the symbol for other Muslims by the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

<sup>355</sup> This tradition is cited in several Moorish-American histories. The star and crescent moon, which were symbols employed by the Shriners, would go on to be important symbols in the MST.

<sup>356</sup> Selby Maxwell, “Crescent and Star,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 19, 1925, 18. The “star,” however, was in fact Venus.

*overtly* Islamic identity became a very real possibility, at least among one group of people.

By the time of his death in 1929, Drew Ali had created what was at that time the largest African-American Islamic movement ever. It would go on to be, for most of the AAIR, not only the largest group, but also the most influential, spawning numerous factions and influencing many African-American Muslims who were not “Moorish Americans” themselves. The story of the AAIR after 1925 should therefore begin with the Moorish Science Temple.

### **Noble Drew Ali and the Sources of his Teachings**

After over eighty years of journalists, government agents, scholars, and amateur researchers sifting through numerous records and interviewing members of his religious community, the background of the man known as Noble Drew Ali remains clouded by conflicting and unverified stories. The almost universally-accepted MST tradition holds that Drew Ali, born Timothy Drew on January 8, 1886 in North Carolina, started his Islamic movement—which was originally known as the Canaanite Temple—in Newark, New Jersey in 1913.<sup>357</sup> However, the details of Drew Ali’s activities before 1925, remain a matter of debate, even among today’s Moorish Americans.<sup>358</sup>

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<sup>357</sup> A few issues need to be made clear here. First of all, the 1913 date was definitely part of MST doctrine in the 1920s: it is mentioned in question number nine of the MST catechism from the period. However, the catechism says that what was founded in 1913 was the Moorish Holy Temple of Science. While references to a group called the “Canaanite Temple” are common in MST writings today, the earliest MST mention of it that I know of only comes in 1943. That year, the FBI interviewed the leader of the Kirkman Bey-affiliated Newark MST temple who said that Drew Ali had started the Canaanite Temple in “about 1913” and “after three or four years in Newark, [he] moved to Chicago and the name of the group became the Moorish Holy Science Temple of the World about 1925” (MST FBI file, Report, 2/17/1943, Newark file 100-18348, 3). While this account, which has been a popular one in the MST, may hold more weight because it comes from a Newark temple (which, presumably, would have better knowledge of MST history in Newark), the chronology in it is at best somewhat confusing and at worst cause for suspicion about its

The earliest known dated document concerning the man is a November 1926 incorporation form for a Moorish Temple of Science in Chicago.<sup>359</sup> In the 1940s, however, the FBI, which was investigating the group for “un-American activities,” took at a Newark MST temple a photograph of an undated business card with a picture of a man that looks very much like the Noble Drew Ali known in Chicago in the late 1920s. The card reads as follows:

Prof. Drew  
The Egyptian Adept Student  
Office Hrs. 10 to 12 A.M. 6 to 8 P.M.  
181 Warren St. Newark, N.J.

I am a Moslem.

Prof. Drew is a man who was born with Divine Power. He was taught by the Adepts of Egypt. I have the secret of destroying the germs of tuberculosis and cancer of the lungs in 10 to 30 days. Your lung cancer ended; a very strict examination that the germs are entirely destroyed. Also I can destroy the germs of

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veracity because it does not address the fact that in the late 1920s Drew Ali explicitly stated that the MST was “organized” and “establish[ed]” in Chicago in 1925 (see *Moorish Guide*, August 24, 1928, 1). Still, there are some clues that Drew Ali’s pre-1925 efforts were done under a different organizational name. First of all, the Moorish catechism does not say that in 1913 the group was either “organized” or “establish[ed],” but rather that it was “founded” that year, which suggests that at the time the group did not have an official name. Also, in a 1929 article, Drew Ali wrote: “I have suffered much and severely in the past through misunderstanding of what the Movement was dedicated to” (“Prophet Makes Plea to Nation,” *Moorish Guide*, March 1, 1929, 1). Intense suffering would of course be a motive for changing a group’s name, particularly if changing it prevented people from “misunderstanding ... what the Movement was dedicated to.”

<sup>358</sup> For a summary of some of the pre-1925 legends, see Bowen, “Abdul Hamid Suleiman,” 29-34 and notes. In his booklet *Prophet Drew Ali: Savior of Humanity*, A. Hopkins-Bey presents an interview from 1981 with a man who was reportedly the last surviving member of Drew Ali’s original group in Newark. This interview contains so many details (about the important people in the group at the time and locations of activities), that, although no parts of the story have yet been corroborated by independent sources, we definitely should not dismiss it as pure fiction.

<sup>359</sup> Moorish Temple of Science, Illinois incorporation form, November 26, 1926. A copy of this form can be found in the incorporation documents for a group of the same name incorporated in 1927 in Detroit, on file with the state of Michigan. The FBI, during its investigation into the group in the 1940s, found a number of copies of this form in the possession of various Moorish Science Temples. It should be noted that there is possibly one document (a photograph) from 1925, but there are serious questions about what the date on the picture represents; see Bowen, “Abdul Hamid Suleiman,” 29, n. 103.

Cancer, Gout, Rheumatism, Lumbago, Heart Trouble, Female Diseases, and various afflictions of the body.

Call at once adults and children and be relieved of your sufferings. If you have any doubts about my treatments you can be assured that a dollar is paid with interest.

Through these Divine Treatments there have been great successes of consumption and long standing diseases which have been cured in 2 or 3 days.

We also give Divine instructions and interpretation of the Bible from Genesis to Revelations. Also I have 18 years of Christ that is missing from your Holy Bible for those who desire to know the truth about Jesus the Christ.<sup>360</sup>

This business card is extremely significant. It, first of all, confirms Drew Ali's pre-MST Newark connection, though its lack of a date unfortunately leaves us not knowing when precisely Drew Ali was acting as a Muslim mystic in Newark. He, notably, may not have been acting alone at this time, as indicated by the "we" in the last paragraph. The card tells us, furthermore, that Drew Ali, while still in Newark, had three key elements that would appear in Chicago: his identification as a Muslim, his claiming he could heal diseases, and his alternative explanations of the Bible and Jesus' lost years. What is missing from this card is also interesting: he does not use the Shriner title "noble," nor does he wear a fez—so the Shriner/Masonic ties that would be so prominent in the MST are not present; the Canaanite Temple is not noted; and there is no mention of Moors.

Although in the 1920s Drew Ali was referred by MST members as the "one and only founder" of the MST,<sup>361</sup> today's MST historians generally agree that sometime before coming to Chicago, Drew Ali was taught Islamic "mysteries" (i.e., "mystical"

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<sup>360</sup> The card in the FBI file (MST FBI file, Report, 3/30/1944, Newark file 100-14714, [13]) is almost completely illegible. A number of Moorish Americans have provided me with a clear copy of the card.

<sup>361</sup> See "Temples Welcome Founder as He Blesses Moors," *Moorish Guide*, March 1, 1929, 1.

knowledge) by one “Dr. Suliman” and, possibly, a representative of Abd el-Krim.<sup>362</sup>

While there is, besides a very interesting claim by one Gavrona Ali Mustapha Abdullah,<sup>363</sup> almost no evidence supporting the Abd el-Krim representative story,<sup>364</sup> the “Dr. Suliman” tradition seems, given the current evidence concerning Rev. Dr. P.D. Solomon/Abdul Hamid Suleiman, very plausible.<sup>365</sup> Both Drew Ali and Suleiman claimed to have mystical powers (fortune telling, healing, etc.), both claimed mystical training in Egypt, both used Masonic/Shriner elements, both attempted to build a connection (if only symbolically) with Garvey, both can be placed in Newark, and both

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<sup>362</sup> ALI’S MEN (a non-sectarian group of Moorish-American historians), email correspondence with the author, June 5, 2012. This tradition about “Dr. Suliman” was passed on to the current generation of Moorish historians by the deceased Moorish-American leader Rufus German Bey, who claimed to be a member of the MST during Drew Ali’s life. Some Moorish-American histories, however, contain slight variations on this tradition, such as Dr. Suliman being a collaborator, or Abd el-Krim himself coming to the U.S.

<sup>363</sup> In two 1931 newspaper articles on Gavrona (in the original article, this is the spelling, but in a reprint in another paper, the name is spelled “Gavorona”), it is reported that he claimed that he was “an organizer for the Moorish Holy Temple of Science,” a one-time major in the Rif army, “a Moroccan prince,” and “the son of King Hussein who was exiled on the Isle of Cypress [sic] in 1917.” These last two claims suggest that he had invented his royal origins: Morocco had no “King Hussein” in the 1910s, and never had one that was exiled to Cyprus, while Arabia did have a King Hussein that was exiled in Cyprus, but this was in 1924, not 1917. As far as Gavrona’s claim of service in the Rif army, I have not been able to verify this. Despite the questionable nature of these claims, however, this does not discount the possibilities that Moorish Americans believed his claims, and that he was the purported representative of Abd el-Krim. The possibility that at least some people followed him and believed his claims is supported by 1) the fact that another Moorish American—a man named McClain Bey—was arrested with Gavrona (if Gavrona was to give such a fantastic story for the press, he almost certainly would not have suddenly made this up when he and another Moor—who might not support a story that would give Gavrona so much authority in the MST—were being interrogated at the same time), and 2) a search in Ancestry.com for the name Gavrona brings up only one individual: a Gavrona Bey, born in 1933 in Toledo in an all-MST family—which suggests that he was named after Gavrona Ali Mustapha Abdullah. FBI records indicate that the Toledo temple No. 18 was established in 1929, but, unfortunately, the name of the person who established it is not given. In any case, by the early 1930s the temple was associated with Kirkman Bey. See “‘Prince’ Faces Pistol Charge,” *Toledo Blade*, September 24, 1931, 25; “Moroccan Prince Jailed in Toledo on Weapons Charge,” *Sandusky Register*, September 25, 1931, 1; MST FBI file, Report, 4/22/1944, Cleveland file 100-9538, 10.

<sup>364</sup> I have found only one explicit mention of this story from during the AAIR period (Cheves Richardson, “Sweeping Investigation Under Way of Jap BB Plan of Conquest,” *The People’s Voice*, March 21, 1942, 4).

<sup>365</sup> See Bowen, “Abdul Hamid Suleiman” for an extended discussion.

were said to have led a Canaanite Temple.<sup>366</sup> In fact, Moorish-American historians claim that the Canaanite Temple that Drew Ali led was on Rutgers Street, the same street on which Suleiman's "Canaanites" Temple was verified as being.<sup>367</sup> It is also significant that the timing of the appearance of Drew Ali in Chicago is perfectly consistent with both Suleiman's imprisonment and/or disappearance beginning around late 1923<sup>368</sup> and the UNIA's promotion of the Moors in 1925.<sup>369</sup> Finally, Drew Ali's ability to have a great deal of success as the leader of his "mystical" Islam group is itself evidence of a connection; sociologists of sects have observed that successful sect leaders usually had at one point been members of a similar group, where they learned the ins and outs of running a successful organization of that type.<sup>370</sup>

While all of this evidence is circumstantial and there is not a single piece that directly and conclusively ties Suleiman and Drew Ali, combined, the evidence is still strong enough that there should be little doubt that Drew Ali had at least been familiar with Suleiman, and that he very likely had been a member of Suleiman's Caananites Temple. The connection to Suleiman would explain a great deal about the peculiar mix of

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<sup>366</sup> Suleiman's temple would be pronounced the same way as Drew Ali's in African-American vernacular.

<sup>367</sup> ALI'S MEN, email correspondence with the author, June 10, 2012. On Suleiman's temple's location, see Bowen, "Abdul Hamid Suleiman," 25.

<sup>368</sup> He was first indicted on September 26, 1923; he was convicted a few months later; and in October 1924 the New Jersey Supreme Court affirmed the lower court's decision on the case; see "Cult Head Must Serve His Term," *Trenton Evening Times*, October 24, 1924, 4.

<sup>369</sup> And, as mentioned below, no Drew or Ali appears on the Canaanite Temple, No. 1, Inc. incorporation form from 1924. Drew Ali may have decided to create his own sect after Suleiman's imprisonment. This may explain why he went to Chicago, where probably no one had heard of Suleiman or his Caananites Temple, thereby reducing the possibility of competition with other former members.

<sup>370</sup> William Sims Bainbridge and Rodney Stark, "Cult Formation: Three Compatible Models," in *Cults and New Religious Movements: A Reader*, ed. Lorne L. Dawson (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 63-64.

elements in Drew Ali's "mystical" Islam in Chicago, including its Hebrew-type elements (such as giving members the *surname* of El—as should be recalled, in 1905 Suleiman claimed to have once been a rabbi)<sup>371</sup> and the claim that African Americans are descendants of the Canaanites.<sup>372</sup> It is very possible that, because Suleiman had, longer than any other known figure, been closely tied to many of the major elements shaping the AAIR, he was able to teach a student—even a student who may have already identified as a Muslim, as some MST histories suggest—who could masterfully channel these elements into a successful organization.

In addition to Suleiman, other individuals had probably influenced the development of the MST prior to 1925. One of the most fascinating pieces of evidence from the FBI's investigation into the MST is the claims of the Johnson family. In the early 1940s, George Johnson told federal agents that his father, Ira, had "started up" the MST in Chicago,<sup>373</sup> that Drew Ali was simply his "associate," and that he had led the MST until his incarceration in 1929 (see below).<sup>374</sup> This is, at best, a distortion of the facts and, at worst, an outright lie: in no known pre-1929 MST document is Ira Johnson identified even as a second-tier leader; Drew Ali was the group's undisputed head and

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<sup>371</sup> However, the possibility that the word, as it was used in the MST, had Hebrew roots was not accepted in the MST (see "'Bey of Baltimore' Protests He's a Teacher, Not Fugitive," *Sun* (Baltimore), October 28, 1934, 3). In most cases, early MST members simply said that El, like Bey, was the person's family's tribal name prior to being brought to America, and either the member or the temple leader, because they had no records about which name the family had used before slavery, determined which name the member would receive. In some cases, El was said to indicate that the person with it was of superior status to those with the name Bey.

<sup>372</sup> This claim is made in Drew Ali's *Holy Koran*. Interestingly, in the MST's catechism, the land of Canaan also has special significance: it is the location not only of the Garden of Eden, but also of Mecca; see Drew Ali, *Koran Questions*, questions 53 and 54.

<sup>373</sup> He claimed that it was originally located at 1841 State Street.

<sup>374</sup> MSTA FBI file, Report, 9/21/1943, Chicago file 14-39, 23.

founder. However, there is evidence that suggests that some people in the MST did believe this claim, or at least something close to it. First of all, Ira was possibly sometimes referred to as Mohammed Bey,<sup>375</sup> and in the 1940s at least some Moors believed that a Mohammed Bey was a key figure in the founding of the MST.<sup>376</sup> Second, in newspaper photographs of Johnson taken around the time of his arrest and trials in 1929 and 1930, he is wearing a beard, which was not a practice common in Drew Ali's group, and is therefore a sign that he was following his own religious doctrines, which suggests that he had his own religious authority. After 1930, the most well-known MST faction that made the wearing of the beard a requirement was that of Givens-El, who reportedly had been a follower or close associate of Ira as early as the fall of 1929.<sup>377</sup> In fact, there were a number of links between Ira and Givens-El. George Johnson said that Givens-El had an MST marriage with George's aunt, Mittie Gordon, who, as will be seen in chapter 5, led a pro-Japanese black nationalist group, the Peace Movement of Ethiopia, in which Islam was very important.<sup>378</sup> It is also known that Ira and his son maintained a rather strong following in several states (an accomplishment that would have been

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<sup>375</sup> James Sullivan, "Malcolm Recalls 'Moors' War," *Chicago Tribune*, February 28, 1965, 2.

<sup>376</sup> MSTA FBI file, Report, 2/26/1943, MID 201, Moorish Science Temple of America, 2. However, I have no evidence from during Ira's lifetime that he was referred to as such—the only alternative name I have seen for him in evidence from the period is Allah-El. There was, however, in the 1930s a Mohammed Bey in Kansas City who claimed to be Drew Ali reincarnated and that he had helped Drew Ali found the MST. After he died in 1941 (a fact that indicates he was not the same person as Ira), his wife became the head of his group. Interestingly, this MST faction was the one that had the most Moors who were incarcerated for draft evasion in the 1940s. See MSTA FBI file, Report, 8/7/1942, Kansas City file 100-4692, 5; MSTA FBI file, Memorandum, United States Naval Intelligence Service Ninth Naval District B-7-O, "Topical Study Memorandum on Moorish Science Temple of America," 5/28/1943, 2.

<sup>377</sup> "Aaron Payne Marked for Death by Moors," *Chicago Defender* (City ed.), September 28, 1929, 3; MSTA FBI file, Report, 9/21/1943, Chicago file 14-39, 24.

<sup>378</sup> *Ibid.*

somewhat difficult had the followers not believed that Ira was the true leader of the MST) and that in the late 1940s, after Givens-El had died, George was able to take over several of Givens-El's temples (see below). These facts suggest that Ira led an early MST faction (which influenced Givens-El) with distinct religious doctrines; this, then, gives some credence to the claim that before Drew Ali passed away Ira was at least contributing unique religious ideas to the MST.

Whatever his influences were, Drew Ali seems to have developed his own unique Islamic identity. Indeed, despite the probably false rumor that he was “almost totally ignorant and [could] scarcely write his own name,”<sup>379</sup> it is likely that many of the central teachings of his movement, particularly its identification with the Moors of North Africa, are primarily attributable to Drew Ali. Even though his main text had largely been plagiarized from two non-Islamic “mystical” works that were being sold at the time (see below), and even though his identification of African Americans with the Moors had perhaps been at least partially inspired by the American Moor tradition, the Ahmadi claims of African Americans’ “forefathers,” and the UNIA’s interest in the Rif War, it was probably Drew Ali—not Suleiman or Ira Johnson—who brought these and other ideas all together in a way that would resonate with thousands of African Americans. Drew Ali probably also gave Garvey-connected themes a much more prominent place in his movement than had Suleiman, who was much older and thus was more likely to be stuck in his pre-Garvey era ways. For Drew Ali, Garvey was his “forerunner” in the same way that John the Baptist was one for Jesus. Garvey, Drew Ali wrote in his 1927 *Holy*

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<sup>379</sup> “Murder Plot Grew Out of this Cult,” *Chicago Defender* (City ed.), March 23, 1929, sect. I, 6.

*Koran of the Moorish Science Temple of America*, “did teach and warn the nations of the earth to prepare to meet the coming Prophet; who was to bring the true and divine Creed of Islam, and his name is Noble Drew Ali...”<sup>380</sup> In other words, those who followed and believed in Marcus Garvey, could now, with Garvey imprisoned (and, later, deported), connect with the true continuation of the powerful message that Garvey had preached, because Drew Ali’s group, he claimed, was philosophically aligned with Garvey’s.<sup>381</sup> In fact, Drew Ali asserted that he had visited Garvey in prison during the fall of 1927 where he obtained Garvey’s personal approval for the MST.<sup>382</sup>

Other elements of Drew Ali’s message also seem to have been influenced by the UNIA community. He emphasized, for instance, that “Moorish” was in fact a *nationality*—echoing Garvey’s urging of black people to acknowledge their African “nationality.”<sup>383</sup> The “science” in Moorish Science Temple, of course, resonated with both the New York Muslim mystic identity and Garvey’s “scientific understanding of

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<sup>380</sup> Drew Ali, *Holy Koran of the Moorish Science Temple of America* ([Chicago]: Noble Drew Ali, 1927), chapter XLVIII.

<sup>381</sup> However, the MST explicitly said it was not a “Back to Africa Movement,” and so was not concerned with moving to Africa; see Drew Ali, “The Moorish Science Temple of America,” *Moorish Guide*, September 14, 1928, 4.

<sup>382</sup> “Noble Drew Ali Returns after Long Visit South,” *Chicago Defender* (Ntl ed.), November 19, 1927, 5. Garvey historians dispute this claim, citing a letter Garvey wrote in September 1927 in which he denied ever hearing about Drew Ali, but Moorish-American historians have what they say is a postcard written by Drew Ali to his wife from the prison dated October 23 of that year (Garvey was not deported until the following month). See Hill, *Garvey Papers*, 7: 82, n. 2; Sheik Way-El, *Noble Drew Ali & the Moorish Science Temple of America: “The Movement that Started it All”* ([Washington, D.C.]: Moorish Science Temple of America, 2011), 31.

<sup>383</sup> However, when Suleiman first appeared, in Washington, D.C. in 1905, he also encouraged the development of an African-American “nation” in West Africa, so he may have also been responsible for Drew Ali’s stress on the term.

religion.” Also, in his *Holy Koran*, Drew Ali urged readers to “know thyself”<sup>384</sup>—though this exhortation dates back to ancient Greece, as discussed in chapter 2, it had been frequently stressed in the UNIA as a way of encouraging its followers to accept black unity and black greatness. Another interesting connection is Drew Ali’s use of the expression “uplift fallen humanity.”<sup>385</sup> The use of the term “uplift” connected him to the post-emancipation African-American religious tradition. But the specific expression that he used is notable because, although it was popular among turn-of-the-century U.S. Christian preachers of all races, it had also been used as part of the organizational name of a little-known Garvey-affiliated New York group in 1923: the Negro Universal Society for the Uplift of the Fallen Humanity. Still, Drew Ali is not listed as a member of this group,<sup>386</sup> so it is likely that, if this group did influence him at all, it was only by showing him an appealing phrase to use.

Another aspect of the MST that can be traced back to the UNIA is Drew Ali’s identification of African Americans with Asia—American blacks are said to be in reality “Asiatics,” and Drew Ali prophesied the imminent “uniting of Asia.” For Drew Ali, all who are not from Europe are Asiatics because the people who inhabited Africa and the pre-Columbian Americas are descendants of people from the Middle East.<sup>387</sup> This

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<sup>384</sup> This expression appears in two places in Drew Ali’s *Holy Koran*: in chapter XXXVI (which is in fact an uncredited borrowing from the book *Unto Thee I Grant*; see below for a discussion) and at the beginning of the introduction, which was written by Drew Ali.

<sup>385</sup> This appeared in several places in Drew Ali-era MST writings. The first, and most important, is in the final line of Ali’s *Holy Koran* (chapter XLVIII).

<sup>386</sup> “Negro Universal Society of New York for Uplift of its Fallen Humanity,” *Negro World*, February 3, 1923, 5.

<sup>387</sup> See Ali, *Holy Koran*, chapter XLV.

identification with Asia is reminiscent of New York's Muslim mystics, such as Prof. Du JaJa and his "Asia and Africa Remedy Company," but it also reflects an identity promoted by the fez-wearing UNIA exponent of Islam, Dusé Mohamed Ali. Dusé had been connecting anti-colonial desires of Africans and Asians since the 1910s, as reflected in the title of his newspaper *African Times and Orient Review* and his American African Oriental Trading company, which he had tried to run in his early years in the U.S. In fact, as his biographer points out, Dusé's effort to connect the struggles of black people with Asians was one of his most unique contributions to Pan-Africanism.<sup>388</sup>

For Dusé, however, in addition to the shared anti-colonial desires of black people and Asians, another shared element was Islam, which had a significant following in both Africa and Asia. Dusé had, while in England, developed strong ties with Asian Muslims, particularly Indians, and while in the U.S. he continued connecting with Asian Muslims, and was invited by several Indian Muslim immigrants to the Detroit Muslim community in the fall of 1922.<sup>389</sup> In 1926, Dusé was president of Detroit's Universal Islamic Society, a multi-racial Islamic group composed primarily of immigrants.<sup>390</sup> Also during the 1920s, Dusé conceived of an organization that would, in his own words, "call into being more amicable relations and a better understanding between America and the Orient in general

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<sup>388</sup> See Duffield, 516-528.

<sup>389</sup> Duffield, 690.

<sup>390</sup> See Duffield, 688-93; Howell, 92-101. While this group was multiracial, we do not know if African *Americans* were part of the community, as opposed to just African immigrants. Also, we do know if Dusé had contact with Satti Majid who, as we will see, was in Detroit in the early 1920s and started groups with similar names.

than had previously obtained.”<sup>391</sup> Gaining commitments from local literary and artistic circles, Dusé formed in Detroit the American-Asiatic Association/America-Asia Society in late 1925,<sup>392</sup> though infighting led to his resignation the following November and the group’s demise shortly thereafter.<sup>393</sup> In New York City, however, probably after he had already resigned from the group in Detroit, Dusé formed a similar organization, the America-Asia Association Inc., which probably lasted no later than 1928.<sup>394</sup> The fact that that UNIA- and Suleiman-linked Dusé was doing more than anyone else to stress the connections between black people and Asians suggests that he may have impacted MST doctrines in some way, perhaps through his influence on the UNIA, his association with Suleiman, or, less likely (given how busy he was with his other activities and the fact that in his detailed autobiography he failed to mention the MST), through a direct connection with Drew Ali.<sup>395</sup>

The Moorish Science Temple was probably also influenced by Garvey’s movement on both an organizational and purpose level. The group, like the UNIA, had a constitution, and local branches and regions had temples led by individuals with

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<sup>391</sup> Dusé Mohamed Ali, *Dusé Mohamed Ali (1866-1945): The Autobiography of a Pioneer Pan African and Afro-Asian Activist* (Trenton: Red Sea Press, 2011), 180.

<sup>392</sup> Duffield, 661.

<sup>393</sup> Duffield, 691-93; Dusé Mohamed Ali, 180-82; Howell, 99; Dada Amir Haider Khan, *Chains to Lose: Life and Struggles of a Revolutionary*, ed. Hasan N. Gardezi (New Delhi: Patriot Publishers, 1989), 422-24 (I would like to thank Sally Howell for informing me about *Chains to Lose*).

<sup>394</sup> There is some conflict between historians over the details connected to these activities. See Duffield, 693-96; Howell, 99-100; Khan, *Chains to Lose*, 422-24.

<sup>395</sup> MST historians ALI’S MEN believe it is likely that Dusé did have a direct connection with Drew Ali. While we cannot eliminate this possibility for before 1925, I know of no evidence to indicate that he was affiliated with the MST from 1925 onwards; and given Dusé’s prominence, the MST would almost certainly have publicized its relationship with him, as it did for other well-known black figures with which it had connections.

important-sounding titles, such as “Grand Sheik” and “Grand Governor”—reflecting the fact that both the UNIA and the Moorish Science Temple were significantly influenced by Masonic/Shriner organizational structures. The MST, like Garvey’s group, used this organizational structure to meet a number of economic goals, such as providing charity and mutual assistance to members (which was a function of African-American Masonry as well).<sup>396</sup> Also, Drew Ali, like Garvey, promoted the creation of black-run businesses that African Americans would patronize, as it was, in the opinion of the MST, a “nation’s” right to retain the money it produced, or, to have businesses of “our own.”<sup>397</sup> Members sold medicinal herbs,<sup>398</sup> started grocery stores, and, at least in Chicago, ran a moving company.<sup>399</sup> The opportunity to earn money without reliance on whites was almost certainly a major draw of the MST.

In addition to his clear Garvey influence, Drew Ali may have also differed from Suleiman in his use of particular practices and texts from the American “mystical” religion scene. First of all, in order to promote his Temple, Drew Ali performed as an escape artist, something for which there is no evidence of Suleiman having ever done.<sup>400</sup>

Drew Ali also may have possibly been uniquely influenced by modern Western esoteric

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<sup>396</sup> Drew Ali, “The Moorish Science Temple of America.”

<sup>397</sup> See Drew Ali, “The Moorish Science Temple of America”; Claude D. Greene, “Our Dollars and Sense,” *Moorish Guide*, September 14, 1928, 2; Drew Ali, “Demanding Ours,” *Moorish Guide*, October 26, 1928, 4.

<sup>398</sup> See the advertisements for these in the *Moorish Guide*. The MST also stated that one of its goals was “to aid in the improvement of health”; see Drew Ali, “The Moorish Science Temple of America.”

<sup>399</sup> Advertisements for the group’s “Moorish Express” company appeared as early as December 1926 in the classified section of the *Chicago Daily Tribune*.

<sup>400</sup> See the advertisements in Wilson, 30 and “Sheiks, Prophets Figure in Great Moorish Drama,” *Chicago Defender* (City ed.), May 14, 1927, sect. II, 9. I would like to thank Susan Nance for giving me a copy of the latter.

teachings about the number seven, with which the links to Suleiman are at best fairly tenuous.<sup>401</sup> The number seven adorned the cover of most copies of Drew Ali's *Holy Koran* (because of this, the book is usually referred to as the "Circle Seven Koran"), was referred to on several occasions in that book, was the number that members had to represent with hand gestures while saying a prayer in MST meetings, and was highly important for the group's understanding of a person's life.

The MST's use of the number is largely reflective of that originally promoted by Theosophy,<sup>402</sup> but Drew Ali and his followers may have obtained their understanding of seven from the Rosicrucian teachings of Max Heindel, who was himself significantly influenced by Theosophy.<sup>403</sup> Heindel was a German emigrant to the U.S. who had been a member of the Theosophical Society and a student of various "mystical" religions during the first decade of the twentieth century. In 1909 he published *The Rosicrucian Cosmo-Conception*,<sup>404</sup> which incorporated themes from Theosophy, astrology, and various other "mystical" traditions, and became fairly popular in the U.S. "mystical" scene at the time. It, furthermore, emphasized the number seven, expanding on the Theosophical teachings on the subject. Heindel claims, among other things, that there are seven periods in

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<sup>401</sup> The two main links between Suleiman and the number seven are A) the fact that in 1922-23, which were the peak of his organizing activities, he consistently claimed to be seventy-seven years old; and B) in 1934 he was listed as a past leader of a Masonic lodge known as Atma Lodge A.F. & O.M. (see Bowen, "Abdul Hamid Suleiman," 23). "Atma" is a term borrowed from Indian religions by Theosophists, for whom it represents the seventh and highest component of a human being, the "spirit."

<sup>402</sup> See Campbell, 62-65.

<sup>403</sup> The contemporary MST historian group, ALI'S MEN, rejects the idea that Drew Ali borrowed directly from Heindel. It explains the similarities by saying that Heindel was simply teaching the same universal, perennial truth that Drew Ali taught; email message to the author, November 20, 2012.

<sup>404</sup> Max Heindel, *The Rosicrucian Cosmo-Conception or Christian Occult Science* (Chicago: M.A. Donahue & Co., 1910).

history, seven spirits guiding the world, seven races, and seven states of matter. More important for our purposes, though, is that seven is a key number for human life. First of all, humans are composed of seven principal parts—the body has three parts, the human “spirit” has three, and the seventh part is the mind, “the mirror through which the threefold spirit reflects itself through the threefold body.”<sup>405</sup> In addition, Heindel says that “the particles of our body are constantly changing; that at least once in seven years there is a change in every atom of matter composing them.”<sup>406</sup> Therefore, every seven years, humans transition into a new stage. For example during its first seven years, the human body develops its basic life-giving characteristics; in the second period it “store[s] up an amount of force which goes to the sex organs and is ready at that time the desire body is set free”;<sup>407</sup> and from fourteen to twenty-one, the human body become strong so that it may propagate.<sup>408</sup>

The MST held similar ideas about the number seven. Drew Ali’s *Holy Koran* had a few references to seven spirits of God, and in 1935 a MST leader wrote about the relationship of seven to human life:<sup>409</sup>

[Seven] has a unity as it were coupling together of two three’s [sic] which would be considered of several parts thereof, and the joining together thereof without a doubt. We shall confess that it is as well by the joining together of these parts thereof, as by its fullness, a part most full of majesty.

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<sup>405</sup> Heindel, 88.

<sup>406</sup> Heindel, 149.

<sup>407</sup> Heindel, 143.

<sup>408</sup> Hendel, 142.

<sup>409</sup> The MST historians, ALI’S MEN, have informed me that the following teachings have been passed on orally in the MST since the 1920s; email correspondence with the author, November 20, 2012.

It may cause a vacuum of man's life; when it does not receive its part (for it contains its whole), or it contains the body and soul. For the body consists of four elements, and it is endowed with four qualities: also the number represents the soul by reason of its (threefold [sic] power that consists the soul [sic] (Byz) [sic]: Rational, irresistible and inconceivable...

The number seven therefore, because it consisted of three and four joins the soul to the body. And the virtue of this number relates to the generation of man, and it causes men to be conceived, formed, brought forth, nourished, to live and indeed altogether to subsist for when the general seed is received of that a woman if it remains that seven years after be [sic] infused of [words missing] abide there, for [words missing] every seven days it is calculated and it is fit to receive the shape of man.

And it produces nature or infant which is called an infant after birth. The first seven hours try, whether it will live or not. For if it will hear the breath of the air after the hour it is conceived, it will live.

After seven days it casts off the relics of the navel. After twice seven days its sides begin to move, after life; and in the third seven, it turns its eyes and whole face freely. After seven months it breeds teeth. After the second seven months it sits without falling. After the third seven months it begins to speak. After the fourth seven months it stands strong and walks. After the fifth seven month [sic] it begins to refrain from circling its nurse. After seven years its first teeth fall and new one [sic] begin to breed, more suitable for eating and its speech is perfect. After the second seventh year boys wax right and then it is the beginning of the generation at the third seven years when they grow to man in nature and begin to be hairy and [he] becomes able and strong for generation.<sup>410</sup>

Another connection with Heindel's thought is apparent in the ideas surrounding spiritual growth in each group. According to Heindel, over the course of his or her life, a human should be trying to fulfill his or her destiny, which is to become Creative Intelligence, or God—a concept that was rather common in the “mystical” initiation groups at the time.<sup>411</sup> To do this, the human must become an “adept” and develop mastery over the seven parts of his or her personhood and over his or her physical environment (a notion also derived from Theosophy). The highest stage to achieve is the

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<sup>410</sup> E[dward] Turner-El, [unknown], *Moorish Guide*, April 19, 1935, 3.

<sup>411</sup> Heindel, 126.

“Third Heaven,” in which a human realizes his or her past lives and contemplates his or her future reincarnation.<sup>412</sup> The MST, meanwhile, contains very similar concepts. Members are encouraged to study to become an “Adept,”— also referred to as entering the “Adept Chamber, 3<sup>rd</sup> heaven”—which is “one that possesses knowledge of and has shown sufficient proficiency in transforming the negatives of their own individual condition into something positive and valuable, and hence can and does direct others to do the same, using the framework set in place by Noble Drew Ali.”<sup>413</sup> Those who have fully mastered the teachings understand that they are truly part of Allah, and can “realat[e] ... infinite experience.”<sup>414</sup> Reincarnation is also taught, and it was an important element for the many of the post-1929 factions (see below).

After publishing *Cosmo-Conception*, Heindel quickly gained a following, known as the Rosicrucian Fellowship, that stretched from Los Angeles to New York City. While I know of no data on any African-American members at the time, interestingly, there are a few connections between the group and black Americans. First, as early as the mid-1920s, one of the leading Rosicrucian Fellowship teachers, Theodore Heline, was advertising his Rosicrucian lectures in New York’s popular black newspaper, the *New York Amsterdam News*. But perhaps the most intriguing connection is one that provides another indirect tie between Drew Ali and Dusé Mohamed Ali. Dusé’s second wife, the white Gertrude La Page, was committed to Heindel’s Rosicrucian teachings. In the 1930s, when Dusé was living in Lagos, Nigeria, he edited a weekly magazine, *The*

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<sup>412</sup> Heindel, 129.

<sup>413</sup> ALI’S MEN, email correspondence with the author, August 4, 2012.

<sup>414</sup> See the ministry ordination certificate in the Schomburg Center’s MSTA collection.

*Comet*, for which La Page wrote a weekly column expounding on moral and religious ideas, which frequently included Heindel's Rosicrucian teachings.<sup>415</sup> Dusé's magazine even sometimes ran pieces written by Heindel's wife and Heline in lieu of La Page's column. Unfortunately, the earliest evidence for a connection between Dusé and La Page is 1931,<sup>416</sup> and there is no clear evidence that Dusé himself was a Rosicrucian,<sup>417</sup> but it is suggestive that La Page appears to have been living in New York State in 1924.<sup>418</sup>

Still, the most important elements from the American "mystical" religion scene that Drew Ali used are those that were employed for his *Holy Koran*. This book was largely composed of un-credited borrowings of portions of two works that were being sold to African-Americans by white "mystical" leaders at the time, and were particularly popular among Rosicrucians: Levi Dowling's *The Aquarian Gospel of Jesus the Christ* and a book whose true author remains obscure, *Unto Thee I Grant*.<sup>419</sup> In many cases, all

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<sup>415</sup> La Page wrote for *The Comet* from 1933 until 1937, the year she left Nigeria and divorced Dusé.

<sup>416</sup> See Duffield, 651-652.

<sup>417</sup> Dusé was reportedly knowledgeable of and taught about "the mysteries of ancient Egypt" (see Duffield, 685), but I have not seen any writing by Dusé endorsing explicitly Rosicrucian ideas, nor have I seen Dusé's name mentioned as a member of La Page's Rosicrucian group. Still, in the picture of La Page's Nigerian Rosicrucian group that ran in the *Comet*'s 1935 Christmas issue, the man standing behind La Page may have possibly been Dusé—the quality of the microfilm copy of the *Comet*, and the fact that there are not enough pictures of Dusé from that period to have a solid knowledge of his appearance at the time (the main picture of Dusé I have used for comparison is that which ran in the Christmas issue of the *Comet* in 1936, page 26), makes it difficult to judge.

<sup>418</sup> She had a poem, entitled "The Phantom Drum," run in the *Tonawanda Evening News* on August 12, 1924.

<sup>419</sup> For a breakdown of how the chapters in Drew Ali's book correspond with the other two books, see Gomez, 232-235 (including notes). *Unto Thee I Grant* was published twice in the 1920s by the two white men who I mentioned in chapter 2 were promoting "mystical" religion to African Americans at the time—William De Laurence (1923) and H. Spencer Lewis of the Rosicrucian AMORC group (1925). Lewis, whose books were sold in Chicago occult bookstores, also used uncredited borrowings of the *Aquarian Gospel* for his own book, *The Mystical Life of Jesus*. For further discussions, see John Benedict Buescher, *Aquarian Evangelist: The Age of Aquarius as it Dawned in the Mind of Levi Dowling* (Fullerton, CA: Theosophical History, 2008), 44; Caverly, 343; Mitch Horowitz, *Occult America: The Secret History of*

that was changed in Ali's text was the order of the passages and the appearance of the word "God," which was substituted with "Allah." Much of the *Unto Thee I Grant* excerpts are instructions for moral conduct, while the *Aquarian Gospel* passages deal with an alternative history of Jesus and Indian religions. The message conveyed in the *Holy Koran* largely reflected what was said by the original authors, which was primarily that humans are a "thought" of Allah, that they therefore have Allah's attributes, and because of these facts people should uphold the godly principles of love, truth, peace, freedom, and justice. Drew Ali's book is in fact very this-worldly oriented; it rejects the idea that there is a heaven or hell in the afterlife—heaven and hell are merely states of mind.

To these ideas Drew Ali added a few concepts that were, as far as is currently known, unique in the AAIR at the time. One was the Canaanite-Moorish genealogy, that African Americans are descendants of the biblical Canaanites *and* Moabites, and that the latter had supposedly immigrated to North Africa. As Ernest Allen, Jr. has argued, it is possible that Drew Ali was able to convincingly connect African Americans' supposed biblical ancestors to North Africans because of similarities of the pronunciations of key groups' names. In African-American vernacular, with its post-vocalic -r deletion, the term "Moabite" would sound very similar to "Moavid," or "Almoravid"—the name of North African Muslim dynasty from which the term "Moor" is derived.<sup>420</sup> The creative reworking of the pronunciation of a North African term may also explain another claim in

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*How Mysticism Shaped Our Nation* (New York: Bantam Books, 2009), 204; Nuruddin, 240-242, n. 12; Wilson, 20-21.

<sup>420</sup> Allen, "Identity and Destiny," 183.

Drew Ali's book: that Africa's "true and divine name" is "Amexem," a term for which there is no trace prior to its use by Drew Ali. Contemporary MST historians have proposed that "Amexem" may be a transliteration of an American pronunciation of the North African term "el-Makzhen," which, prior to 1957, was used to refer to the ruling institution of Morocco and Tunisia.<sup>421</sup> Finally, Drew Ali advanced the notion that through acknowledging and living up to their true "nationality" and religion, Moorish-Americans would be able to overcome their "fallen" condition in the U.S. and regain self-respect and economic and political strength. It was a very Garvey-like message that had been combined with, and strengthened by the late nineteenth-century "uplift" and American Moor traditions (and possibly Muhammad Din's claim) and the "mystical" Islam dynamic.

### **The Moorish Science Temple, 1925-1929: The Drew Ali Era**

After establishing himself in Chicago, where there were reportedly several thousand Garveyites in 1925<sup>422</sup> and where the Ahmadiyya movement was headquartered, Drew Ali's Temple was off to a slow start. But in 1927, around the time the Ahmadi movement was beginning to reach its 1920s nadir (see chapter 5) and Garvey's imprisonment had begun leading to the UNIA's losing cohesion, MSTs started being organized in numerous cities east of the Mississippi River.<sup>423</sup> By early 1929, when the

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<sup>421</sup> ALI'S MEN, Facebook correspondence with the author, April 25, 2013.

<sup>422</sup> W.A. Wallace and E.B. Knox, "Chicago, Ill.," *Negro World*, October 24, 1925, 6. The president of the Chicago UNIA claimed 18,000 members that year, though this was probably, at best, the number of registered members *and* sympathizers.

<sup>423</sup> My assertion here agrees with the charter dates of the first eleven temples given by MST historians (see Way-El, 95). In addition, the incorporation record for Detroit's Temple No. 4, shows that it was not incorporated until September 22, 1927.

group was known as the Moorish Science Temple of America (MSTA), over a dozen branches could be found in black communities from Milwaukee and Pine Bluff, Arkansas, the group's most northwestern and southwestern points, to Richmond, Virginia and Newark, its eastern limits.<sup>424</sup> Evidence suggests that around 7,000 people had joined the movement by late 1928, making it the largest African-American Muslim organization to have existed by that time.<sup>425</sup> Drew Ali, meanwhile, was rapidly moving up Chicago's

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<sup>424</sup> I have seen a copy of the *Moorish Guide* from October 26, 1928 which has the membership numbers for some of the smaller groups, but there is also reportedly at least one issue of that newspaper (October 6, 1928) that has the size of the Detroit temple, and possibly others.

<sup>425</sup> A number of scholars have uncritically accepted the exaggerated membership numbers (from 12,000 to over 100,000) offered by Moorish Americans to outsiders during the period, but we can gain a more accurate picture by using the temple membership numbers that were reported by the MST during the late 1920s in its organ, the *Moorish Guide*. So far, I have only been able to look at one issue of the *Moorish Guide* that contains these numbers (the October 28, 1928 issue), and this particular issue (at least the copy I have seen) only gives the numbers for ten temples, and it does not give numbers for the two largest temples: Detroit's and Chicago's Grand Temple. The total number of members (in cases where two numbers are given, "eligible members" and "adepts," I only count the larger number) in these ten temples is 1,585; the average is about 159 members per temple, with the greatest number being 459 in Pittsburgh and the lowest number 57 in Youngstown. If we were to estimate that the other five known temples had 159 members each, this would bring our number to 2,380. However, there is good evidence that the Chicago Grand Temple and Detroit temple were much larger than the other temples. First of all, the Detroit temple's finances were published in the October 28 issue, and they showed a total income of \$19,458, which was five times as much as the temple with the next highest reported income: Pittsburgh (the Chicago Grand Temple's income was not reported). Therefore, we could estimate that the Detroit temple had around five times as many members as the Pittsburgh temple, putting it at 2,295. However, the MST historians, ALI'S MEN, have told me (though have not provided a copy) that "In the 'Report of Temples' published in the *Moorish Guide* (Oct. 6, 1928), Temple 4 in Detroit shows 1500 members," email correspondence with the author, August 5, 2012. I have seen this number referred to in at least one other newspaper article from the period, so I am inclined to believe its truth. Despite this evidence, however, ALI'S MEN also say, without citing any source, that the Detroit temple actually had 4,000, a somewhat less believable number. In any case, if the Detroit temple did have 1,500 members, this would bring our total to 3,371. As for the Chicago Grand Temple—which was, because it was the main center of MST activity in the 1920s and the home base of Drew Ali, most likely the largest MST temple in the 1920s—in one *Moorish Guide* article there is a claim that it had 3,000 members ("All Registering," *Moorish Guide*, September 28, 1928, 4). Given what we know about the size of the Detroit temple, the likelihood that the Chicago Grand Temple was even larger, and the tendency of the *Moorish Guide* to report what appear to be fairly accurate numbers, I am inclined to believe that this is a legitimate number. This number puts us, then, at a grand total of 6,212. I have rounded up to 7,000 to account for the possibilities of under-reporting and that membership numbers rose slightly by December 1928/January 1929, which might have been the true peak of the Drew Ali-era MST. I should also point out that ALI'S MEN claim (but, again, without documentation) that until May 1928, the MST was a civic—not religious—organization that had over 9,000 members, and not all were Muslim: "The greater part of the work of the organization was to galvanize and mobilize an 'Asiatic voter bloc,' referred to in Drew Ali's statements as a 'casting a free national ballot at the polls.' The nationality

circles—both black and white—of political influence, and had gained the support of Oscar De Priest, who was on his way to becoming the first African-American elected into Congress.<sup>426</sup>

Very little is known about the early group's day-to-day religious practices and rituals. For over sixty years, scholars have mostly relied on the description of a MST faction made by Arthur Fauset in his 1944 study of African-American religious sects.<sup>427</sup> As will be shown, however, by the time Fauset conducted his study, the various MST factions had developed distinct identities and practices, and so, while it is likely that each sect's practices were derived from those in the Drew Ali-period,<sup>428</sup> what the original elements were are currently not known. Nevertheless, there exists a small amount of relatively reliable information about the early practices. There is, first of all, the short

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card for the MSTA was a registration card to show registered members (not adepts), and cards were issued EVERY DAY OF THE WEEK during the time of Drew Ali. Friday and Sunday religious meetings/classes were held (Holy Day and Sunday School), however social, economic and political organizing took place every other day of the week, with Wednesday meetings slated to teach 'the national language,' or the Moorish American political agenda and platform. It was via this action that Drew Ali's political influence became so strong during that time," email correspondence with the author, August 5, 2012.

<sup>426</sup> See the mention of politicians in the following newspaper reports: "Moorish Leader is Postmaster's Guest," *Chicago Defender* (City ed.), June 30, 1928, sect. I, [3?]; "Moors to Hold National Conclave October 14," *Chicago Defender* (Ntl ed.), October 13, 1928, 3; "Hold Session of Moorish Science Body," *Chicago Defender* (City ed.), October 20, 1928, sect. I, 2; "Moorish Leader on Tour Visits Subordinate Bodies," *Chicago Defender* (Ntl ed.), November 24, 1928, 3; "Birthday of Moorish Leader Is Celebrated," *Chicago Defender* (Ntl ed.), January 12, 1929, 3; "Greene Heads Chicago Boosters Civic Club," *Chicago Defender* (Ntl ed.), January 12, 1929, 3; "Moorish Leader Attends Inauguration of Governor," *Chicago Defender* (Ntl ed.), January 19, 1929, 2; Claude D. Greene, "Why Voters in the 2D Ward Will Re-Elect Ald. Anderson," *Chicago Defender* (City ed.), February 2, 1929, sect. I, 3.

<sup>427</sup> Arthur Huff Fauset, *Black Gods of the Metropolis* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002 [1944]), 41-51.

<sup>428</sup> Fauset, in fact, was aware of this fact through his work with the Works Progress Administration (WPA) whose writings on the MST written during the early 1940s made this observation; see the WPA's *Early Studies in Black Nationalism*.

description made by the Works Progress Administration.<sup>429</sup> In addition, a ritual outline found in a MST newspaper in 1928 reveals a service that was similar to, but slightly different from, the one described by Fauset.<sup>430</sup> Finally, the FBI interviewed individuals who had been members of the MST during the 1920s and they gave snippets of information about the services.<sup>431</sup> Generally, the Drew Ali-era meeting—which was typically held during Wednesday and Sunday<sup>432</sup> evenings from 8:00 to 10:00 p.m.—began with readings by the temple leader (the Grand Sheik) from MST literature, primarily Drew Ali’s *Holy Koran*. Then, numerous members of the temple would be given the floor to speak on various MST teachings. Usually dispersed throughout the meeting was the chanting of songs—which were most often common Christian hymns with the words changed to reflect MST teachings—performed by a single member, a choir, or the whole congregation.<sup>433</sup>

In addition to the regular services, one newspaper article from the pre-1930 period suggests that “sheik meeting[s]” were held intermittently on Tuesday nights.<sup>434</sup> The FBI’s investigation revealed that holding these “sheik meetings”—during which leading

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<sup>429</sup> See WPA, *Early Studies*, 21-22.

<sup>430</sup> P. Smith-El, “Program of Moorish Science Temple of America No. 12,” *Moorish Guide*, [September 28, 1928?], 3.

<sup>431</sup> E.g., MSTA FBI file, Report, 9/21/1943, Chicago file 14-39, 19.

<sup>432</sup> And probably Friday.

<sup>433</sup> The MST songs have been compiled in Willie Bey and [Muhammad] [Al-]Ahari El, eds., *Songs of Salvation* (Chicago: Magribine Press, 1996).

<sup>434</sup> “Bomb Blasts Hill Temple,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, November 6, 1929, 1.

members of a temple would discuss issues related to the local group—continued to be a practice into the 1940s, at least among the largest faction.<sup>435</sup>

It is not known exactly what the dress requirements were during the pre-1930 period, but in the pictures from that time, MST men typically wore suits, red fezzes (some with tassels and some without), buttons with either an encircled “7” or a crescent and star, and were either completely clean-shaven or had only mustaches. For official temple gatherings, they would sometimes wear sashes, robes, and turbans. Women, on the other hand, are always depicted wearing robes and hair-covering veils or turbans. As for moral behavior, in the Drew Ali era materials there is little discussion of dietary restrictions (save for alcohol being frowned upon, especially for the leadership<sup>436</sup>) or sexual conduct, other than the fact that monogamous marriage for regular members was officially endorsed by Drew Ali<sup>437</sup> (though Drew Ali was accused of having polygamous relationships with a number of teenage girls in the MST).<sup>438</sup>

A word should also be said here about the MST’s position on white Americans. The full view on the topic held by the Drew Ali-era MST is currently not known. Ostensibly, in the publicly-available material and most of the literature that was read by

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<sup>435</sup> MSTA FBI file, Exhibit No. 7, 11/19/1942, Flint, MI file.

<sup>436</sup> See Drew Ali’s “Instructions for the Grand Sheiks” contained in MSTA FBI file, Report, 4/21/1943, Detroit file 100-6603, 6-9. This document is very similar to the “General Laws as Said by the Prophet” contained in the pamphlet “Humanity” which itself is a collection of Drew Ali’s writings. “Humanity” can be found in Joseph Holloway and Herbert H. Booker II, eds., *The Noble Drew and Moorish Science Temple Movement* (n.p.: New World African Press, n.d.).

<sup>437</sup> See Drew Ali, “Prophet Sends Marriage Law to all Temples,” *Moorish Guide*, February 15, 1929, 1.

<sup>438</sup> For a discussion, see Marcia Chatelain, “‘The Most Interesting Girl of this Country is the Colored Girl:’ Girls and Racial Uplift in Great Migration Chicago, 1899-1950” (PhD diss., Brown University, 2008), 128-31. This is another similarity with Abdul Hamid Suleiman’s “Canaanites” Temple, in which, it was accused, the founder raped the female children of members.

early members, Drew Ali taught love and peace towards all people, including whites, as well as loyalty to the U.S. government and its laws.<sup>439</sup> However, Drew Ali's catechism implied that Satan, or "the Devil," called himself "white." This, according to the catechism, was equivalent to calling himself God, and it thus gave Satan/the Devil psychological and cultural/religious power over those who were believed to think that white skin color was indeed more godly.<sup>440</sup> Because Drew Ali, in his other teachings, said that "Europeans" (i.e., non-Asiatics) made Moors believe both that they were "black" (and thus the opposite of white and its godly connotations) and in the superiority of whites and Christianity, it would be easy to read this lesson as implying that *all* "Europeans"/"whites" were essentially Satan/the Devil. But this is not explicitly claimed in the literature: the catechism taught that Satan/the Devil was also the "lower self," and that the lower self was within all people, regardless of race/"nationality." Therefore, the teachings could be understood as saying that it was merely a historical action—not an inherent trait—of "Europeans" to call themselves "white" and perform the work of Satan/the Devil (i.e., sinning in various ways, but especially through their treatment of African Americans).

Beyond these exoteric teachings, however, there were reportedly esoteric doctrines concerning whites. One was that some whites, particularly the Irish, were themselves Moors, and that Moorish Americans should be careful about how they treated whites because it was not known which whites were also Moors.<sup>441</sup> Another, apparently,

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<sup>439</sup> Drew Ali, "The Moorish Science Temple of America."

<sup>440</sup> "Koran Questions for Moorish Children," questions 93 and 94.

<sup>441</sup> See MSTA FBI file, Exhibit No. 14, 12/17/1942, Flint, MI file. Also see Wilson, 18-19.

was that whites represented the angel of death, the rider of the biblical pale horse.<sup>442</sup> In the end, it is likely that in the MST, similar to many if not most religious settings, multiple and even contradictory beliefs were held simultaneously by the members, and only in certain contexts was one interpretation emphasized over another. As will be shown, the position towards whites and the U.S. government taken by post-Drew Ali MSTs varied between factions, temples, and individuals. More on this topic will also be discussed in connection with the Nation of Islam's doctrines in chapter 7.

### **1929-1934: The Great Schism**

Despite the MST's rapid success and its adoption of a constitution and an organizational structure by early 1928, it did not take long for internal problems to rear their heads. By August of that year, the Pittsburgh temple leader had been accused of attempting to exploit his followers.<sup>443</sup> Then, in October, Drew Ali had discovered that there were "incidents in some of the branch temples' prices to [the MST's first national] convention" that had been held that month, and in response he was instituting "far-reaching changes" in the organization and commanding all temple leaders to adhere to both the group's constitution and a strict moral code.<sup>444</sup> Another problem was that, since 1928, some of local temple leaders had been drawing negative attention from authorities

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<sup>442</sup> I have, however, only seen this as being conveyed by Elijah Muhammad's son, W.D. Mohamed, and not an actual MST member; see Clifton E. Marsh, *The Lost-Found Nation of Islam in America* (Lanham: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2000), 158.

<sup>443</sup> See chapter 5.

<sup>444</sup> "Hold Session of Moorish Science Body," *Chicago Defender* (City ed.), October 20, 1928, 1-2; "The Prophet Has Spoken," *Moorish Guide*, October 26, 1928, 3.

because of their preaching anti-American and anti-white ideas.<sup>445</sup> Drew Ali did not approve of this and ordered that at every meeting a statement he wrote condemning such practices be read.

These efforts, however, were not enough. By January 1929, though Drew Ali was continuing to move up the circles of political influence, it appears that he felt that he was losing control of the group and that his position was becoming increasingly precarious.<sup>446</sup> In early February, Drew Ali's relationship with his well-connected business manager, Claude Greene, disintegrated when Greene suddenly resigned from his post.<sup>447</sup> It was later reported that this was due, in part, to "some misunderstanding" concerning money collections in the temples across the country, though there was also a rumor that Greene had been having an affair with Drew Ali's wife.<sup>448</sup> Greene began working with the Detroit temple leader, James Lomax, to break off from Drew Ali's organization and, perhaps, to try to wrest control of the MST from the prophet.<sup>449</sup> By early March, Lomax's temple had split into two factions and he had learned that some Moors wanted him dead.<sup>450</sup> On the 11<sup>th</sup> of that month, after a charge was brought by a Drew Ali partisan, he

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<sup>445</sup> "Moorish-American Arrested as Agitator," *Chicago Defender* (City ed.), Mar 24, 1928, sect. I, 5; "Pittsburgh," *New York Evening Post*, April 17, 1928, 28; "'Negroes Moabites', Says Science Leader," *Pittsburgh Courier*, Apr 21, 1928, 9; "Police Put 'Prophet' in Jail for Preaching Race Sedition," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, May 21, 1928, 1, 8; "El Sheik, Minus Moorish Regalia, Is Back in City Jail After Police Make Raid on 'Red Flag' Temple," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, June 8, 1928, 1, 7.

<sup>446</sup> "Birthday of Moorish Leader is Celebrated," *Chicago Defender* (Ntl ed.), January 12, 1929, 3; "Moorish Leader Attends Inauguration of Governor," *Chicago Defender* (Ntl ed.), January 19, 1929, 2; "Prophet Warns all Moslems," *Moorish Guide*, January 15, 1929, 1.

<sup>447</sup> "Bro. Greene Bey Quits Business Manager Post," *Moorish Guide*, February 15, 1929, 1.

<sup>448</sup> "Murder Exposes Moorish Leader's Amours," *Pittsburgh Courier*, March 23, 1929, 10.

<sup>449</sup> "Hold Moorish Temple 'Prophet' in Murder Plot," *Chicago Defender* (Ntl ed.), March 23, 1929, 1, 3.

<sup>450</sup> "Detroit Followers Riot," *Chicago Defender* (Ntl ed.), March 23, 1929, 3.

was arrested for embezzlement. The next day, members of the two factions gathered for a meeting and a leadership dispute led to a shootout that resulted in the wounding of two police officers and two Moors.<sup>451</sup> Then, on March 15<sup>th</sup>, Greene was murdered by Drew Ali partisans.<sup>452</sup> Drew Ali was subsequently arrested as a suspect for Greene's murder, but the charges were eventually dropped. A few weeks later, on July 20<sup>th</sup>, the MST prophet "passed from physical form." There is some controversy about the cause of Drew Ali's death, but today's Moorish-American historians generally agree that it was from a sickness, perhaps tuberculosis.

Almost immediately after Drew Ali's death, reporters learned that at least some of his followers believed his spirit would enter the body of another and that person would become head of the movement.<sup>453</sup> Several Moors had suspected that this person would be Aaron Payne, a politically-connected attorney who had replaced Greene as the MSTA's business manager. Payne, claiming he had possession of the group's original charter, accepted the role, taking the name Ali and the title of prophet.<sup>454</sup> For at least a month, it seems, the group was still holding together.

But at the annual convention held in mid-September, serious challenges to the group's unity emerged. Payne had begun receiving several death threats and MST

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<sup>451</sup> For a more complete account, see the section on Lomax (Ezaldeen) in chapter 6 and accompanying notes.

<sup>452</sup> "Claude Greene Shot to Death in Unity Hall," *Chicago Defender* (City ed.), March 16, 1929, 1, 2; "Hold Moorish Temple 'Prophet'."

<sup>453</sup> "Drew Ali, Prophet of Cult, is Buried with Pomp by Members," *Chicago Defender* (Ntl ed.), August 3, 1929, 1, 3

<sup>454</sup> *Ibid.*; "6 Held to Grand Jury for Cult Battle Murders," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 28, 1929, 4.

histories say that John Givens-El, purportedly Drew Ali's former chauffeur, announced that he was "Noble Drew Ali Reincarnated" and started building a following.<sup>455</sup> Another man, Edward Mealy-El, the Chicago temple leader who was one of the earliest followers of Drew Ali and reportedly at the prophet's side upon his death, claimed that Drew Ali had named him as his successor. Mealy-El made Charles Kirkman Bey—who, it was rumored, had become head of the faction aligned with Greene and Lomax—the group's "Grand Advisor" in hopes of quelling desires for a schism. Kirkman Bey's followers, however, were not satisfied; they believed he should have had a higher rank than Mealy-El and therefore chose to call him the "Supreme Grand Advisor." To resolve the conflict, the issue was put to a vote, and Kirkman Bey emerged as the MST's head.<sup>456</sup> To make this official, all the temple leaders signed a certificate affirming Kirkman Bey's position.

These events angered several Moors who had opposed the Greene faction earlier in the year. Under the direction of Ira Johnson—probably the same man who had killed Greene—a group of men, including Givens-El, forced their way into Payne's home to obtain the charter.<sup>457</sup> Johnson, who later revealed that he had desired to be the MST's Grand Advisor, then had several men kidnap Kirkman Bey to try to retrieve his

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<sup>455</sup> Way-El, 124-125; Richard Edwards-El, *The Muqarrabeen Files* (N.p.: SMD Media Group, 2008), 44-47. My main hesitation with this claim is that we have evidence from 1929 that Givens-El was working under *after* the convention; see below.

<sup>456</sup> Way-El, 122-124; Edwards-El, 46.

<sup>457</sup> See "Aaron Payne Marked for Death by Moors," *Chicago Defender* (City ed.), September 28, 1929, 3.

certificate.<sup>458</sup> The police were called and a shootout occurred in which two police officers were killed. Ira and his gang were arrested and eventually convicted.

Following the shootout, Mealy-El attempted to reassert his claim as the legitimate head of the movement, an act that led to increasing partisanship, with Kirkman Bey and Mealy-El's followers each refusing to recognize each other (Payne seems to have left the movement by 1930). The factionalism became so intense that over the next five years each group began suing the other over the right to lead the movement,<sup>459</sup> violence erupted in several temples throughout the country, and in many cases temples simply split.<sup>460</sup> Both Kirkman Bey and Givens-El's factions called their groups the Moorish Science Temple of America (MSTA) (though Kirkman Bey added an "Inc." at the end of the title), the title Drew Ali's group had used since 1928. Meanwhile, unhappy with the divisiveness that was becoming a significant part of MST life in the main factions, many

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<sup>458</sup> Previous histories fail to make clear that Johnson had significant support in the MST community at the time. See "Five Moors to Face Trial for Murder Next Week," *Chicago Defender* (City Ed.), January 25, 1930, sect. I, [?].

<sup>459</sup> Copies of several of these lawsuits can be found in Ra Saadi El, *The Controversial Years of the Moorish Science Temple of America* (Atlanta: Saadi El Publications: Moorish Science Temple of America-1928, 2012).

<sup>460</sup> Way-El, 140-147; Edwards-El, 50-55; "Bomb Blasts Hill Temple," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, November 6, 1929, 1; "Curious Woman Foils Bombing of Temple," *Milwaukee Journal*, May 6, 1930, 2; R. Francis-Bey, "Afro Readers Say," *Afro-American*, September 23, 1933, 18; MSTA FBI file, Report, 2/17/1943, Newark file 100-18348, 3; MSTA FBI file, Report, 9/29/1943, Newark file 100-14714, 7; "Moorish Science Temple Faithful Granted Contribution Moratorium," *Newark Evening News*, September 7, 1934, 17.

<sup>460</sup> In fact, in 1933 the UNIA was complaining about the significant number of ex-UNIA members who were joining the MST; see S.A. Haynes, "Through Black Spectacles," *Negro World*, April 15, 1933. An example of the growing UNIA interest in Islam and the impact this may have had on the MST can be seen in Cleveland in the early 1930s. In 1931, the UNIA-affiliated Ethiopian Club sponsored a "Mohammed Day" at which a Dr. Abdud M.D. Sty from "North East Africa" spoke. Around that same time, the local MST was actually growing bigger than it had ever been under Drew Ali. See "The Ethiopian Club, Cleveland, Ohio," *Negro World*, August 8, 1931, 3; MST FBI file, Report, 4/22/1944, Cleveland file 100-9536, 4.

Moors began to leave the dominant groups to follow numerous new Moorish leaders. The MST had succumbed to crippling factionalism; although the infighting would settle down by 1935, no single faction would lead a significant majority of Moorish Americans.

I have labeled this period, from 1929 to 1934, the “*Great Schism*”—which is a term that others have used before me for this period in MST history<sup>461</sup>—not only because of the fact that it marks the point at which the MST devolved into a seemingly permanent state of factionalism, but also because of the significance the period would have on the rest of the AAIR. It was because of the MST’s loss of central leadership during the Great Schism that other Islamic groups and currents were able to emerge and succeed in the African-American community. It seems to me that without the Great Schism, the 1920-1959 period would not have been a renaissance, full of diversity and experimentation. The MST would have likely remained, without serious contestation, the dominant Islamic group among African-Americans, and no one would have ever heard of the Nation of Islam. And while the MST did still become the largest and probably most influential Islamic community for most of the AAIR, it beat out other popular groups only by a small margin. And because of its deep factionalism, the post-Great Schism MST could not successfully mobilize masses of African-American Muslims the way that the NOI later would. In fact, as I discuss in chapter 7, the MST’s disunity made it, despite it being

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<sup>461</sup> I began using this term in my notes around late 2011 without any knowledge of others using this term for the 1929 MST schism, but several months later I saw it used on a website produced by a MST leader who informed me that Dr. Malachi York, founder of the Ansaar sect, used this term long before me, and some students of his work have picked up the term due to his influence. Unfortunately, I have not been able to verify which publication York used the term in, so I am not entirely certain about the specific reasons he called this event the “Great Schism,” nor am I clear about if he used it to refer to the same period of time that I do. In any case, the fact that we *independently* came to use this term for the same general event supports the notion that the 1929 schism was of major significance for African-American Islam.

larger than most other AAIR groups, fall into relative obscurity in the late 1950s, being drowned out by attention given to the NOI. So, while schisms would continue to be very common in the AAIR and would frequently result in significant turns in the development of the period, no other had a historical impact as important as the MST's Great Schism of 1929-1934.

### **The Factions, 1929-1959**

#### Basic Traits of the Factions

By 1943, there were over seventy *active* temples in the U.S., with all but a handful located north of the southern border of Tennessee and east of the Mississippi River. Kirkman Bey could claim at least fifty-four of these temples and Givens-El ten.<sup>462</sup> The rest were connected to leaders who typically had only one or two temples each. By the next year, the FBI had identified the leaders of at least eleven different MST factions, most of which only had one or two temples, and about half of these leaders claimed to be Drew Ali reincarnated: Kirkman Bey, Turner-El, Givens-El, Rhodes El (Detroit), Bates Bey (Detroit), Shelby El (Chicago), Delia El (unknown), Mealy-El (Chicago, New York), Morgan (Chicago; a break-off from the Mealy El faction), Father Mohammed Bey (Kansas City), Joshua Bey (Toledo).<sup>463</sup> In addition, there is evidence for at least a half

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<sup>462</sup> MSTA FBI file, Report, 12/15/1943, Chicago file 61-293; MSTA FBI file, Report, 5/19/1943, Chicago file 14-41.

<sup>463</sup> See e.g., MSTA FBI file, Report, MID 201. MSTA, 2/26/1943; MSTA FBI file, Report, 10/26/1944, Chicago file 100-1100; MSTA FBI file, Report, 12/15/1943, Chicago file 61-293. On Shelby El's faction and its schisms, see Way-El, 150-151.

dozen other factions during the 1930s and early 1940s.<sup>464</sup> It is notable that several of these leaders, probably in an attempt to assert their sole right to lead the MST, falsely claimed to have parents or grandparents from North Africa, and/or to have spent time there themselves; claims usually made in order to obtain an image of someone with a higher level of religious authenticity and thus elevated spiritual power.<sup>465</sup>

Although it is true, as many scholars have observed, that the factions differed primarily over the issue of Drew Ali's reincarnation, this is a very much an oversimplification. The factions diverged on multiple levels, and there were often local variations within factions. To give some examples: the Givens-El and Kirkman Bey groups were split not only over the issue of Givens-El's claim to be Drew Ali reincarnated, but also over Givens-El's insistence on strict adherence to grooming, dress, and dietary codes (which may have originally come from Ira Johnson) as well as his promotion of an exclusivistic, antagonistic attitude towards outsiders. Among those who did not believe that Drew Ali had reincarnated (these groups did not reject the idea that Drew Ali *would* reincarnate; they simply did not think it had happened yet), one faction,

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<sup>464</sup> These groups were mentioned in various reports, but little information was obtained on them. Also see "Moorish Sheik Held in Philly," *Afro-American*, February 11, 1933, 13; "'Moor' Slashes Constable in Escape Attempt," *Philadelphia Tribune*, February 20, 1930, 1.

<sup>465</sup> See, e.g., MSTA FBI file, Report, 11/2/1943, Indianapolis file 100-4094, 3. Among the more notable leaders, it was a claim made by at least Kirkman Bey, Turner-El, James Lomax, and Ira Johnson. For Kirkman Bey, Turner-El, and James Lomax's claim, see the sections discussing them below; for Johnson's claim, see "Score are Held as Aftermath of Bloody Fight," *New Journal and Guide*, October 5, 1929, 14. Interestingly, this trend (if we include dubiously-claimed Arab parentage as well) has also been found among early AAIR leaders who are not typically associated with the MST—such as the Sunnis Wali Akram, Sheikh Daoud Faisal, and Lynn Hope, the NOI leader Wallace D. Fard, and the Ahmadi/Fahamme Paul Nathaniel Johnson—which suggests that these individuals may have been former MST members or had at least been influenced by the MST. For Akram's claim, see "The Moslems in Cleveland," *Cleveland Plain Dealer Pictorial Magazine*, November 11, 1951, 19; for Faisal's, see Lawrence Farrant, "The Days of Ramadan," *New York World-Telegram*, January 5, 1965, B1; for Hope's, see "Arabic Ancestors Lynn Hope's Claim," *Cleveland Call and Post*, May 24, 1952, 6D; for Fard's, see chapter 7; and for Johnson's, see the section on the Fahamme in chapter 5.

that led by Turner-El, was particularly concerned with both fighting for the Moors' rights in court as well as with fostering ties with politicians, while Kirkman Bey's faction was more interested in expansion and the building up of a Moorish-American farm.

A factor that led to great variation at the local level during the 1930s and 1940s was interest in pro-Japanese thought, the existence of which had been the cause of the FBI's main investigation of the MST in the 1940s.<sup>466</sup> Generally, all MST factions considered the Japanese fellow "Asiatics," but, following Drew Ali, believed that it was important to support the country in which one resides. Still, because Drew Ali's *Holy Koran* had a millennial element,<sup>467</sup> it would have been relatively easy for individuals to believe in an imminent war between the "European" nations (including the U.S.) and the "Asiatic" ones. Which branches would take up this interpretation was usually the result of the personal interpretations of local leaders. However, there does seem to have been a greater concentration of pro-Japanese sentiment in Michigan,<sup>468</sup> which had been the primary target for promoters of pro-Japanese groups, such as Satokata Takahashi, who in 1933 became the leader of the Detroit-based Development of Our Own (DOO).<sup>469</sup> As will be discussed in chapters 5 and 7, the DOO was a pro-Japanese, anti-American, black uplift organization that drew many of its members from the MST and the NOI, and may

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<sup>466</sup> The FBI had briefly investigated the group in 1931 when a lone Moor wrote a letter to the U.S. President. It was determined at the time that the MST was a harmless cult, and no pro-Japanese sentiment was observed. The group's file reopened in 1942 when the FBI heard rumors that Japanese agents were speaking at MST meetings. During this second investigation, it was learned that pro-Japanese doctrines had already been prevalent in many MST groups in the early 1930s.

<sup>467</sup> Ali, *Holy Koran*, ch. XLVIII.

<sup>468</sup> See MSTA FBI file, Report, 11/12/1942, Detroit file 100-6603.

<sup>469</sup> For a discussion of Takahashi's influence on African-American groups, including the NOI, see Allen, "When Japan."

have been primarily MST-inspired.<sup>470</sup> Beginning in the mid-1930s, the DOO and a related pro-Japanese group called the Pacific Movement of the Eastern World experienced a number of schisms, and at least three of these were led by Moors. Two of the three, the Onward Movement of America and the Moorish Science Temple of I AM, had leading members that became, while still committed to pro-Japanese ideas, influential figures in Kirkman Bey's faction and were in fact the primary sources of that faction's pro-Japanese sentiment in the early 1940s. Ultimately, however, the FBI determined that, overall, pro-Japanese sentiment was not particularly strong in the MST, and even when it was (such as in Detroit and Flint, Michigan), the group lacked strong enough leadership, organization, and resources to actually pose a threat to the U.S.

The weakness of the pro-Japanese stance, however, did not mean that Moorish-Americans passively accepted conditions in the U.S. One of the crucial but overlooked features of Drew Ali's message was that African Americans could gain self-respect and political strength in the U.S. if they converted their racial grievances into religious rights issues. He had observed that Islam was the religion that was "the least appreciated and probably, the most misunderstood ... especially ... in our western world."<sup>471</sup> Its numerous contributions to modern civilization had been ignored due to European tyranny and ignorance. But, he stressed, the U.S., because it was dedicated to what he considered the important ideal of religious freedom, and because it had created laws to protect that freedom, would permit even the most misunderstood religion to exist without

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<sup>470</sup> See chapters 5 and 7 for more information.

<sup>471</sup> Drew Ali, "Moorish Leader's Historical Message," 2.

harassment.<sup>472</sup> Therefore, if African Americans accepted what he claimed about them (that their true heritage was Islamic), they would thus have *political/legal* recourse—a vastly more effective tool than either violence or simply developing a respectable cultural identity—to protect their “religious” rights without harassment.<sup>473</sup> Ultimately, then, Drew Ali had discovered a way to move black Americans out of the de facto racist system, a system that white America tolerated to a great extent: by transforming race issues into religious issues. Perhaps Drew Ali believed that U.S. whites, in a Protestant-dominated culture, would be less willing to accept the trampling over laws that protected religious freedom.<sup>474</sup> And while there were many factors influencing the African-American appreciation of the Moorish and Islamic identities, the Moorish identity was profoundly relevant for this particular project of Drew Ali: Morocco and Moors were understood by the MST (due to the American tradition about Moors) as being, out of all the black and brown nations, historically the most respected by the U.S. in the realms of politics and law.<sup>475</sup>

During the Great Schism, a few trailblazers had begun applying this philosophy, appearing in courts to challenge laws that they claimed violated their religious rights.<sup>476</sup>

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<sup>472</sup> *Ibid.*, 2, 3.

<sup>473</sup> Drew Ali: “This is our religious privilege as American citizens, under the laws of one of the greatest legal documents of all time, the American Constitution.”

<sup>474</sup> There does seem to be some historical precedent for this, see the following note. Also see, for instance, Denise A. Spelberg, “Could a Muslim Be President? An Eighteenth-Century Constitutional Debate,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 39, no. 4 (2006): 485-506.

<sup>475</sup> Favorite facts that the MST members repeated were that of Morocco’s early recognition of U.S. independence and the exemption of “Moors” from slavery in some states.

<sup>476</sup> “Moorish American Chief Facing Court,” *Trenton Evening Times*, January 14, 1933, 2; “‘Bible-Foey’ Say Moors at Court Hearing,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, August 23, 1934, 3.

And after 1934, this became a common occurrence. For instance, when numerous followers of Givens-El refused at first to remove their fezzes and shave when they joined the army, the issue was taken to military courts. Though the faction would end up granting the soldiers special dispensations to conform to military dress rules, the challenging of rules by appeal to religious rights was nevertheless a way for them and other African-American Muslims to stand up to whites in a respectable manner—an incredibly powerful tool for building cultural self-confidence. On other occasions, Moors caused a stir when they refused to sign government documents without their MST-given last names of El or Bey, they fought in courts to have their children exempt from attending public schools on Fridays (the MST Sabbath), and they argued against attempts to force MST members to remove their fezzes while in court. Also, after 1929, the group used a related technique would later be popularized by the NOI: large numbers of Moors filling courtrooms to support a fellow Moor who was being prosecuted.<sup>477</sup>

Another rather common feature of the various factions was the establishing of businesses, run either by temples or by individual Moorish Americans for their personal profit. The creation of small businesses had been one of the attractive features of the MST during the Drew Ali era, and it remained so through the subsequent period. In Philadelphia alone there were seven Moor-run businesses in 1943,<sup>478</sup> and the FBI believed that the popularity of the movement could be attributed, partially at least, to the economic independence that these businesses offered African Americans in a time when

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<sup>477</sup> See, e.g., “Bey of Baltimore”; “Self-Styled Moslem Leader Returns from Jail to Fold,” *Sun* (Baltimore), October 30, 1934, 9.

<sup>478</sup> MSTA FBI file, Report, 6/18/1943, Philadelphia file 100-1544.

racism and lower-class blacks' lack of education had prevented the majority from attaining an enviable financial income.<sup>479</sup> It also appears that some individuals with at best only minimal ties to the MST capitalized on the popularity of the group by using the "Moorish" title for their own business.<sup>480</sup>

The MST's ability to recruit new followers was also helped by its attracting former UNIA members. Interestingly, despite the MST's increasing factionalism, in the early 1930s the UNIA was complaining that it was losing members to the MST.<sup>481</sup> This suggests that the Islamophilia from the early 1920s had remained latent in the UNIA, and perhaps was rekindled by the MST, which, as was shown, had been explicitly linked to Garvey by Drew Ali. It is notable that in early 1930s Cleveland, the local MST was actually growing bigger than it had ever been under Drew Ali;<sup>482</sup> and it was during this time that a Cleveland UNIA division, known as the Ethiopian Club, had a president who was probably Muslim<sup>483</sup> and sponsored a "Mohammed Day."<sup>484</sup> As will be demonstrated

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<sup>479</sup> MSTA FBI file, Report, 9/22/1943, Newark file 100-14714, 3.

<sup>480</sup> For example, see the 1931 and 1932 issues of the *Afro-American* and the *Chicago Defender* in which there were advertisements for a Moorish (Mystic) Temple Co., which had the same address as the older businesses, the Moon Curio Co. and the New Orleans Importing Co.

<sup>481</sup> S.A. Haynes, "Through Black Spectacles," *Negro World*, April 15, 1933; Martin, 80 n.58; "Convention Continues at Edelweiss Pk.," *Daily Gleaner*, August 15, 1934, 10.

<sup>482</sup> MST FBI file, Report, 4/22/1944, Cleveland file 100-9536, 4.

<sup>483</sup> The man's name was Dr. Steinbant Dyer Mohammond; see the Ethiopian Club's division reports in the *Negro World* on the following dates: December 5, 1931, December 26, 1931, and January 2, 1932. Mohammond, notably, visited Detroit's UNIA division in December 1931; see P. Prendas, "Detroit at Last Comes into Fold of U.N.I.A. of Aug., 1929," *Negro World*, December 5, 1931, 3 (he is referred to as "President Steinbant").

<sup>484</sup> "The Ethiopian Club, Cleveland, Ohio," *Negro World*, August 8, 1931, 3. It is also notable, as will be mentioned in chapter 6, that Cleveland's UNIA headquarters—which was not run by the Ethiopian Club—was located in the same building as the city's Ahmadi mosque.

in chapters 5 and 7, at this time other groups would also be capitalizing off of the relationship between the UNIA and Islam to increase their own numbers.

Another the reason the attraction to the MST was growing was that the MST began receiving more attention from newspapers than it ever had before. Between 1930 and 1956, over 400 unique stories about the MST ran in various U.S. newspapers, making it the most well-publicized African-American Islamic group before 1956.<sup>485</sup> Some papers, such as the *Richmond-Times Dispatch*, the *Philadelphia Tribune*, the *Hartford Courant*, Baltimore's *The Sun*, and the *Berkshire Evening Eagle*, regularly discussed their local MST temples. Far from "retreat[ing] underground," as one scholar has asserted,<sup>486</sup> the MST was in fact by far the most reported-on and well-known African-American Islamic group for most of the AAIR. Though the press usually picked up on stories that put the MST in a less than favorable light, such as the drawn-out trial concerning the Chicago shootout or when individual Moors committed crimes, in many cases MST-hosted events were announced and described. Occasionally, Moors even wrote letters to various newspapers to promote their activities and doctrines. For example, in 1932 the nationally-distributed *Afro-American* held a weekly poll and debate over what African Americans should call themselves. "Asiatic" and "Moorish American" often appeared in the list and Moors wrote letters briefly giving their teachings on the topic.<sup>487</sup>

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<sup>485</sup> In 1956, as will be discussed in chapter 8, the NOI began frequently appearing in black newspapers.

<sup>486</sup> Dannin, 32.

<sup>487</sup> See the *Afro-American* from February through April that year. Also see Joshua Bey, "Colored or Negro?," *Philadelphia Tribune*, February 22, 1934, 4 and R. Francis-Bey, "There is But One God and Mohamet is His Prophet," *Afro-American*, September 23, 1933, 18.

Another significant feature about the people who were becoming Moors in this period was discovered by the FBI. Like those in the other African-American religious movements that formed during the Great Migration (including the NOI), the vast majority of MST members were from the rural South and in their young adulthood had migrated to the North where they eventually joined an MST temple. MST members, however, had a trait that was not as common in other movements: they were frequently older, often in their forties or fifties, and they typically had joined the MST while in their thirties or forties.<sup>488</sup> This is interesting for two reasons. First of all, it may explain why the FBI observed that a MST member was more likely to be literate than an average African American<sup>489</sup>—the older the person was, the more likely they would have valued literacy and gained literacy skills at some point. Second, because the literature on religious conversion indicates that conversion—particularly conversion to a radically different religion—usually happens before someone reaches the age of thirty, the time by which people typically fully develop their adult identity, the MST conversions at an older age suggest that the group’s message was so powerful that it was able to accomplish the kinds of conversions that few other religious groups have been able to make. In fact, in the MST, there were a number of notable cases in which older, well-established, and well-respected men converted and, to the utter amazement of the people in their communities, completely changed in their attitudes and behaviors. Men who were once hard workers, devout Christians, and very reluctant to criticize whites were now almost unconcerned

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<sup>488</sup> See, for example, the list of members in the Hartford temple in MSTA FBI file, Report, 6/5/1944, New Haven, CT file, 100-5943.

<sup>489</sup> MSTA FBI file, Report, 9/22/1943, Newark file 100-14714, 9.

with their incomes and extremely critical of both whites and Christianity.<sup>490</sup> The MST's message thus seems to have been, for some, one so meaningful that it caused these mature adults to radically question all of their beliefs about society.

The MST message was in fact able to attract anywhere from four to eight thousand members in the generation after Drew Ali.<sup>491</sup> And the faction that drew the most followers was that led by Kirkman Bey.

#### The Charles Kirkman Bey Faction

Charles Kirkman Bey was born in 1898 in South Dakota, reportedly to a mother who had been “brought” to the U.S.—he did not indicate whether this was as an enslaved person—from Morocco and a father who was “a full-blooded Sioux Indian.”<sup>492</sup> He maintained that at the age of two,

my parents took me to Egypt. I had 12 years schooling in Egypt and India. I attended Cairo University of Egypt for 6 years, and Delhi University, Delhi, India

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<sup>490</sup> Perhaps the best example of this is the case of Ruben Frazier Bey, the upstanding patriarch of the Frazier family in southern Indiana. His conversion not only led to the several changes noted above, but also resulted in the conversion of his entire rather large family. Subsequently, the Frazier Bey clan's home became an important center of MST activity in Indiana, regularly drawing Moorish visitors from all over the state. See MSTA FBI file, Report, 2/2/1943, Indianapolis file 100-4094 and MSTA FBI file, Report, 4/13/1943, Indianapolis file 100-4094.

<sup>491</sup> A solid estimate is hard to pinpoint. Kirkman Bey's group, with over fifty temples, was definitely the largest, but the FBI only estimated it to have at most two to three thousand members at its height, and much smaller number were estimated for other groups. The Naval Intelligence Service, however, estimated that in the early 1940s in Chicago alone there were around five thousand Moors. We also have newspaper reports from the early 1950s that indicate that around two thousand Moors attended George Johnson's wedding in Newark in the late 1940s—and it is most likely that these were primarily former followers of Givens-El.

<sup>492</sup> MSTA FBI file, Exhibit No. 25, 11/25/1942, Flint, MI file. The pages for this interview are dispersed throughout a few sections of the online FBI file. I have attempted to identify, based on the subject matter discussed, other clues in the pages which *are* clearly part of that interview, and the accompanying summaries of the interview, all of the pages that belong to this particular document.

for 6½ years. When I was about 23 years of age I returned to the United States and attended Campbell College in Mississippi.<sup>493</sup>

Kirkman Bey also said that—in addition to claiming that one of his sons was currently in the Egyptian army—he was fluent and literate in Arabic, could speak some Spanish, and was literate in “Syrian.”

Syrians, however, write and speak Arabic, so for Kirkman Bey to suggest that the written form of “Syrian” was not Arabic raises some red flags. The FBI agent interviewing him cast further doubt on his story when he brought into the interview room an Arabic-speaking (probably Syrian or Lebanese) immigrant employed at the site of the interview (a Buick car factory in Flint) who attempted but failed to hold an intelligent conversation in Arabic with Kirkman Bey. As mentioned above, the claim to have Islamic and North African connections was made by several early MST leaders, but Kirkman Bey’s claimed pedigree is interesting for another reason as well: both Drew Ali and the influential James Lomax, like Kirkman Bey, also said they were raised by Native Americans. While it is unknown if this was true for any of these men, it probably enhanced the esoteric religious mystique and the non-“negro” identity that they were likely cultivating, and it also added to the appearance of possessing special spiritual power.

Sometime after Kirkman Bey joined the MST in 1926, and sometime before 1928, Drew Ali visited the Detroit temple of which the former was reportedly a member.<sup>494</sup> The

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<sup>493</sup> *Ibid.* He also claimed to have attended Howard University, but was unable to prove this. See “Moors Go on Trial for Slaying of Policemen,” *Chicago Defender* (City ed.), February 8, 1930, 12; “3 Dead in Moorish Science Temple Riot,” *Chicago Defender* (City ed.), September 28, 1929, 9.

<sup>494</sup> Though I know of no solid external evidence that supports the claim that Kirkman Bey had been a member of the Detroit temple, a Charles T. Kirkman was a member of Detroit’s black Shriner temple in

prophet was, at that time, looking for a follower who could speak “many languages” in order to act as his translator while he spread the MST message to “foreign lands.”

Kirkman Bey indicated that he could do so—an event that apparently led to his ascension in the MST organization.<sup>495</sup> While Drew Ali was alive, Kirkman Bey was his official interpreter and secretary, traveling with Drew Ali throughout the country and, reportedly, to Havana, Cuba in early 1928.<sup>496</sup>

Already, in the first few years after Drew Ali’s death, Kirkman Bey’s following, the MSTA Inc., began making plans to start a farm on which Moorish Americans could live and be self-sustaining.<sup>497</sup> Even during Drew Ali’s life, Moorish Americans had been discussing the establishment of “a town owned and completely operated” by MST members where they could live out their dream of having a community built on the MST principles of love, truth, peace, freedom, and justice, an idea likely inspired by the Garvey tradition.<sup>498</sup> Drew Ali promised that in his 1929 tour of the MST temples he

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1925. If this was the same person as Kirkman Bey, this early experience in a well-organized group may explain his apparently superior organizing abilities while in the MST. See Ancient Egyptian Arabic Order of Nobles of the Mystic Shrine of North and South America and Jurisdiction, *Transactions of the Twenty-Sixth Annual Session of the Imperial Council...Oasis of Kansas City, Desert of Kansas...1925* (n.p.: Ancient Egyptian Arabic Order of Nobles of the Mystic Shrine, 1925), 146.

<sup>495</sup> L. Blakely Bey, “Lasting Impressions,” *Moorish Voice* (May 1943): 6, 18-19; L. Blakely Bey, “Lasting Impressions,” *Moorish Voice* (June 1943): 6, 19. See also Way-El, 65-66, 160.

<sup>496</sup> Kirkman Bey, in the FBI interview, claimed that he went with Drew Ali to Havana for “vacation,” but other MST traditions hold that Drew Ali traveled to Cuba in 1928 to attend the Pan-American Conference. See P.K. Saadi El, “Noble Drew Ali Sunna #39,” *Moorish Kingdom*, accessed January 10, 2010, <http://moorishkingdom.tripod.com/id23.html>. I have seen a partial copy of the front page of *Moorish Guide* issue 1 (August 24, 1928), which claims that Drew Ali went to the conference in January 1928, though I have not been able to find Drew Ali’s name in any document related to the conference that I have seen. Interestingly, that same article asserts that Drew Ali traveled to Mexico in May of that same year.

<sup>497</sup> MSTA FBI file, Report, 9/22/1943, Newark file 100-14714, 27.

<sup>498</sup> “Moors Endorse Village Idea,” *Moorish Guide*, February 1, 1929, 1.

would “fully inform” the Moors of his plans for this town.<sup>499</sup> But with the infighting, Drew Ali’s death, and all-around chaos that would soon follow, the vision was not able to come to fruition in the 1920s MST. Kirkman Bey, however, did not forget this dream; he happily accepted Ruben Frazier Bey’s—a recent convert—offer to deed his farm over to the MSTA Inc. in 1937, and it quickly became a popular site for Indiana’s Moors to visit.<sup>500</sup> Perhaps inspired by the success of Frazier Bey’s farm, in 1939 Kirkman Bey sent Michigan’s regional head, F. Nelson Bey, to begin farming and constructing buildings on land in Price George, Virginia, which Kirkman Bey had reportedly inherited from his father.<sup>501</sup> The Prince George site was named the MSTA Inc.’s National Home, and soon fifty to one hundred Moorish Americans—including a number of elderly Moors—immigrated there from throughout the country to work and live on the land. The National Home became one of the favored sites for the group’s annual convention, which was regularly attended by several hundred Moors, and it was from this colony that the MSTA Inc. published its national magazine, the *Moorish Voice*.<sup>502</sup> In New Jersey, meanwhile, other Kirkman Bey followers had been collecting money and attempting negotiations to buy their own piece of land, and eventually obtained this in 1943 in the city of Moorestown.<sup>503</sup>

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<sup>499</sup> “Detroit, Newark, Philadelphia, are in Order as First Stops,” *Moorish Guide*, February 15, 1929, 2.

<sup>500</sup> MSTA FBI file, Report, 2/2/1943, Indianapolis file 100-4094.

<sup>501</sup> See MSTA FBI file, Exhibit No. 25, 11/25/1942, Flint, MI file; James Latimer, “Dusky ‘Moors’ Wear Turbans, Farm Nearby,” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, April 11, 1943, 12.

<sup>502</sup> MSTA FBI file, Report, 12/15/1942, Richmond file 100-5698; MSTA FBI file, Report, 7/18/1943, Richmond file 100-5698.

<sup>503</sup> MSTA FBI file, Report, 9/22/1943, Newark file 100-14714, 27-28.

It was Kirkman Bey's faction, which had over fifty active temples and perhaps around 2,000 followers by the early 1940s, that was the one on which most of the FBI's investigation focused. As a result, more is known about the MSTA Inc. than most of the others, including details about its temples and the beliefs held by its initiates. For instance, that Kirkman Bey's MSTA Inc. kept most of the Drew Ali-era relatively lax rules regarding dress and moral behavior, though it does not appear that the prophet's restriction on temple leaders drinking was strictly enforced. Another thing that the FBI files make clear is the fact that Kirkman Bey's faction did not reject the idea that Drew Ali would someday be reincarnated—it simply rejected that claims some men made that they were Drew Ali reincarnated. In the Kirkman Bey temples, in fact, a crepe paper-decorated chair, which sat in the front of the meeting rooms, was said to be for Drew Ali upon his reincarnation. On each side of this chair were two or three more chairs for the temple's Grand Sheik and other officers. In front of this stood a table and, next to it, a flag pole (topped with a crescent and star) bearing the red silk flag of Morocco,<sup>504</sup> and, usually, a U.S. flag was also present. Facing the chairs of the temple leaders were the congregation's own chairs, and, at least sometimes, these chairs were arranged in a crescent shape, with the whole setup aligned so that the congregation faced east.<sup>505</sup>

As I have pointed out, the MST was influenced by Freemasonry, particularly the para-Masonic Shriner organization. This influence was, during the Drew Ali period, in the group's use of fezzes, Masonic- and Shriner-style costumes, secret hand signals and

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<sup>504</sup> MSTA FBI file, Report, 6/17/1943, Newark file 100-14714, 3.

<sup>505</sup> MSTA FBI file, Report, 6/29/1943, Cleveland file 100-9538, 5.

passwords, meeting places called “temples,” and a number of Masonic symbols.<sup>506</sup> These particular elements were maintained in Kirkman Bey’s group,<sup>507</sup> and it is notable that its *Moorish Voice* frequently used Masonic symbols (such as the ladder, square, and hammer) as the primary image on the cover of the magazine.<sup>508</sup> In addition, the FBI files reveal that, like the Masons, the MSTA Inc. had a “degree” rank system in which members, by demonstrating appropriate behavior and knowledge of doctrines, were bestowed with certain titles and privileges that reflected that member’s position and authority in the group. One Moorish American described the system as follows:

Members come into this temple as infants or beginners and are taught [Drew Ali’s] *Koran*. If they improve and appear to develop leadership qualities during these days of instruction they are allowed to enter [an] Inner Circle.<sup>509</sup> ... [I]t is a requirement of the organization that one be a member of the Inner Circle before he can hold an office in the organization. ... [A]nother degree of the organization is the “Divine Ministry” and every minister must have credentials which are issued to him by Colonel C. Kirkman Bey before he is allowed to teach. ... [T]he highest degree in the organization is that of Sultan and that C. Kirkman Bey is the only person who holds that degree today.<sup>510</sup>

Apart from explaining the MSTA Inc.’s degree system, this description reveals the nature of Kirkman Bey’s authority and how his MSTA Inc. organization was structured. Officially, for the general public, his title was Supreme Grand Adviser and

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<sup>506</sup> For a discussion, see Robert L. Uzzel, “The Moorish Science Temple: A Religion Influenced by Freemasonry,” *Chater-Cosmos Transactions* 8 (1985): 65-82; Bowen, “Abdul Hamid Suleiman,” 37-42 and notes.

<sup>507</sup> On the use of secret passwords and hand signs, see the various exhibits in the MSTA FBI file, Flint, MI file.

<sup>508</sup> See the copies of the *Moorish Voice* in the MSTA FBI file.

<sup>509</sup> This Inner Circle is probably an alternative name given to the Adept Chamber, a known element in the Drew Ali-era MST.

<sup>510</sup> MSTA FBI file, Report, 3/16/1943, Detroit file 100-6603, 3-4.

Moderator, a position he was reportedly voted into on a regular basis. His job in this capacity was primarily to hold the community together. This meant giving “advice” and speeches to the various leaders and common members, challenging (usually through lawsuits) those who claimed to be members of the MSTA Inc. but refused to pay the requisite contributions to the MSTA Inc. headquarters (dues were fifty cents per month), and traveling to the temples collecting contributions.<sup>511</sup> However, the use of titles like “Colonel” and “Sultan” suggests that Kirkman Bey’s authority was more than simply as a “moderator”—he was seen as having superior religious knowledge<sup>512</sup> and, according to a number of informants, it was generally understood that if (or when) the U.S. government did eventually fall, he would become the country’s ruler. Still, as was noted above, the FBI came to the conclusion, by late 1943, that Kirkman Bey’s faction was, generally, not “subversive.”

One other feature of Kirkman Bey’s group should be made clear. Despite him being seen as having superior religious status, Kirkman Bey was not regarded as a prophet (or “Drew Ali reincarnated”) and therefore there seems to have been a little more freedom in his community to debate and control what direction local temples should take than there was in the reincarnation factions. As has been observed, some local temples displayed stronger pro-Japanese sentiment than others, and there are also records of debates during the “sheik meetings” over how much the group should follow Kirkman

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<sup>511</sup> See MSTA FBI file, Exhibit No. 25, 11/25/1942, Flint, MI file.

<sup>512</sup> Kirkman Bey plagiarized other parts of the same book by Dowling that Drew Ali had used, for his “mystical” Moorish religious texts, *The Mysteries of the Silent Brotherhood of the East* (Chicago: Magribine Press, 2006).

Bey and what MST principles and practices should be emphasized.<sup>513</sup> One group of Kirkman Bey followers was even reported as wearing beards and abstaining from meat—practices usually only found in reincarnation factions.<sup>514</sup> The debate and differences were perhaps inevitable: Drew Ali had only been active as the MST leader, as far as is the evidence supports, for four years (1925-29), and he gave many esoteric doctrines and instructions that were neither known to all, nor able to be followed through with during his short time as head—so when the next generation wanted to use the foundational doctrines laid by Drew Ali to address their new conditions, debate was almost unavoidable. This challenge of negotiating new conditions can be seen in the use of a saying attributed to Drew Ali that was brought up at one of the Kirkman Bey group’s sheik meetings: “I brought you everything it takes to save a nation; now you save yourself.”<sup>515</sup> It was a heavy burden, and it seems that Kirkman Bey’s group was, for around thirty years at least, the one that dealt with it most successfully.

Because Kirkman Bey’s group avoided controversy, it received little attention from journalists in the late 1940s and 1950s, so currently not much else is known about its other activities during that time. The available evidence, however, suggests that the group started declining by the mid-1940s<sup>516</sup> and, as will be shown with other factions,

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<sup>513</sup> See MSTA FBI file, Exhibit No. 42, Flint, MI file.

<sup>514</sup> MSTA FBI file, Letter, Lt. Col., G.S.C., Executive Officer, New York, to Director, War Department Intelligence Division, 10/29/1943.

<sup>515</sup> MSTA FBI file, Exhibit No. 42, 11/[28?]/1942, Flint, MI file.

<sup>516</sup> FBI files from the early 1940s reveal that at that time the attendance at the faction’s national convention was between 400 and 600. However, the minutes for the 1946 convention show that only 218 had come that year. See MSTA FBI file, Report, 12/15/1942, Richmond file 100-5698; MSTA FBI file, Report, 7/18/1943, Richmond file 100-5698; Moorish Science Temple of America, Inc., *Moorish Science Temple of*

there was an even greater decrease in interest in Kirkman Bey's faction in the 1950s as the NOI began to become *the* Islamic-identity movement in African-American culture. But the faction did not collapse, and when Kirkman Bey died in 1959, he left a successor.<sup>517</sup>

### The John Givens-El Faction

No information about John Givens-El's pre-MST background can be gleaned from the non-redacted portions of the FBI files, and the existing data about his early years in the movement sometimes conflicts. It is important to acknowledge, first of all, that the Works Progress Administration's (WPA) early 1940s study of the history of the MST apparently had two versions printed, with the only difference between them being the name of the man who was said to be Drew Ali's chauffeur: John Givens-El and Steve Gibbons El.<sup>518</sup> This was perhaps the result of the fact that the man may have used both names.<sup>519</sup> The WPA history obscures the man's history further with its claims about Givens-El's activities after Drew Ali's death that are not consistent with other evidence. The WPA says that Givens-El took part in activities related to the death of Claude Greene and for his role in this he was sentenced to an insane asylum for "several years" until 1941 when, with the headquarters of his group on East 40<sup>th</sup> Street in Chicago, he was

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*America 1946 Minutes of the Moorish Science Temple of America, Inc.* (Chicago: Moorish Science Temple of America, Inc., 1946), 5, in the Schomburg Center MST collection.

<sup>517</sup> Obituary for Charles Kirkman Bay [sic], *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 28, 1959, 18; Mubashshir, 88.

<sup>518</sup> Compare the versions of the WPA piece contained in MST collection, Report, 12/15/1943, Chicago file 61-293 and MST collection, Report, 5/19/1943, Chicago file 14-41.

<sup>519</sup> This clarification is necessary because Turner, whose book remains one of the most important and influential books for understanding the development of African-American Islam, and who has the most thorough analysis of the MST collection files to date, uncritically accepts that Givens-El and Gibbons El were two different people; see Turner, 100.

claiming to be the true leader of the MST. However, one newspaper article from that fall of 1929 tells us that Givens-El was one of the men who had been sent by Ira Johnson to break into the home of Payne<sup>520</sup> and it was for this act that he had been initially arrested. Nevertheless, consistent with the WPA account, that same article tells us that because authorities considered him to be insane, Givens-El was sent to a psychiatric hospital to have his case evaluated. But Givens-El did not remain in that psychiatric hospital for several years, as the WPA piece asserts; the FBI's investigation revealed that he ended up serving only six months in a local jail.<sup>521</sup> Upon his release, his family and possibly a few others began to form a following around him, and in the early 1930s the group moved to a residence at 447 East 40<sup>th</sup> Street.<sup>522</sup> Givens-El claimed that on August 7, 1929, Drew Ali's spirit "passed" into his body, so he was now—as many of his followers called him—Noble Drew Ali (or the Prophet) Reincarnated. Of course, the group saw itself as the true continuation of Drew Ali's movement, and so it went by the same title used by Drew Ali in his last years: MSTA (unlike Kirkman Bey's faction, Givens-El's did not add an "Inc.").<sup>523</sup>

It was said that while in jail Givens-El (probably due to the influence of Ira) began growing a beard, a practice which his male followers soon imitated. Indeed, Givens-El's group was known for its numerous rules for appearance and conduct that

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<sup>520</sup> "Aaron Payne Marked for Death by Moors," *Chicago Defender* (City ed.), September 28, 1929, 3.

<sup>521</sup> MSTA FBI file, Report, 9/21/1943, Chicago file 14-39, 15.

<sup>522</sup> MSTA FBI file, Report, 9/21/1943, Chicago file 14-39, 15.

<sup>523</sup> The fact that Drew Ali and a number of the different post-Drew Ali factions used this as their official name has led to some confusion in the academic literature.

were not held by either Drew Ali's or Kirkman Bey's faction: men could neither shave nor cut their hair and women could not wear makeup. Both sexes were required to wear religious clothing at all times; for men, this was the red fez, and for women this was both long, colorful gowns and turbans (and, occasionally, fezzes). Prohibitions on alcohol, tobacco,<sup>524</sup> caffeine, and meat (though not fish) were strictly followed. As far as sexual conduct was concerned, it was confirmed that Givens-El had a multiple common-law wives, and there were numerous but unverified reports that followers freely wife-swapped. Members were also encouraged to work only for the faction's several businesses—Givens-El's faction had far more businesses than the others—and, particularly in Chicago, members lived either in or in the immediate vicinity of the local temple. Along with this high degree of social introversion, followers displayed a corresponding level of extreme devotion to their prophet as well as a strong belief in an imminent millennial event in which "Asiatics" would become the planet's rulers. Consistent with their other behaviors, the group was very reticent to talk to outsiders, it held religious services<sup>525</sup> more frequently and regularly than Kirkman Bey's faction, and it was rather uninterested in either political activity or proselytization. Followers also reportedly held as much antipathy for non-member African Americans as they held for whites,<sup>526</sup> and one could join through invitation only. Apparently, however, their exclusivity and the profits they made from their businesses were very attractive for some,

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<sup>524</sup> It seems that in the early years of the group tobacco was not prohibited. See "Allah Hovers over Lombard Street," *Philadelphia Tribune*, October 25, 1934, 20.

<sup>525</sup> We know very little about their services. For some clues and a picture of the inside of a temple, see "Allah Hovers."

<sup>526</sup> MSTA FBI file, Report, 9/21/1943, Chicago file 14-39, 17, 38.

and in a number of cities their temples had a few hundred members, rivaling the numbers of Kirkman Bey's larger temples.

Givens-El "passed" in 1945, and this seems to have led to another schism, with some of his followers choosing to align with Ira Johnson, who had maintained a following even after being sentenced to life in prison in 1930.<sup>527</sup> In the late 1940s and early 1950s, Ira's son, George, led a take-over of temples in New Jersey and eastern Pennsylvania.<sup>528</sup> However, both Ira and George died by 1951, and the group fractured into several smaller factions. Some followed Richardson and Timothy Dingle-El, two brothers from Baltimore who claimed to have been designated as leaders by Givens-El in the 1940s.<sup>529</sup>

#### The Turner-El Faction<sup>530</sup>

Grand Sheik Frederick Turner-El claimed that he was born in 1910 in Cincinnati, Ohio, "the son of an Islamic missionary couple. When he was ten, the family returned to their native land. [He] was educated at Al-Azhar University ... and became fluent in many languages."<sup>531</sup> In a 1944 Selective Service hearing,<sup>532</sup> he explained that from the

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<sup>527</sup> Mubashshir, 87 n. 44; "200 Moorish Followers Seek Freedom of Leader in Prison," *Chicago Defender*, July 23, 1949, 5; MSTA FBI file, Memorandum, SAC, Philadelphia to Director, FBI, 12/27/1948; "'Moors' Hold 24 Hr. Vigil beside Dead Leader," *Philadelphia Tribune*, April 7, 1951, 1; James Sullivan, "Malcolm Recalls 'Moors' War," *Chicago Tribune*, February 28, 1965, 2; also see Way-El, 140.

<sup>528</sup> This event was well-documented in various newspapers during the period. It was indicated that when George held his marriage ceremony in Newark in 1949, between 2,500 and 3,000 Moors attended; see "Moorish Grand Sheik Weds in Solemn Ceremony," *Philadelphia Tribune*, August 20, 1949, 7; "Police Charge Grand Sheik of U.S. Moors Had 2 Guns," *Afro-American*, September 17, 1949, 6.

<sup>529</sup> Edwards-El, 58; Gene Oishi, "Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory of Noble Drew Ali," *The Sun*, October 31, 1978, B1-B2.

<sup>530</sup> A more extended discussion of Turner-El and his faction is in Patrick D. Bowen, "Grand Sheik Frederick Turner-El: A Moorish-American Trailblazer," Presented by Ali's Men (2013).

<sup>531</sup> "Sheik," *New Yorker*, September 21, 1940, 15.

ages fifteen to twenty he studied at the “Moslem Divine school,” which was part of the MST in Newark, the same temple in which his father was one of the heads. Furthermore, according to Frederick, one of the teachers in Newark was from Al-Azhar university, and the transcript indicates that at the Selective Service hearing, Turner-El presented books from the school in Cairo in order to prove this claim. Turner-El also conveyed that towards the end of his formal education he taught as a minister for the MST, and sometime in 1933 he received his “ordination” as Grand Sheik, which was confirmed in the summer of the next year.<sup>533</sup> It should be pointed out here, however, that there is almost no outside evidence to confirm any of Turner-El’s claimed early overseas connections.<sup>534</sup>

As a number of public and MSTA Inc. newspaper articles from the mid-1930s make clear, Turner-El’s early professional religious career was as a leader within Kirkman Bey’s faction.<sup>535</sup> In the early-to-mid 1930s his father, Edward, was the group’s regional head (Grand Governor) for the State of New York, and that Turner-El the younger was eager to become a major leader in the movement himself. In as early as 1935, Frederick was teaching Arabic at the group’s Brooklyn temple<sup>536</sup> and, when his followers faced criminal or civil charges, he showed up in the courts acting as a religious

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<sup>532</sup> See MSTA FBI file, Report, 4/22/1944, Chicago file 100-33742.

<sup>533</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>534</sup> In fact, Frederick’s father, apart from his MST suffix of El, had a notably non-Islamic name: Edward. See “Moors Meet in Convention at Becket,” *Berkshire Evening Eagle*, September 26, 1944, 3.

<sup>535</sup> See, e.g., “Harlem Moors to Have Own Party in 1940,” *Afro-American*, November 7, 1936, 21 and “Moors Parade But No Dance,” *New York Amsterdam News*, July 10, 1937, 6.

<sup>536</sup> See page 7, column 4 of the *Moorish Guide*, April 19, 1935 and July 12, 1935.

authority for the judge, who usually knew nothing about the MST.<sup>537</sup> He also sought out alliances with other African Americans promoting racial uplift through alternative religions, and he began setting up new temples in several New England cities, including in Bridgeport and Hartford, Connecticut, and in Boston and Springfield, Massachusetts.<sup>538</sup>

By late 1938, Turner-El, now an established leader, saw his community as distinct from the MST Inc., and in October he incorporated the Moorish Science Temple, the Divine and National Movement of North America, Inc., in both New York and Hartford.<sup>539</sup> Of course, this was not welcomed by Kirkman Bey's group, which filed a complaint against Turner-El in the Brooklyn Federal Court.<sup>540</sup> The ruling was in Turner-El's favor, and henceforth his group was no longer affiliated with Kirkman Bey's, though it appears to have continued to share Kirkman Bey-style rules for member dress and conduct as well as the belief that Drew Ali had not yet reincarnated.

For the remainder of his career, besides defending Moors in courts, Turner-El focused his work around four projects: 1) establishing his own Moorish village and farms; 2) building ties with local, state, and national politicians (both white and black); 3)

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<sup>537</sup> E.g., "Bronx Court Recognizes Moslem Sabbath," *New York Times* February 9, 1934, 21; "Mohammedan Tots Get Fridays Off," *Border Cities Star*, June 1, 1934, 23; "Consul Comes to Aid of Moor on Gun Charge," *Albany Evening News*, July 7, 1936, 3; "Fez No Hat and so it May Be Worn in Court," *Independent*, January 28, 1937, 5; "Sheik Seeks Leniency for Lamont Watson-El," *Poughkeepsie Eagle-News*, January 15, 1941, 2.

<sup>538</sup> There was also a Philadelphia temple affiliated with Turner-El.

<sup>539</sup> Selective Service interview; "Moorish Temple is Sued," *New York Times*, December 20, 1938, 26. The Hartford group had originally been established in May 1936 when Turner-El converted Edward Countryman-Bey, a UNIA member at the time, who became the leader of the local group; see the memorial for Edward Countryman-Bey in *Hartford Courant*, June 2, 1980, 13.

<sup>540</sup> "Moorish Temple is Sued"; "'Shieks' Ask Court to Change Name of Boro Moorish Cult," *New York Age*, January 21, 1939, 5.

courting diplomats from Muslim-majority countries in order to foster a Pan-Islamic, anti-colonial coalition; and 4) establishing an inter-religious African-American organization for racial uplift. Turner-El was in fact one of the first African-American Muslims to do these particular activities, which added to the diversity of the AAIR. And although he has received almost no attention in the scholarship on African-American Islam, his trailblazing and his persistence in the face of what were believed to be racist communities make him a notable figure in the history of African-American Islam. His activities also earned him relatively considerable coverage in the press, making the MDNMNA currently the most well-documented of the AAIR MST factions. Because of these traits, I feel it is important to go into some detail here about the MDNMNA's activities.

### **The early years of the MDNMNA**

Turner-El's efforts to build a village for African-American Muslims dates back to 1938: just months prior to his incorporating the MDNMNA, Turner-El announced plans to construct Moorish "colonies" in both Woodstock, Connecticut and Long Island, New York after receiving a grant from the newly established Federal Housing Administration (FHA), which aimed to stimulate home construction and reduce unemployment during the Depression.<sup>541</sup> Though both sites were originally to be used as a home for all Moorish

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<sup>541</sup> "Moors to Establish a Mecca for 20,000 in Yaphank Area," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, April 16, 1938, 4; S.W. Garlington, "Moors Get Government Backing to Help Relieve Food Problem," *People's Voice*, April 17, 1943, 14; "Sheik." The Long Island colony was at Camp Upton, a former U.S. army training camp that had been abandoned by the early 1930s. In late 1941, as the U.S. became increasingly prepared for participation in the Second World War, the military re-took control over the camp in order to house "enemy aliens" (probably German-American and Japanese-American U.S. residents and citizens). It is not known if Turner-El's community had to leave Camp Upton at this time.

Americans, the MDNMNA soon decided that the Woodstock location would be set aside for elderly Moors, much like Kirkman Bey's village in Prince George.<sup>542</sup>

In late 1942, the MDMNA purchased a 500-acre farm in the town of Becket, located in the western Massachusetts county of Berkshire, and soon obtained another FHA grant to buy livestock and farm equipment for use there.<sup>543</sup> The MDNMNA had many hopes for the Becket site, which had a fourteen-room hotel and an eleven-room farmhouse.<sup>544</sup> In addition to starting a farm and raising chickens, Turner-El planned to turn the hotel into the Moorish Berkshire National Home, which would serve as a “year-round retreat for persons of Moorish descent and others [, ... a] health resort, [a] rest home, [a] home for the aged, and [a] summer camp for [children].”<sup>545</sup> Also, the farmhouse had been converted into a temple, and the MDNMNA hoped to someday establish at the location a university modeled on Al-Azhar, which would help teach Moorish Americans, in line Drew Ali's mission as well as the earlier MST education efforts, “a feeling of pride in their [Moorish] national cultural heritage” so that it would be spread to all African Americans.<sup>546</sup>

For the first year-and-a-half or so, things seem to have run smoothly at the Becket site, but in May 1944 a fire—which the Moors suspected was started by arsonists—burnt

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<sup>542</sup> “Will Establish Moorish University in Becket,” *Berkshire Evening Eagle*, February 10, 1944, 11.

<sup>543</sup> Garlington; “Moors to Form Bridgeport Unit,” *Bridgeport Post*, November 21, 1942, 9; “N. Becket Property Transfer Disclosed,” *Springfield Sunday Union and Republican*, January 23, 1944, 12A.

<sup>544</sup> “Moorish Convention is Scheduled for Becket,” *Berkshire County Eagle*, August 8, 1944, 18. These features were apparently observed by a reporter who visited the site. Prior to this, the Turner-El claimed that the Becket land had eleven total buildings.

<sup>545</sup> “Will Establish.”

<sup>546</sup> “Will Establish.”

down the property's ice house and root cellar.<sup>547</sup> In August 1944, plans for the MDNMNA convention for mid-September to be held at Becket were announced,<sup>548</sup> but before the festivities could begin, the local newspaper revealed that the original owners of the Becket property had been trying to foreclose on the Moors, saying that they had not kept up with the mortgage. The Moors had responded by filing two bills of equity to prevent the foreclosure, and claimed, through their lawyers, that the sellers had deceived the Moors about the terms of the sale contract. The judge for the case put a restraining order on the foreclosure, but dismissed the charges of deception.<sup>549</sup> With the restraining order, though, the convention could go on, and seems to have been quite a success, drawing reportedly 300 Moors from several states.<sup>550</sup>

During the convention, Frederick, along with other high-ranking members, traveled about twenty miles southwest of Becket to the town of Great Barrington (also in Berkshire County) in order to attend a tea at the home of Dr. I.M. Allaraz, who ran a school in the area, and to speak at a local African-American church.<sup>551</sup> It was perhaps during or as a result of this outing, which took place during a period when the Moorish National Home was faced with its difficulties in Becket, that connections and plans were

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<sup>547</sup> "Becket: Ice House and Roots Cellar are Burned," *Springfield Daily Republican*, May 13, 1944, 3.

<sup>548</sup> "Moorish Convention is Scheduled."

<sup>549</sup> "Moors Seeking to Prevent Becket Property Foreclosure," *Berkshire Evening Eagle*, September 13, 1944, 17.

<sup>550</sup> "Mohammedan Moors Come to the Mountain," *Berkshire Evening Eagle*, September 18, 1944, 5; "Moors Meet."

<sup>551</sup> "Mohammedan Moors Come"; David Levinson, *Sewing Circles, Dime Suppers, and W.E.B. Du Bois: A History of the Clinton A.M.E. Zion Church* (Great Barrington, MA: Berkshire Publishing Group, 2007), 119-120.

made to purchase property in Great Barrington. Before the end of the year, one Lucille Stanton announced that she had signed a sales agreement with the MDNMNA for a piece of Great Barrington property that was once the site of a school.<sup>552</sup> No more is heard about the Becket property, other than a note in a news story from 1945 that indicated the Moors no longer had it.<sup>553</sup>

The MDNMNA's time in Great Barrington was one in which would Turner-El's experience, faith, and leadership would be repeatedly tested, and it also was a time of growth and development for the Grand Sheik's mission. In fact, the appearance in the press of Turner-El's name in connection to the new "Moorish Berkshire National Homestead" was almost immediately<sup>554</sup> in the context of controversy. The group once again felt that it was experiencing racial prejudice from the locals.<sup>555</sup> This time, however, Turner-El would not easily retreat.

### **Challenges and Maturation**

It must be understood that by 1945 the Grand Sheik now had extensive experience in dealing with courts, politicians, and racism. After his court appearances in the 1930s, during which time he "represented in legal and other conflicts [...] all members of the sect,"<sup>556</sup> Frederick understood well the value of Drew Ali's political/legal message and

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<sup>552</sup> Levinson, 120; "Moorish Sheik Charges Race Prejudice by Gt. Barrington," *Berkshire Evening Eagle*, August 23, 1945, 1, 2.

<sup>553</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>554</sup> The earliest mention I have found of Turner-El in direct connection with Great Barrington is "Grand Sheik to Speak at Mission," *Berkshire Evening Eagle*, May 2, 1945, 4.

<sup>555</sup> "Moorish Sheik Charges"; "Racial Prejudice is Denied by Great Barrington Officials," *Springfield Republican*, August 24, 1945, 1, 6.

<sup>556</sup> "Harlem Moors."

had begun cultivating political ties. As was shown earlier, Drew Ali had provided the example, fostering connections between his MST and various politicians in Chicago. The New York Moors, however, had at first tried to avoid this, as seen in 1936 when a Harlem Moor announced that the MST would have Moorish-American candidates for the 1940 U.S. Presidential election (though the reporter noted that the Moors were far from gaining the requisite number of signatures to add their party).<sup>557</sup> But by 1941, Turner-El realized that, at least for its circumstances at the time, his group would be better served by having friendly relations with politicians. In January of that year, representing the local mayor was an alderman who gave a speech at the birthday celebration for Drew Ali held in Hartford.<sup>558</sup> In March of the following year, Turner-El joined several other black leaders from Brooklyn in supporting an African-American candidate for the local Assembly.<sup>559</sup> Later in 1942, a Hartford Lieutenant Governor, acting as the mayor's representative, gave a speech at the first MDNMNA convention.<sup>560</sup> Then the 1944 convention—the one at Becket—hosted a representative of Massachusetts' Governor.<sup>561</sup>

With this experience behind him, in 1945 the Grand Sheik arranged for a conference with the Massachusetts Governor in which he complained that the taxes on the Moorish Homestead had been unfairly raised and he accused officials in Great Barrington of conspiring to run the Moors out of town because of their race. The

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<sup>557</sup> "Harlem Moors."

<sup>558</sup> "Moorish-Americans End Anniversary Celebration," *Hartford Courant*, January 12, 1941, A13.

<sup>559</sup> Tommy Watkins, "Brooklyn Launches Drive for Colored Assemblyman," *New York Amsterdam Star-News*, March 14, 1942, 2.

<sup>560</sup> "Moorish Science Temple Holds First Convention," *Hartford Courant*, September 16, 1942, 11.

<sup>561</sup> "Mohammedan Moors Come."

Governor assured Turner-El, the latter told a reporter, that the MDNMNA would be protected, and that Turner-El's complaints were referred to the Governor's committee on racial and religious understanding. Meanwhile, the town selectmen denied all charges and called Turner-El's complaints "a cheap publicity stunt."<sup>562</sup> By February 1946, with the issues still not resolved, Turner-El traveled to Boston to meet with several state officials, including the Governor's secretary, the counsel of the state Senate, and the Attorney General. A few weeks before, the Moors had filed for a request to make the Homestead tax exempt due to it being a religious institution, and the Senate's counsel assured Frederick that this was appropriate. In an interview following his meetings in Boston, Turner-El took the time to acknowledge "friends of the Moorish people in the district," including a local judge.<sup>563</sup> After a four-month absence from the newspapers, Turner-El reappeared with a new perspective on his circumstances. He was pleased with the situation and praised both the Governor and the Great Barrington selectmen—the very selectmen who had derided his claims a year earlier.<sup>564</sup>

Satisfaction would be short-lived, however. By the following February, Great Barrington officials were insisting that the Homestead should not be considered tax-exempt, after the Moors had charged for parking on their property during the recent local fair that was held across the street from the Homestead. Turner-El, through his lawyer,

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<sup>562</sup> "Moorish Sheik Charges"; "Town Agog at Sheik's Claim of Prejudice," *Berkshire Evening Eagle*, August 24, 1945, 8.

<sup>563</sup> "Moors Seek Exemption of Taxes," *Berkshire Evening Eagle*, February 4, 1946, 8.

<sup>564</sup> "500 Dedicate Moorish Property," *Berkshire Evening Eagle*, June 1, 1946, 5.

appealed to the State Tax Appellate Board.<sup>565</sup> The Grand Sheik—now referring to the property as the “Moorish National Home,” leaving out “Berkshire” from its title—repeated his charge from the year prior, that this was the result of “racial and religious antagonism” on the part of certain Great Barrington residents.<sup>566</sup> Then, in June, a few dozen teenagers taunted the Springfield temple leader as he walked along the streets of Great Barrington during a visit.<sup>567</sup> Though the young men were reprimanded by a local judge, the event reinforced for the Moors the feeling of persecution. By the fall, Turner-El still had not obtained total exemption for his group,<sup>568</sup> but he would not let the issue be swept under the rug. He was apparently attending the weekly meetings of the local selectmen,<sup>569</sup> and in September invited them to the annual convention,<sup>570</sup> along with the Governor and Lieutenant Governor.<sup>571</sup>

The Moors’ troubles in Berkshire, however, were not over. In late 1948 Turner-El clarified in a speech at an interreligious conference that the prejudice in the county was only coming from “a few” locals, but he nevertheless advised all residents to “keep their hands off his people.”<sup>572</sup> Because the Home had failed to keep up on its mortgage, an

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<sup>565</sup> “Moorish Science Temple Wants all Taxes Abated,” *Berkshire Evening Eagle*, February 4, 1947, 7.

<sup>566</sup> “Grand Sheik Charges Racial Antagonism,” *Berkshire County Eagle*, February 5, 1947, 1.

<sup>567</sup> “Great Barrington: Court Lectures Berkshire Lads,” *Springfield Union*, June 19, 1947, 4. The boys were brought before a judge “who gave them a stern lecture about respecting the rights of others.”

<sup>568</sup> “Turner-El Invites Bradford to Moors’ Convention,” *Berkshire County Eagle*, September 10, 1947, 5.

<sup>569</sup> “Relocation of Road Sought,” *Berkshire County Eagle*, August 20, 1947, 16.

<sup>570</sup> “23 Lights to Be Installed,” *Berkshire Evening Eagle*, September 9, 1947, 4.

<sup>571</sup> “Turner-El Invites.”

<sup>572</sup> “Moorish Temple Grand Sheik Proclaims His Monroe Doctrine,” *Berkshire Evening Eagle*, September 7, 1948, 11.

arrangement had been made with Stanton, the original seller. She and her two brothers, along with her attorney and the MDNMNA's own attorney, had been made honorary members of the MST, and one of Stanton's brothers moved into the main building, using the rooms for raising his chickens. But Stanton and her brothers claimed that the property was being run down by the Moors, thus devaluing it, and so they had initiated a foreclosure process that would last until a hearing in January.<sup>573</sup> By June 1949, after a spring in which Turner-El and another Moor were in an automobile accident,<sup>574</sup> the home had been foreclosed on and Stanton outbid the Moors for the property in the foreclosure sale.<sup>575</sup> In July an eviction hearing was initiated, and the Moorish Americans finally left their Homestead before the town could forcibly remove them... with only a few hours to spare.<sup>576</sup>

Turner-El, however, was not one to be held down for long. In less than a year, the "National Home," now alternatively known as the "National Shrine,"<sup>577</sup> held a dedication ceremony for its new location, Norfolk, Connecticut, in which the MDNMNA would stay for the next fifteen years.<sup>578</sup> At the ceremony—complete with, as guests, various

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<sup>573</sup> "Moorish Mortgage Hearing Under Way," *North Adams Transcript*, November 24, 1948, 5; "Condition of Moors' Temple Examined at Local Hearing," *Berkshire Evening Eagle*, December 2, 1948, 6; "Moorish Hearing Continues," *Berkshire Evening Eagle*, December 17, 1948, 36; "Temple Case Will Close Monday," *Berkshire Evening Eagle*, January 8, 1949, 9.

<sup>574</sup> "Auto Strikes Pole Causing Blackout in Winsted Area," *Hartford Courant*, April 23, 1949, 2.

<sup>575</sup> "Stantons Bid \$25,000 for Moors' Temple," *Berkshire Evening Eagle*, June 21, 1949, 4.

<sup>576</sup> "Eviction of Moors Started in Court," *Berkshire Evening Eagle*, July 9, 1949, 4; "Moors Have Left Great Barrington," *North Adams Transcript*, July 15, 1949, 14.

<sup>577</sup> Advertisements for the Shrine appeared in the black newspaper *The New York Amsterdam News*. They portrayed the Shrine as a secular summer vacation resort.

<sup>578</sup> "Two Large Properties Change Ownership," *Hartford Courant*, May 21, 1950, B3; "Moroccans Open Shrine in Norfolk," *Hartford Courant*, May 15, 1950, 15.

politicians and respected non-political figures from within and without the state—Turner-El introduced a new organization that he recently had started, and he was now emphasizing, more than ever before, an element in the identity of his movement that he had been cultivating over the past few years. The Grand Sheik had finally found a stable home for his movement—geographically, politically, and ideologically.

**New directions: interreligious efforts and the appeal to international human rights**

Since the time he first conveyed his message of African Americans' Moorish origins, Drew Ali had worked for their unification. Racial—not religious—oppression was, after all, at the core of what drove individuals to embrace the Moorish identity. As explained above, the U.S.'s higher tolerance for religious rights than for racial equality presumably had suggested to Drew Ali that it would be easier for a black person to fight for equality if that fight was put into the rhetoric of religious freedom. It was also true at the time that a black person in the U.S. was often treated better by whites if he or she was wearing Islamic clothing, as it signified an almost non-black status.

It is understandable, then, that after a decade of battling racism via legal and political activities grounded almost exclusively in religious rhetoric, Frederick, now a seasoned activist and advocate, would tackle the core issue head-on. With more experience, wisdom, resources, and connections than he had in the 1930s, Turner-El, in 1947, decided to establish an inter-faith coalition for African-Americans, all while still trudging through his tribulations in Great Barrington. In June, this organization was discussed in a syndicated newspaper article:

In one of the most unusual gatherings of its kind ever to be held in the New England area, two hundred delegates representing thousands of colored people of

many religions, nationalities and beliefs heard a dramatic plea for unity and “Strength through full Brotherhood of Man” here [in Great Barrington]... The event was the Interorganizational Conference of the Moorish Science Movement. ... Chief point stressed throughout the ... General Meeting ... was that the colored man must do three things to achieve victory in his fight for a place in the world: forget forever the use of the derogatory term of “Negro”; learn the true historical background of our great great people and their contributions, and make ourselves a strong nation that we may be heard when we speak.<sup>579</sup>

Turner-El was now emphasizing the core elements of Drew Ali’s message, but framing them in a secular way in order to reach the masses of U.S. blacks. And it seemed to be inspiring many.

At the conference, among the speakers were a respected African-born businessman and the head of one of the oldest and largest African-American Hebrew Israelite movements in the U.S., Bishop Plummer, who pledged the loyalty of his churches (which he said numbered 132) to Turner-El’s vision.<sup>580</sup> Plans were introduced for organizing economic and education programs and a MST spokesperson announced that

Our organization does not come to you merely with an IDEA: we have something to offer you NOW. We have land: 300 acres more in Connecticut; we have this beautiful homestead, the largest thing of its type in the race. This is yours, and forever it is to remain YOURS.<sup>581</sup>

The immediate outcome of this conference is not clear. But in the fall of the following year, over 1,000 people reportedly came to the Home at Great Barrington for the next conference.<sup>582</sup> It was at this September 1948 conference where Turner-El warned

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<sup>579</sup> “Brotherhood Meet in Massachusetts,” *Atlanta Daily World*, June 19, 1947, 1, 7.

<sup>580</sup> “Moors, Christ Church Affiliate,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, June 28, 1947, 12.

<sup>581</sup> “Brotherhood Meet.”

<sup>582</sup> “Moorish Temple Grand.”

his Berkshire neighbors to “keep their hands off his people.” He also went on to explain there that “Prejudice... is only ignorance and the more we are educated, the less we will hate.”<sup>583</sup>

This 1948 conference, besides it taking place in September, had one thing noticeably different from the “Interorganizational Conference of the Moorish Science Movement” held in June 1947: its title, which was the “Moroccan Inter-Religious Conference.” This appears to have been one of the earliest instances in which Turner-El had used “Moroccan” as opposed to “Moorish” to describe African Americans and their heritage. While the meaning of the term was close to the same as the one that had been used by Drew Ali’s followers,<sup>584</sup> the change seems to have been a strategic shift in identity, one that was likely connected to other developments that Turner-El was instigating.

That Turner-El was doing things that had not been done in the Drew-Ali era MST should not be surprising; Drew Ali’s MST had only existed for at most four-and-a-half years, from 1925 to mid-1929, when Drew Ali died. Almost twenty years had passed since that time, and, especially since even Drew Ali had been unable to perform all the activities he had discussed and had, understandably, given little instruction for those things, the Moors had to figure out new ways to adapt to their situations, which were often different from what Drew Ali had dealt with. Although Turner-El had been following and been inspired by the model and message of Drew Ali, he had now built up

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<sup>583</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>584</sup> The Drew Ali-era MST did sometimes refer to “Moroccans,” but this was only on very rare occasions.

the kinds of projects, connections, and experiences that the group's founder had only talked about.

In 1949, two years after the initiation of Turner-El's unity movement, at the annual MDNMNA convention, which leaders from various African-American religious communities attended,<sup>585</sup> the group adopted a charter modeled after the United Nations' own charter (the latter had been signed four years prior). According to a news article, the convention charter formally established the Moroccan United Organization Federation (MUOF), an organization title that Turner-El had used as early as April of that year,<sup>586</sup> "with the purpose of uniting all Moroccans in the United States and [peacefully] combating racial and religious prejudice in this country."<sup>587</sup> In addition to inspiring the MUOF's charter, the U.N. had, with its Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), also influenced the "fundamental philosophy" of the MUOF, which was:

1. The teaching of the [U.N.'s UDHR], to eradicate ignorance and prejudice; 2. The teaching of the nationality, history and background of all Afro-American citizens, who, since being in bondage, lost their national identification; 3. Education on inter-religious interdenominational good-will to establish brotherhood and love among all religious denominations, and 4. Let it be thoroughly noted and understood that the terms Negro, colored, etc., are slave names. Therefore it is proper that initiative procedure be undertaken to eradicate the same in order to restore the proper nationality of all Moroccan, Afro-American peoples.<sup>588</sup>

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<sup>585</sup> "Principal Speakers at Moorish Convention," *Hartford Courant*, September 19, 1949, 15.

<sup>586</sup> "'Moroccan Tulip,' 'Arab Rose' Furnish Exotic Backdrop for Moors' Meeting," *Springfield Union*, April 13, 1949, 5.

<sup>587</sup> "Vice-Consul of Pakistan Visits City," *Hartford Courant*, September 18, 1949, B8.

<sup>588</sup> "MUOF Philosophy," *Afro-American*, July 20, 1957, 4.

Turner-El and those who joined the MUOF (including, it appears, some whites from Hartford)<sup>589</sup> had found in the U.N. both a source of legitimization for the African-American demand for equal rights and the Moors' long-time claims about being an oppressed "nation," and this may explain why Turner-El began adopting the term "Moroccan" as opposed to Moorish. His using a name that clearly related to the contemporary *state* of Morocco at the same time at which he began to look towards the U.N. as a model and source of legitimization for African-American grievances suggests that the name change was likely done to appeal to an international political audience. Over a dozen years before Malcolm X would make famous the defense of African-American rights by appeal to human—as opposed to civil—rights, Turner-El and the MUOF were doing so.<sup>590</sup>

Turner-El waited no time in putting his new international position into action. In 1948, he, acting as spokesman for "new voters of *Moroccan* descent" (my italics), presented to the Connecticut registrar of voters a petition that supported individuals' rights to register to vote using their MST suffix, El or Bey.<sup>591</sup> The Grand Sheik was also, in addition to continuing his by now well-established practice of having local and state politicians attend the various conventions and conferences he put on, developing ties with various liberal-minded professionals and meeting figures from further up the political chain. In 1951 he presented to the U.S. Vice President and a state Senator a petition

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<sup>589</sup> "Moroccans Open"; "Symbol Gift at Shrine Opening," *Hartford Courant*, May 15, 1950, 15. These individuals were likely honorary members only.

<sup>590</sup> On Malcolm X's use of human rights discourse, see Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), 128-157.

<sup>591</sup> "5304 Voters Added to List in Week," *Hartford Courant*, October 17, 1948, 1.

asking for the approval of “Moroccan American Rights.” At this important meeting in Washington, D.C., Frederick pointed to the UDHR, explaining that all people have a right to have a nationality<sup>592</sup> and encouraged the recognition of the “inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family as fundamental to justice and peace in the world.”<sup>593</sup> In 1958, he addressed the U.S. Justice Department, pointing to the U.N. genocide declaration as a legal and ideological base on which the U.S. could begin preventing the further “physical and mental destruction” of African Americans.<sup>594</sup>

Throughout the 1950s and early 1960s Turner-El fostered ties with various figures from a variety of communities, but particularly non-Muslim African-American religious leaders.<sup>595</sup> He also seems to have, by emphasizing his identity as an advocate of interreligious unity (and downplaying on occasion his role as leader of the MDNMNA),<sup>596</sup> been able to build bonds with Moors from different communities, even the MSTA Inc.<sup>597</sup> And, in addition to making these connections, Turner-El was establishing a new dimension to his movement, one that makes him particularly

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<sup>592</sup> “Morocco-American Group Asks Rights in Barkley Visit,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, June 16, 1951, 2.

<sup>593</sup> *Bridgeport Telegram*, June 12, 1951, 15.

<sup>594</sup> “Covering the International Front,” October 11, 1958, 5.

<sup>595</sup> See, for example, “Church Hears Moroccan Speak on Brotherhood,” *Sun* (Baltimore), February 19, 1953, 10; “Return to God Called Nation’s Need,” *New York Amsterdam News*, November 27, 1954, 17; Cliff Swain, “In North Jersey,” *New Journal Guide*, April 29, 1961, 19.

<sup>596</sup> Turner-El even claimed in 1949 that the “Moroccan International and Inter-Organizational Association”—not MDNMNA—was the name of the organization that he had been leading since the early 1930s; see “MIIA Plans Conference,” *New York Age*, April 23, 1949, 15.

<sup>597</sup> In 1953, there is a report of another Moor challenging the legitimacy of the MDNMNA; but news available reports after this date show cooperation between Turner-El and various MST groups. See “Judgment is Suspended in Lodge Charter Dispute,” *Hartford Courant*, July 1, 1953, 21; “Moorish American Officers,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, September 8, 1956, 2; Ralph Matthews, “One Way to Solve the Race Problem,” *Afro-American*, March 16, 1957, 11.

important in a discussion of Islamic diversity in the AAIR: ties with immigrant and diplomat Muslims.

### **Pan-Islam and Anti-Colonialism**

That Turner-El was now appealing to both a Moroccan identity and the example of the U.N. reflects his new international stance, one that represents a significant transmutation in his movement's relation to international Islam. By the late 1940s, Turner-El was one of the few non-Sunni African-American Muslims fostering real ties with the Muslim political figures, Pan-Islam, and anti-colonial movements.

Despite his claims of having connections to international Muslims in his early life, the available evidence only suggests some brief contact in the 1930s; there is little to support his claims that he was affiliated with the "Counsel Royale of Egypt," the "Supreme Moslem Council of the World," or other influential international Muslims prior to 1949.<sup>598</sup> But by 1947, when the seasoned politicker was redefining his mission to include the institutionalization of an African-American unity program, Turner-El had begun making serious efforts to reach out to international Muslims officials. Just prior to the fall convention that year, Frederick claimed that he had invited delegates from Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Egypt, and India, and that they had given their assurances that they would come,<sup>599</sup> though there is no evidence that they did indeed arrive at the convention

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<sup>598</sup> MST FBI file, Report, 8/18/1943, New York, 100-33742; "Sheik." The "Supreme Moslem Council of the World" may have been the organization based in Palestine known as the Supreme Muslim Council. Although solid evidence for this Council's ties to African Americans in the 1930s is still virtually non-existent, one Muhammad Ali al-Humani represented Islamic societies in Argentina and the US at the Council in 1931. Hopefully, a future researcher will find out more about this individual's and other Council representatives' links to U.S. Muslims.

<sup>599</sup> "Turner-El Invites."

either that year or in 1948.<sup>600</sup> But by his appealing to the U.N. and international politics, Turner-El now had a tool that might persuade Muslim diplomats to take him seriously. Just prior to the September 1949 convention, Turner-El announced that he had become a “member” of the U.N. Commission on Human Rights<sup>601</sup> and that he had invited to the convention several international Muslim officials.<sup>602</sup> Of those invited, it seems that the only one to attend was Aftab Ahmad Khan, Pakistan’s vice-consul in the U.S., who had already attended two large Turner-El-led meetings earlier in the year.<sup>603</sup> At this convention, Khan joined the several African-American religious leaders there in creating the MUOF’s charter.

While nothing is heard about international Muslims visiting the Moors again until 1952, it appears that Turner-El had continued to cultivate ties and had become more committed to supporting their international political agendas. In Norfolk in May 1952, Turner-El put on what was called the Moroccan Inter-Religious and International Conference<sup>604</sup> (MIIC) during which, on the final day, a speaking program was held on the topic of liberating North Africa from French colonialism. The speakers included Dr. Ben Aboud, spokesman for the Moroccan Information Office; Dr. Mohammed Butts, Pakistan

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<sup>600</sup> On the 1948 convention, see “Moorish Temple Grand.”

<sup>601</sup> I have not been able to confirm this.

<sup>602</sup> “Moroccans Meet Here on Thursday,” *Hartford Courant*, September 13, 1949, 22.

<sup>603</sup> “Vice-Consul”; “Principal Speakers”; “Moroccan Tulip”; “Great Barrington Moors Hear Brotherhood Urged,” *Springfield Union*, May 16, 1949, 1, 8.

<sup>604</sup> The name adds an “and International” to the title of the conference previously discussed.

delegate to the U.N.; El Aboud Bouhafa,<sup>605</sup> representative of Abed-el-Krim; and Bahi Laghdi, head of the Tunisian delegation to the U.N. who, notably, spoke in Arabic, using an interpreter for the audience.<sup>606</sup> These officials urged those in attendance to support their political efforts.

Over the next few years, officials continued to come to the Grand Sheik's conventions. In September of 1952, at the Moroccan National Convention<sup>607</sup> distinguished guests included, Bouhafa and Butts (who had both come in May), as well as Dr. El-Mehdi Aboud, representative of the Sultan of Morocco. There, a committee drafted a petition to be presented to the U.N. asking for Moroccan freedom.<sup>608</sup> In the following May, for the MIIC, guests included “[d]elegates from the U.N. staffs from

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<sup>605</sup> In 1952, Arnold Forster and Benjamin R. Epstein wrote that Bouhafa was “correspondent of *Al Misri*, Egypt’s largest daily newspaper. In his dispatches to *Al Misri* and in his private conversations at the U.N. lounge, he pounded on the theme that the Secretariat of the U.N. was ‘Jewish-dominated’. But his main labors were devoted to American Negroes. Bouhafa was a French citizen from Tunisia, of mixed Arab and French descent, a shrill-voiced and frequently hysterical speaker. He directs his anti-Semitism to Negroes. He holds out promises of first-class citizenship in Morocco—without danger of losing their American citizenship—and special privileges elsewhere in North Africa. In personal conversations he minces no words: ‘The American Jews are snakes worse than Hitler. We must continue to make this clear and before long you Americans will become like us, the most violent anti-Semites in the world. These bloodsucking bloodsucking Jews will pay for it when you Americans tell them, “Get out! Go to Israel!”.’” The authors indicate that he influenced Turner-El and that in at least one speech to African Americans, Turner-El said: “We Moslems must help our brother Moslems everywhere cast off the chains of Western imperialism, and suppress all Jewish aggression in the United States and the Middle East.” Although this would not be inconsistent with what we know about the other major non-Sunni African-American Muslim group’s (such as the NOI) views at the time, three things should be pointed out here: 1) The authors claim not only that Turner-El’s name was “Frank” and that it was only after meeting Bouhafa that he became a Muslim, which indicates that they were not very familiar with Turner-El, and their sources for the Grand Sheik and his activities may have been only second-hand. 2) Bouhafa was only one of many international influences on Turner-El, and we currently have no other evidence of his anti-Semitism. 3) In fact, as we have seen, Turner-El had collaborated, at least during the late 1940s, with African-American Hebrew Israelites. See Arnold Forster and Benjamin R. Epstein, *The Trouble-Makers* (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday and Company, 1952), 175-176.

<sup>606</sup> “Call Sounded to Liberate North Africa,” *Hartford Courant*, May 19, 1952, 9B.

<sup>607</sup> It is unclear whether this was what had previously been the MST convention.

<sup>608</sup> “Moroccans Ask Freedom at Norfolk Convention,” *Hartford Courant*, September 17, 1952, 17B.

Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Israel, India, Pakistan, Liberia and Ethiopia” as well as Moroccan Secretary-General Hajj Ahmed Balfarej, who was the conference’s principal speaker.<sup>609</sup> At the fall MUOF convention that year, representatives from India, Indonesia, Egypt, and Iran were expected to attend.<sup>610</sup> One year later—again at the MUOF convention—Balafrej returned, as well as a number of other Asian and African U.N. delegates. Here, preparations were begun by the MUOF’s Asian-African Committee for a presentation to be given to the U.N. demanding Morocco’s liberation.<sup>611</sup> In June 1956, the Moroccan Americans were visited by “Mohammed La Zoizi, minister of the interior of the Moroccan government and ... Princess Hamini of Pakistan.”<sup>612</sup> Finally, in 1957, Turner-El was vocal in his support of Algerian independence and had invited U.N. delegates from several Muslim countries to various MUOF and MIIC meetings.<sup>613</sup>

Frederick, emboldened by his numerous alliances with international Muslim political figures, was now making strong assertions directed to the U.S. government. For instance, he told a reporter at the U.N. that “The Middle East and Far East will not help in the fight against communism until they are completely free from European colonialism.”<sup>614</sup> In 1957 he advised the Justice Department that if the U.S. desired the

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<sup>609</sup> “Norfolk,” *Hartford Courant*, May 24, 1953, A6A. Also invited were Vice President Richard Nixon and Senator Hubert Humphrey of Minnesota. See “Moroccans Plan Two-Day Parley at National Home,” *Hartford Courant*, May 15, 1953, 22C.

<sup>610</sup> “Convention,” *Naugatuck Daily News*, September 15, 1953, 5.

<sup>611</sup> “Moroccan Federation Opens Norfolk Meeting,” *Hartford Courant*, September 16, 1954, 4.

<sup>612</sup> “One Way to Solve.”

<sup>613</sup> *Ibid*; “Moroccans Set for May Meeting,” *Afro-American*, April 27, 1957, 13.

<sup>614</sup> “American ‘Grand Sheik’.”

friendship of the African, Arabian, and Asian peoples, “a thorough investigation must be made of ‘the inhuman crimes continually being committed behind the iron curtain of Mississippi, Alabama, South Carolina and other areas.’”<sup>615</sup> Even the MDNMNA’s religious practices had begun changing to be more in line with the Sunni Islam that his allies practiced (see chapter 6).

But the Grand Sheik would suddenly lose both his momentum and his alliances. By the late 1950s another, younger African-American Muslim organization possessing a vastly more critical rhetoric was rapidly gaining followers. Now, for Muslim-majority countries, Malcolm X and Elijah Muhammad were the African-American Muslims of choice to be courted. Only fifteen people attended the 1959 MIIC and there is no mention of any international officials being among them.<sup>616</sup> Frederick’s movement had lost its influence and would never recover the prominence it once had.

Before his group’s decline in the late 1950s, however, Turner-El was the most outwardly-focused MST leader. And, with the exception of Satti Majid (see chapter 6), he was perhaps also the AAIR leader to do the most to spread awareness about African-American Muslims to U.S. non-Muslim and international Muslim politicians prior to the NOI in the late 1950s. Despite these efforts, though, Turner-El was not able to attract as great a following as that had by Kirkman Bey or even Givens-El. His movement probably had no more than, at its peak, ten temples and 1,200 followers, and all were concentrated

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<sup>615</sup> “U.S. Warned,” *Afro-American*, May 19, 1956, 1.

<sup>616</sup> “Civil Rights Discussed at Norfolk Parley,” *Hartford Courant*, September 28, 1959, 18C.

in the Northeast. By the early 1960s, evidence suggests, the faction had dwindled to almost nothing, and most of Turner-El's earlier efforts had to be abandoned.

### **Moorish Americans and International Islam**

Turner-El's was not the only MST faction that was exposed to international forms of Islam during the AAIR. A number of Moorish Americans had experienced this, though their reactions varied: some Moors completely rejected international Islam, some used elements (e.g., informal teachings and perhaps an Arabic Qur'an), some converted, and some eventually became leaders in international Islam movements. Ultimately, however, the FBI files reveal that Moorish contact with international Islam was, for the most part, minimal, and it took unique circumstances and individuals for such contact to turn into something greater than brief encounters.

In Detroit, Chicago, and Pittsburgh, there were reports of contact with South Asians; it is likely that most of these were members of the Ahmadiyya movement.<sup>617</sup> In New York, a number of factions, including Turner-El's, had immigrant Muslims from a variety of regions visit and become members of the MST (see chapter 6 for a discussion).<sup>618</sup> And in Cleveland, the local African-American Sunni mosque had piqued the interest of a Moor, though only for a brief moment.<sup>619</sup> In fact, it seems that overall there was little interest in immigrant or Sunni Muslims. Cases like the one in Chicago

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<sup>617</sup> MSTA FBI file, Report, 11/12/1942, Detroit file 100-6603, 23; MSTA FBI file, Report, 9/21/1943, Chicago file 14-39, 39-40; MSTA FBI file, Report, 9/13/43, Pittsburgh file 100-5820, 2. One of the South Asians in Chicago, however, seems to have been making a living as a traveling "Oriental" mystic. On the Ahmadis in the U.S., see Turner, 109-46.

<sup>618</sup> See Bowen, "The Search for 'Islam'," 272-277.

<sup>619</sup> MSTA FBI file, Report, 6/29/1943, Cleveland file 100-9538, 15. The only indicating feature of the mosque that was given in this report was its address (75<sup>th</sup> and Woodland), which tells us that this was the mosque led by Wali Akram. For more on this mosque, see chapter 6.

where a Moorish American regularly attended Arabic classes at an Ahmadi mosque were very rare.<sup>620</sup>

There were, however, two important exceptions, both of which will be discussed in more detail in the following chapters. The first was in Pittsburgh where Ahmadis had come proselytizing to black Americans by no later than 1930. At the time, the local MST temple—one of the largest temples during the Drew Ali-era—was caught up in internecine conflict<sup>621</sup> and one faction decided to leave the MST altogether and join the Ahmadis. By the late 1930s this particular group had turned to Sunnism, which made it one of the first African-American Sunni communities in the U.S.<sup>622</sup> This Pittsburgh group's transition to Sunnism was paralleled and supported by another growing African-American Sunni community, the Addeynu Allahe-Universal Arabic Association (AAUAA). The AAUAA was led by the former MST regional head of Michigan, James Lomax, who had spent a few years in the Middle East, and upon his return to the U.S. went by the name of Muhammad Ezaldeen.<sup>623</sup> This group, founded in 1938, would soon have branches in eastern New York, Jacksonville, Florida, Newark, Youngstown, Wilmington, Delaware, and Detroit. The success of the AAUAA, which connected itself with the Pittsburgh and Cleveland African-American Sunni communities as well as with a few New York City groups (including the Moorish National Islamic Center, an MST

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<sup>620</sup> MSTA FBI file, Report, 5/27/1944, Chicago file 61-893, 3.

<sup>621</sup> See "Bomb Blasts." The conflict had apparently been going on since at least 1928 when members began accusing the local Grand Sheik of abusing his power.

<sup>622</sup> See Hakim for the story.

<sup>623</sup> Dennis Walker, *Islam and the Search for African-American Nationhood* (Atlanta: Clarity Press, 2005), 243-44; Michael Nash, *Islam Among Urban Blacks: Muslims in Newark, New Jersey: A Social History* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2008), 41-42.

that was highly influenced by international Islam), formed the basis of the first national Sunni network for African Americans. The prevalence of these last communities demonstrates the important role the MST had in establishing African-American Sunnism, which today is the dominant form of Islam in black America.

### **Diverging Streams in Islamic Black Nationalism**

Building off the diverse elements in the AAIR, but especially the UNIA's early 1920s Islamophilia, Noble Drew Ali created what would be the largest and most widespread Islamic organization in the AAIR. Its success shows the cultural weight had by both the UNIA and Islam in the African-American community. As will be shown, the UNIA-inspired Islamic black nationalism would remain a dominant current in the AAIR.

But, although the UNIA-inspired Islamic black nationalism was clearly important in the MST, there was still diversity in how a group might utilize both the black nationalism influence and Islam. For a number of early leaders, the goal of Drew Ali's doctrines was understood as complete economic and political separation from whites; some, such as Drew Ali himself and Frederick Turner-El, had a willingness to work with whites for African-American empowerment; some turned inward and were almost completely apolitical; some were perhaps mildly interested in politics but spent their energy on using Drew Ali's ideas as a stepping stone to explore international Islam or other alternative religions. Indeed, the fact that there were so many factions of the MST after 1929 reflects the diversity that was becoming very common in the AAIR. And, while the MST's ability to spread was undoubtedly inspiring others, there remained several other sources for Islam in African-American culture, and these sources would be

explored. Islam was still deterritorializing in the U.S. and the MST alone was not capable of reterritorializing it. In the end, then, while the MST was the largest and probably the most influential current for most of the AAIR, its size and influence were not *significantly* greater than the other groups’.

## **Chapter Five: Smaller Sects and Independent Mystics**

Particularly when a dominant cultural movement loses its power to successfully territorialize—i.e., to limit the number of alternative cultural expressions—the modern tendency to deterritorialize can grow stronger, leading to incredibly diverse manifestations of a religion even within a single subculture. Because of the Great Schism, then, though the MST remained overall the most popular Islamic current in the AAIR, it was far from being the only current, and in many important cities and regions it was not even the most dominant one. In this chapter, I examine some of the less well-known examples of the deterritorialization of Islam in the AAIR: the smaller sects and independent mystics. Several of them were influenced by the MST, and sometimes they were able to thrive precisely because of the MST's disunity after the Great Schism, but these sects and figures had other sources of influences and differed enough from the MST that they should be considered separately. An examination of these groups and individuals is important because the AAIR was the only period in African-American Islamic history after 1920 in which smaller sects and figures were the dominant forms of Islam in several important African-American communities.

### **The U.S. Ahmadis after 1925**

After Muhammad Sadiq left the U.S. in 1923, the U.S. Ahmadi movement's growth began slowing significantly. Under Sadiq's successor, Muhammad Din, the U.S. Ahmadi magazine, the *Moslem Sunrise*, which had been started by Sadiq and whose

printing had been a sign of the group's success, stopped publication after the April 1924 issue. Then, when Din departed in 1925, the group went into an actual decline. By 1926, Muhammad Yusuf Khan, the Indian immigrant left in charge of the U.S. organization, still had no idea when or if the magazine would be revived.<sup>624</sup> Though around 1,400 people were said to have converted under Sadiq and Din, by 1927, there were now at the very most 400 active members throughout the country.<sup>625</sup> At that time, the group's largest membership was, surprisingly, not in Chicago, where the movement was headquartered; the MST was likely siphoning off most of the African-American interest in Islam in that city, and the Chicago mosque had dwindled to maybe sixty or seventy members total.<sup>626</sup> There were smaller groups Indianapolis and Detroit, and New York had the largest mosque, with 120 to 125 active Ahmadis.<sup>627</sup> In St. Louis, Paul Nathaniel Johnson, the principal African-American Ahmadi leader, had around seventy-five members, but, unlike Sadiq, he had failed to convert any white Americans and was on the cusp of detaching his group from the main Ahmadi movement (see below).<sup>628</sup>

In August 1928, the new official missionary, Sufi M.B. Bengalee, arrived from India. Bengalee, unlike his predecessors, was to direct much of his attention towards white Americans.<sup>629</sup> He established a new headquarters and began lecturing for white-

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<sup>624</sup> Holmes, 264-265.

<sup>625</sup> Hoffert, "Moslem Propaganda," 141.

<sup>626</sup> Hoffert, "Moslem Propaganda," 141; John Van Ess, "A Moslem Mosque in Chicago," *Neglected Arabia* 141 (1927): 13-15.

<sup>627</sup> Hoffert, "Moslem Propaganda," 141.

<sup>628</sup> Hoffert, "Moslem Propaganda," 141; Holmes, 266.

<sup>629</sup> Andrew T. Hoffert, "The Moslem Movement in America," *Moslem World* 20 (1930): 309.

majority audiences. In the late 1920s, however, conversion to Islam was primarily seen as an African-American phenomenon, and Bengalee was finding it difficult to draw in new white converts. At the same time, he was not effective in stopping the flow of African-American Ahmadis into other groups, particularly the MST. In late 1929, he stated that there were only twelve Ahmadis in the Chicago group, and all were white; and throughout the rest of the country, there were perhaps eighty to ninety converts total, of which only a few were African-American.<sup>630</sup> At this time, it must have become clear to Bengalee, just as it had to Sadiq, that if the Ahmadis were to succeed in the U.S., they would have to put more effort into their work with African Americans.

From a proselytizer's standpoint, the timing for this was actually ideal. Several thousand African-American Muslims had suddenly lost their leader (Drew Ali), and among these were probably hundreds of former Ahmadis. All that was needed, then, was a concentrated effort to draw these Muslims into the Ahmadi fold. Bengalee, however, did not have to completely sacrifice the attention he wanted to give to whites in order to bring in African Americans. Unlike Sadiq, Bengalee had an Ahmadi proselytizer in the U.S. who had experience working with African Americans and therefore could be the person primarily responsible for their conversions: Muhammad Yusuf Khan.

Within a few months of first coming to the U.S. from Jhelum, Pakistan as a student in January 1921,<sup>631</sup> Khan had joined up with Sadiq, helping him write and mail

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<sup>630</sup> Hoffert, "Moslem Movement in America," 309.

<sup>631</sup> Khan, "Some of our Missionaries," 14; "Yusuf Khan," Card Manifests of Individuals Entering through the Port of Detroit, Michigan, 1906-1954, available on Ancestry.com.

letters to various U.S. groups in order to promote Islam and the Ahmadi movement.<sup>632</sup> With this experience behind him, when Din arrived in 1923, Khan became an important and respected figure in the movement and he began giving lectures on Islam.<sup>633</sup> Then, after Din left, Khan became the de facto head of the U.S. mission,<sup>634</sup> and by the summer of 1927 he had made his way to Cincinnati, Ohio where he began making converts.<sup>635</sup> Bengalee apparently made Khan, who was now using the titles of “doctor”<sup>636</sup> and “Sufi,” a full-time missionary. By 1930, the *Moslem Sunrise* was being printed again, signaling the revival of the U.S. Ahmadi movement.<sup>637</sup>

#### Growth and Schisms in the Ohio-Pennsylvania Region

After building up the African-American Ahmadi community in Cincinnati and leaving a black convert in charge, in March 1930 Khan moved to Pittsburgh.<sup>638</sup> From his Pittsburgh mosque base—which was known in the early 1930s as the “Mother

<sup>632</sup> Khan appears in the following issues of the Sadiq-era *Moslem Sunrise*: 1, no. 1 (1921): 14; 1, no. 2 (1921): 36; 1, no. 3 (1922): 54; 1, no. 4 (1922): 87.

<sup>633</sup> *Moslem Sunrise*, 2, no. 2 & 3 (1923): 190, 193.

<sup>634</sup> Holmes, 264-265; Munawar Ahmad Anees, “Ahmadiyyat in America,” *Muslim Sunrise* 43, no. 1 & 2 (1976): 12. One Ahmadi account claims that Bengalee was actually head of the U.S. mission from 1925 to 1927, but left to India in the latter year, and then returned to the U.S. in 1928 (see Rashid Ahmad American, “A Brief Summary of the Ahmadiyya Movement in America,” *Muslim Sunrise* 42, no. 4 (1975): 12). However, because this cannot be corroborated by other sources while the 1928 first arrival date can, I suspect that it is inaccurate.

<sup>635</sup> Khan, “Some of our Missionaries,” 15; Sheikh Nazeer Elahee, “Islam in Evans City, Pennsylvania,” *Muslim Sunrise* 2, no. 4 (1975): 13; “Cincinnati, Ohio,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, June 11, 1927, 12. Cincinnati had likely already had a small number of people who had converted under Sadiq.

<sup>636</sup> It is unknown whether this title was given to him through his college education or even by the Ahmadis, perhaps to indicate his religious knowledge.

<sup>637</sup> The magazine started back up with volume 3, number 3, in July 1930.

<sup>638</sup> Khan, “Some of our Missionaries,” 15. Khan may have been visiting Pittsburgh as early as 1928; see Noshir P. Kaikobad, “The Colored Muslims of Pittsburgh” (M.A. thesis, University of Pittsburgh, 1948), 19. An FBI report incorrectly says the date of Khan’s arrival was 1929; see MSTA FBI file, Report, 9/13/43, Pittsburgh file 100-5820, 2.

Mosque”—Khan led the establishment of numerous mosques in the region. By 1932, he had, under his leadership, mosques in Cincinnati, Youngstown, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, and Washington, Pennsylvania.<sup>639</sup> In 1933, these mosques, which were each being led by the African-American “sheiks” (religious leaders) whom Khan had appointed, were responsible for starting mosques in at least four more cities: Columbus, Akron, Dayton, and Braddock.<sup>640</sup> And by 1934, when the Ahmadiis were boasting that they had 3,000 American converts,<sup>641</sup> there were also mosques in Buffalo, New York, Homestead, Pennsylvania, Mansfield, Ohio, and Steubenville, Ohio.<sup>642</sup> With these thirteen mosques, the Ohio River Valley region had become, in four years, the U.S. region with the fastest-growing, and perhaps most densely-concentrated African-American Islamic community.

There are several factors that contributed to Khan’s success in the region. First was his experience with African Americans. By the early 1930s, Khan had been working as an Islamic missionary to U.S. blacks for ten years—longer, perhaps, than any other Islamic missionary in the U.S. at the time. When he found his audiences, he made sure

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<sup>639</sup> M[uhammad] Yusuf Khan, “My Message to the Moslems,” *Cleveland Call and Post*, January 6, 1934, 4; “Activities of the American Ahmadiyya Moslem Mission,” *Moslem Sunrise* 3, no. 4 (1930): 22.

<sup>640</sup> Khan, “My Message.”

<sup>641</sup> “Press Notices,” *Moslem Sunrise* 7, no. 1 & 2 (1934): 30. I suspect this number was exaggerated because by 1937, the Cleveland mosque, which had been one of the largest Ahmadi mosques in 1934, could only claim 120 members, of which only about forty regularly attended; see John P. Leacacos, “Imam of Moslems Has 10-Year Plan,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, June 20, 1937, 4-A.

<sup>642</sup> Khan, “Some of Our Missionaries,” 15; “Press Notices,” *Moslem Sunrise* 6, no. 3 & 4 (1933): 39; “Among the Moslems,” *Cleveland Call and Post*, August 4, 1934, 2. Mansfield, whose mosque was started by Bengalee and not Khan, would become an important center for the propagation of Islam, and will be discussed in chapter 6. The Buffalo branch is not mentioned in any Ahmadi-Qadiani writings that I have seen, but Dannin reports that he has seen papers for advanced Arabic study among Buffalo’s African Americans dating back at least as to July 1933; see Dannin, 285, n. 1. Dannin believes this is evidence of Muhammad Ezaldeen, but as will be discussed below, Dannin’s dates about Ezaldeen are sometimes incorrect—Ezaldeen had not returned to the U.S. by 1933.

his message highlighted the themes and symbols that were resonating with black Americans. Under Khan, African Americans were taught elements of “mystical” Islam (Sufism), they were sold fezzes (popular both around the Islamic world and within African-American circles due to the MST),<sup>643</sup> they were encouraged to “know thyself,” and Khan was known to preach the popular message that “Christians brought you here as slaves and have oppressed you. We Mohammedans are all brothers.”<sup>644</sup> Now able to devote himself full-time to his work, and backed by the main Ahmadi mission in India, Khan had the resources, skills, and legitimacy to succeed.

Another crucial factor, though, was timing. When Khan arrived in Pittsburgh, the city already had both an MST and an African-American Sunni community (the latter will be discussed more in the next chapter). While it does not appear that Khan made contact with the Sunnis, he did find Moorish Americans who were interested in his message. Pittsburgh’s Moorish Science Temple No. 5 had probably been established around late 1927.<sup>645</sup> By the fall of 1928, the group, led by T. Crumby Bey, had 459 “eligible members” and 147 “adepts” (full members), making it the third largest MST temple.<sup>646</sup> In fact, it was also one of the most active and economically successful Drew Ali-era temples, running a barber shop, laundry, and grocery store, the last of which was directed

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<sup>643</sup> Dannin, *Pilgrimage*, 39.

<sup>644</sup> “Mohammedan Activities,” *Missionary Review of the World* 55 (1932): 246; “Islam in Pittsburgh,” *Moslem World* 23, no. 1 (1933): 90.

<sup>645</sup> I am basing this on A) the fact that incorporation records for Temple No. 4 (Detroit) show that it was incorporated in late September 1927, and, given that the Temples were numbered in the order in which they were founded, the Pittsburgh Temple, No. 5, was likely established soon after; and B) MST historians date the temple’s founding to November 15, 1927; see Way-El, 95.

<sup>646</sup> “Report of Temples,” *Moorish Guide*, October 26, 1928, 4.

by one W. Smith Bey.<sup>647</sup> During the first half of 1928, however, Crumby Bey began making vocal his strong anti-American and anti-white beliefs, and as a result he had been arrested and told by local authorities to leave the city.<sup>648</sup> By mid-year, he was also being accused by some of his followers of exploiting them; but when no witnesses appeared at his trial, he announced that he had been “vindicated.”<sup>649</sup> Not thirty days later, one of Crumby’s relatives—probably his son—was arrested for shooting at two individuals with the intent to kill.<sup>650</sup> Then, after Drew Ali died in 1929, like with what happened in many of the temples throughout the country, the membership split over differences of opinion on who should lead the group—differences that erupted into violence.<sup>651</sup> When Khan came to Pittsburgh, he found an African-American Muslim population in distress, in need of a new leader and a new approach to their problems.

It seems that Walter Smith Bey—probably the same person as the W. Smith Bey who had run the MST grocery store—became the leader of one post-Drew Ali MST

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<sup>647</sup> “Message from Temple No. Five,” *Moorish Guide*, September 14, 1928, 3; “Bro T. Crumbey-Bey Will Visit Youngstown, O.,” *Moorish Guide*, September 28, 1928, 3. Crumby Bey may have taken part in the killing of Claude Greene and was likely a partisan of Ira Johnson; see “Hold Moorish Temple ‘Prophet’.”

<sup>648</sup> “Pittsburgh,” *New York Evening Post*, Apr 17, 1928, 28.

<sup>649</sup> “T. Crumby Bey Freed of Charges,” *Moorish Guide*, September 14, 1928, 3.

<sup>650</sup> *The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania v. Carson Crumby Bey*, November 9, 1928.

<sup>651</sup> Blanche Taylor Dickinson, “Smoky City Streets: Moor against Moor,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, September 21, 1929, 8; “Bomb Blasts Hill Temple,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, November 6, 1929, 1; *The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania v. G. Martin Bey*, September 4, 1929. Pittsburgh had a strong pro-Ira Johnson faction—which was probably the group aligned with Crumby Bey; see “Five Moors to Face Trial for Murder Next Week,” *Chicago Defender* (City ed.), January 25, 1930, [?]. After Ira’s arrest, Crumby Bey appears to have joined Kirkman Bey’s faction, serving as a temple leader and Grand Governor at various locations outside of Pittsburgh; see T. Grumby[Crumby] Bey, [article title unknown], *Moorish Guide*, April 19, 1935, 5.

faction in Pittsburgh.<sup>652</sup> It is unknown when it happened exactly, but at some point between 1930 and 1932,<sup>653</sup> Smith Bey had met Khan, who at some point gave Smith Bey

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<sup>652</sup> Hakim, *History*, 2.

<sup>653</sup> What exactly took place in Pittsburgh—and Cleveland, for that matter—between 1930 and 1933 is something that has been very much clouded by conflicting stories. I will attempt to summarize the main pieces of evidence and arguments here. (A) According to Smith Bey (Nasir Ahmad), in an interview conducted by the FBI a dozen years after the fact, his first introduction to the Ahmadis was in Cleveland in 1930 (see AAUAA FBI file, Philadelphia, No. 100-19940). We cannot be sure about this claim however, because it conflicts slightly with other accounts (see below) and there seems to be some other incorrect facts reported by Smith Bey to the FBI. (B) What is interesting about the account in story (A) is that it is unlikely that either Bengalee or Khan were in Cleveland in 1930. No Cleveland mosque is mentioned in the Ahmadi magazine until 1935 (at which point, it was listed as being at 5311 Woodland Ave. S.E.); and, in fact, I have no solid evidence that any Cleveland mosque was Ahmadi-led prior to 1933. (C) However, there was indeed an Ahmadi missionary in Cleveland in 1930: the African-American Wali Akram. Akram had converted in St. Louis under Paul Nathaniel Johnson in 1923 and came to Cleveland in 1927 where, Dannin tells us, he involved himself with the immigrant Sunni Muslims (Dannin, *Pilgrimage*, 97), which suggests that the Cleveland mosque could have been Sunni-led in 1930. (D) In a 1937 newspaper article (Leacacos, “Imam of Moslems”), Akram states that he joined the Cleveland mosque—which was, in 1937, located at 5311 Woodland Ave. S.E. and an overtly Ahmadi mosque at that time—in 1930. This claim does not necessarily contradict the possibility, as stated in (C), that the Cleveland mosque could have been Sunni-led in 1930, but it does provide strong evidence that the mosque Akram was at in 1937 was the same mosque he was at in 1930, and that it became Ahmadi-led by at least (referring to issue (B) 1935. What is notable about this address, however, is that it is for a building that was in Cleveland’s black community; in fact, that same building hosted a Prince Hall Masonic lodge and was at that time the main center of UNIA activity in the city (see Thelma-Louise, “Cleveland,” *Afro-American*, July 12, 1930, 18; Alexander O. Taylor, “Ohio State News,” *Chicago Defender* (Ntl ed.), September 27, 1930, 19; Alexander O. Taylor, “Ohio State News,” *Chicago Defender* (Ntl ed.), August 20, 1932, 19). Though it is certainly not impossible, it is somewhat unlikely that an immigrant Sunni mosque was set up in the heart of the black community in Cleveland; this evidence increases the likelihood that the mosque at 5311 Woodland Avenue was organized—and not by Akram—as an African-American-majority Ahmadi mosque in 1930. (E) The above stories and their dates can all be put into question because Dannin says that in 1932 Akram *started a mosque* and invited Nasir Ahmad to be its imam that year (Dannin, *Pilgrimage*, 98). In my opinion, this story is probably incorrect. It seems to be a case of Dannin relying on the memories of men in their eighties about events that took place over fifty years beforehand. Akram’s statements from the 1930s (see issue (D) should be taken to have more credibility because they were clearly given from Akram (and Dannin’s source on this issue may have been Akram and other early members who may not have actually been in the community at the time) and they were recorded closer to the time the events occurred. (F) The earliest dated document I have seen concerning what was probably this mosque is a January 1933 newspaper article that indicates that Khan was expected to give a speech at the “Moslem Mosque” at 5217 Wodland [sic] Ave. S.E. (see “Mohammedan to Speak,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, January 30, 1933, 5). The mosque itself was not explicitly identified as Ahmadi one and Khan was not noted as being its leader. What is most notable is that it has a slightly different address than the known Ahmadi mosque (5311 Woodland Ave. S.E.). (G) In an article from January 1934, however, it is implied that the Cleveland mosque (its address was not given) had been Ahmadi-led for most of 1933 (M[uhammad] Yusuf Khan, “My Message to the Moslems,” *Cleveland Call and Post*, January 6, 1934, 4). (H) Khan never claimed to have founded the Cleveland mosque, while he did claim this for several others in Ohio. One Ahmadi history, however, tells us that Bengalee founded the Cleveland mosque (see *American*, 12). This claim is problematic because the same article indicates that Bengalee founded mosques that Khan took credit for. (I) Dannin (p. 98) says Khan first came to Cleveland in 1932 or 1933; there Smith Bey/Nasir Ahmad was the leader and invited

the Muslim name Nasir Ahmad.<sup>654</sup> Khan believed that Nasir Ahmad would be a strong leader and so made him and around a dozen other African Americans (most of whom were probably former Moors) sheiks.<sup>655</sup> These sheiks were the people directly responsible for establishing the mosques in the region, and their success most likely came by recruiting other former Moors. What distinguished Nasir Ahmad from the others, though, was that he was also made an imam—of the Cleveland mosque—and was said to have been the first true African-American imam.<sup>656</sup> Ahmad, now the most influential African-American Muslim in the region, was thus poised to become a significant shaper of the region's African-American Muslim community.

In March 1934, Khan announced that he would be making the Cleveland mosque his new headquarters, ostensibly because of its more central location relative to the rest of the U.S.<sup>657</sup> This would mean that Sheik Nasir Ahmad would no longer be the imam in the

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Khan to teach his own followers (former MST members) who were living in Pittsburgh. (J) A newspaper article from the period indicates that Khan in fact appointed Nasir Ahmad to be head of the Cleveland mosque—suggesting that Khan was in control of the Cleveland mosque and not Ahmad or Akram; see Ahsan Elihee, “The Cleveland Mosque,” *Cleveland Call and Post*, January 13, 1934, 4. This story is almost certainly the correct one, as it was written by a Muslim from the period and it is corroborated by other Muslim-written articles from 1934. (K) Bengalee's first known appearance in Cleveland is June 1932, when he gave speeches at both black and white churches (see “Some Press Notices,” *Moslem Sunrise* 4, no. 3 (1932): 18-20); it is possible that he gained control of the mosque at that time.

Clearly this evidence does not give us any obvious and reliable outline and timeline of the events.

<sup>654</sup> Hakim, *History*, 2-3, 6; “Mohammedan Activities,” *Missionary Review of the World* 55 (1932): 246; “Islam in Pittsburgh,” *Moslem World* 23, no. 1 (1933): 90.

<sup>655</sup> Hakim, *History*, 6; M[uhammad] Yusuf Khan, “Cleveland Mosque, My Message,” *Cleveland Call and Post*, April 7, 1934, [2?].

<sup>656</sup> Ahsan Elihee, “The Cleveland Mosque,” *Cleveland Call and Post*, January 13, 1934, 4. Also, see two footnotes above for a discussion of the difficulties of dating the events in Cleveland in the early 1930s.

<sup>657</sup> “Dr. Khan to Make His Headquarters Here,” *Cleveland Call and Post*, March 3, 1934, 2.

city and he returned to Pittsburgh, though he was not to stay there as the leader—that job had been granted to Sheik Abdullah Farook. Instead, Ahmad was sent to Philadelphia, which was likely explained as a move to develop a base from which the movement could start spreading Islam on the East Coast. In April, however, as Ahmad was preparing to leave for eastern Pennsylvania, Khan began publicly criticizing the MST and denounced Ahmad for supposedly maintaining ties to his former group.<sup>658</sup> The true reason for Ahmad’s move, it appears, was that Khan was afraid of losing control of his community to Ahmad.

But exiling Ahmad would prove a fateful decision for Khan. Despite Khan’s followers’ frequent public expressions of respect and admiration for him,<sup>659</sup> during early 1934 there was growing resentment among a number of African-American Ahmadis towards Khan. Some believed that he had been exploiting them for personal profit<sup>660</sup> and there was a feeling that he was not doing enough to strengthen and grow the African-American Muslim community. The removal of Ahmad from the Ohio River Valley region and his subsequent condemnation was, it seems, the last straw.

Just six weeks after his departure, the Ohio River Valley Muslims got word of Ahmad’s success in Philadelphia where he was teaching the African Americans—echoing the words of Muhammad Din in the 1920s—their “own language and

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<sup>658</sup> “Bismilla,” *Cleveland Call and Post*, April 21, 1934, 2; Dannin, *Pilgrimage*, 38.

<sup>659</sup> As seen weekly in the *Cleveland Call and Post* religion section.

<sup>660</sup> Dannin, *Pilgrimage*, 38-40, 98-103.

religion.”<sup>661</sup> Then, on July 14, an important announcement was made in the religion section of the *Cleveland Call and Post*, the local black newspaper:

The leaders of Vearianue [sic], or what is better known as Imams, gathered [in Pittsburgh] and formed a council, according to the Islamic teaching. We discharged the missionary, M.Y. Khan because of his failure to carry the work on in the right way. We, the members have been successful in making connection with the Moslem League, that we may be known throughout all the Moslem World. Our lecturer will cost just about half what it has been costing. The new missionary will be located at ... Pittsburgh. His name is Abdul Mohammed Iben Akbar. For any information, please write 18 South Sickel St., Philadelphia, Pa.

Shaikh Nasir Ahmad has returned back to his mission in Philadelphia. We are making wonderful progress here in Philadelphia. Unity is our aim. May Allah guide us wherever we go.<sup>662</sup>

The Vearianue,<sup>663</sup> which was also known as both the Islamic Council and the Supreme Council, was led by Nasir Ahmad and was initially composed of twelve leading men from the Ohio-Pennsylvania community (because Philadelphia was now included, the region cannot be limited to the Ohio River Valley), and it soon acquired representatives from the Pittsburgh, Braddock, Youngstown, and Columbus Ahmadi mosques.<sup>664</sup> It was said that Abdul Mohammed Iben Akbar, purportedly an Egyptian who claimed to be the “Imam Ul Shareef of America,” was the person who connected the black Ahmadi Muslims to both various governments of Muslim-majority countries and the Moslem League, an Indian Muslim organization that, prior to the partition of

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<sup>661</sup> Abdul Mohammad, “Philadelphia Mission,” *Cleveland Call and Post*, June 2, 1934, 2.

<sup>662</sup> “Pittsburgh Mosque,” *Cleveland Call and Post*, July 14, 1934, 2.

<sup>663</sup> It is unknown if this was the correct spelling; there were occasional spelling errors in the religion section of the *Call and Post*, as many of the articles, particularly those written by Muslims, were submitted by members of the religious communities, not professional writers.

<sup>664</sup> Saadi Mliak, “Proceedings at the Pittsburgh Mosque,” *Cleveland Call and Post*, July 31, 1934, 2; Abdulla Eesa, “Bis-mil-lah,” *Cleveland Call and Post*, July 31, 1934, 2.

Pakistan, worked for the creation of a separate Muslim country in South Asia.<sup>665</sup> Next to nothing is known about this Abdul Mohammed Iben Akbar and his Moslem League connections. Although there are reports of various “Moslem Leagues” in the U.S. during the AAIR, I know of no information concerning the activities of a U.S. branch of the Moslem League in the 1930s: A “Moslem League of America” was in both California in the 1920s and in New York City in the 1940s, and a “Moslem League of Philadelphia”—which had been founded by an African-American Muslim named Abdul Rahman (born Nathan Johnson), who had converted to Islam in the early 1930s, and which had ties to a known African-American Sunni group—reportedly held its first public meeting in 1951.<sup>666</sup> In any case, it was believed that connecting with the League was “most necessary” if the African-American Muslims of Ohio and Pennsylvania were to be “recognized as Moslems.”<sup>667</sup> The community was therefore understandably excited for the possibilities Abdul Mohammed Iben Akbar’s presence brought; record-breaking audiences packed the mosque halls when he visited them for the first time<sup>668</sup>

In histories of the schism in Pittsburgh, there has been some confusion over the Islamic sectarian beliefs that were introduced to the community. Dannin, relying on

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<sup>665</sup> Mliak, “Proceedings”; Eesa, “Bis-mil-lah.”

<sup>666</sup> Special Correspondent, “Muslim Activities in Philadelphia,” *Muslim Digest* (1951): 85. This article indicates that the “founder-patron” of the Moslem League of Philadelphia was one Abdul Rahman and that the group was working together with an African-American Sunni organization, the AAUAA, and immigrant Muslims. Because this article also tells us that one Abdul Basit Naeem was an influential participant in the activities discussed in the article, we can be fairly certain that this Abdul Rahman was the same Abdul Rahman for whom, in 1955, Abdul Basit Naeem gave a brief biography in his magazine, *Moslem World & the U.S.A.*; see “Moslems in the U.S.A.,” *Moslem World & the U.S.A.* 1, no. 1 (1955): 24-25.

<sup>667</sup> Mliak, “Proceedings”; Eesa, “Bis-mil-lah.”

<sup>668</sup> “Moslem Activities in Braddock,” *Cleveland Call and Post*, August 4, 1934, 2.

letters from the period as well as interviews with members of the community over fifty years after the events, demonstrates that sometime between 1934 and 1938, a number of the leaders in the Pittsburgh community, including Nasir Ahmad, rejected the dominant Ahmadi sect to which most of the South Asian missionaries belonged, the “Qadianis,” and joined up with the “Lahoris.”<sup>669</sup> The former believe that Ghulam Ahmad, the Ahmadi founder, was a new prophet, while the latter see him as merely a reformer, and thus are more in line with Sunni Islam. Hakim, who was a member of the Pittsburgh mosque and wrote in the 1970s, makes no mention of the Lahori split, and only discusses an Ahmadi-Sunni split. I have found newspaper evidence from 1937 that shows that Akram was part of *some sort of* split in the Ahmadi community, but that he remained an Ahmadi of some type, which is contrary to Dannin’s claim that once he left the Qadianis he did not join another Ahmadi organization.<sup>670</sup> Also, the fact that Abdul Mohammed Iben Akbar was perhaps an Egyptian adds to the confusion, as Egyptian Lahoris were relatively few and I am not aware of any Egyptian Lahoris using the organizational name Moslem League, though the League did indeed have numerous Lahori members in India.

There is, however, some additional evidence that at least seems to verify a Lahori connection. One Lahori magazine from the period indicates that in 1935 an American, whose Muslim name was Saeed Ahmad, converted to their group and began proselytizing to other Americans, most of whom were Qadiani—and the evidence suggests that he was

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<sup>669</sup> Dannin, *Pilgrimage*, 103.

<sup>670</sup> Leacacos, “Imam of Moslems”; Dannin, *Pilgrimage*, 103. Dannin, however, could not explain why Akram tried to introduce the Ahmadi practice of using a *bayat* (pledge) to the UISA in the 1940s (see the chapter on Sunnis).

doing so in the Pittsburgh area.<sup>671</sup> Saeed Ahmad registered his group that November and quickly gained a small following of both immigrants and converts. While there is still no known evidence to directly tie him to the Pittsburgh community, we do know that by late 1937/early 1938 Nasir Ahmad and other Pennsylvania leaders were adamantly Lahori and that their leader was American-born.<sup>672</sup> Beyond this, though, evidence explaining their direct ties with Lahoris is still lacking.

Other evidence indicates that many of the Ohio-Pennsylvania Muslims were known as the Moslems of America (MOA),<sup>673</sup> and at first their leader was an immigrant named Professor Ala E. Mohammed—it is not known if this was the same person as the Abdul Mohammed Iben Akbar—who incorporated the group in Washington, D.C. in September 1935.<sup>674</sup> Prof. Ala E. Mohammed may have been a national head, as in at least one report one Omar El-Farook led the MOA in Pittsburgh in 1935.<sup>675</sup> In 1937, when the Pittsburgh Muslim community had reportedly reached what would be its peak size in the AAIR, 1,800 people,<sup>676</sup> Mohammed was deported, leaving El-Farook as president of the

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<sup>671</sup> See *Young Islam*, 1935-36.

<sup>672</sup> See Dannin, *Pilgrimage*, 103 and accompanying notes.

<sup>673</sup> This title was used occasionally while still under Khan.

<sup>674</sup> AAUAA FBI file, Report, Buffalo file 100-6320. The only references I have found for Professor Ala E. Mohammed are in the AAUAA FBI file and in nowhere in that file does it indicate his sectarian affiliations. However, his connection to the Moslems of America is clear when we consider that (A) evidence from Hakim and the AAUAA FBI file indicates that indicates that Ahmad and another First Mosque leader, Saeed Akmal, were affiliated with the Moslems of America and (B) Dannin says Ahmad and Akmal were Lahoris.

<sup>675</sup> Moslems of America (MOA) FBI file, Report, 9/5/1944, Pittsburgh file 100-6685, 2.

<sup>676</sup> Laurence A. Glasco, ed., *The WPA History of the Negro in Pittsburgh* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2004), 350.

group.<sup>677</sup> As has been the case in other AAIR communities, the departure of this influential leader seems to have caused a schism, producing at least three Lahori-Sunni mosques at the time, with one being led by El-Farook, one being led in nearby Braddock by the convert Saeed Akmal, and another being led in Pittsburgh by the convert Saleem Abdul Wahab.<sup>678</sup> While not much is known about the Moslems of America's activities over the next few years, they do appear to have been affiliated with a UNIA chapter<sup>679</sup> and continued to actively promote their religion, establishing more branches in West Virginia, western Pennsylvania, and, at some point prior to 1936, in Buffalo, New York.<sup>680</sup>

#### In the Aftermath of the 1934 Schism

In August 1934, Sufi Bengalee who had spent most of the last few years promoting Islam to whites in cities outside of the Ohio River Valley, attempted to win back the disgruntled Sunnis and Lahoris. He publicly denounced Khan and pleaded with the mosques that had broken off to return under his leadership.<sup>681</sup> The mosques that had already separated themselves from Khan's group, however, were unwilling to do so, and Bengalee was left to try to organize new mosques in the cities that had experienced

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<sup>677</sup> AAUAA FBI file, Report, Buffalo file 100-6320.

<sup>678</sup> MOA FBI File, Report, 9/5/1944, Pittsburgh file 100-6685, 2; MOA FBI File, Report, 3/7/1944, Pittsburgh file 100-6685, 3.

<sup>679</sup> "Youngstown, Ohio," *Chicago Defender*, August 28, 1937, 22. Also, in 1944, Sadiq Ali, who was at that time a member of a local UNIA chapter as well as a leading figure in the MOA, claimed that the MOA and the UNIA were a single organization, though this is not corroborated by any other evidence discovered by the FBI; see MOA FBI File, Report, 9/5/1944, Pittsburgh file 100-6685, 3 and UNIA FBI file, Report, 10/12/1945, Cleveland file 100-3472, 7.

<sup>680</sup> AAUAA FBI file, Buffalo, No. 100-6320; Hakim, *History*, 7; Dannin, *Pilgrimage*, 103; AAUAA FBI file, Cleveland, No. 100-10446.

<sup>681</sup> "Moslem Activities in Braddock," *Cleveland Call and Post*, August 4, 1934, 2.

schisms (though he appears to have only been successful in Pittsburgh) and convince those mosques that had not already broken off to stay. In 1935, Bengalee, leaving African-American sheiks in charge, returned to India, presumably to consult the Ahmadi leadership on what he should do with the Americans.<sup>682</sup> Whatever the motives for his trip, after his return in December 1936, he does not seem to have been able to revive the U.S. mission to its early-1930s level.

Judging by newspaper accounts, Dannin's evidence, Qadiani histories of their U.S. activities, and U.S. Qadiani periodicals printed during the AAIR, it appears that the 1934 schism and Bengalee's subsequent year-long departure knocked the wind out of the movement—only a handful of Qadiani mosques would be established between 1935 and the 1950s, at which point the group underwent several major changes.<sup>683</sup> In fact, one of its larger mosques, the one in Cleveland, though it did not participate in the 1934 schism, would soon undergo a schism of its own, and the faction led by Wali Akram eventually left the Ahmadiyya movement completely (see chapter 6). Though there are no known precise numbers, if the movement, as it claimed, had 3,000 U.S. members in early 1934,<sup>684</sup> then the schism that year and the subsequent lack of growth brought the entire

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<sup>682</sup> "To Our Readers," *Moslem Sunrise* 9, no. 1 (1937): 7; T. Titus Smith, "Activities of the Ahmadiyya Moslem Mosque in Chicago," *Moslem Sunrise* 9, no. 1 (1937): 17; "Press Notices," *Moslem Sunrise* 10, no. 3 (1938): 26.

<sup>683</sup> In a 1948, a U.S. Qadiani official said that the group only had sixteen U.S. mosques, which would be only four or five more than the number left after the schism; see "Hill District Has Only Moslem Mosque in State," *Pittsburgh Press*, April 3, 1948, 5.

<sup>684</sup> "Press Notices," *Moslem Sunrise* 7, no. 1 & 2 (1934): 30. However, I suspect this number was an exaggeration.

U.S. Qadiani community down to less than 1,000, and, evidence suggests, to maybe even less than 500, by the mid-to-late 1940s.<sup>685</sup>

In 1946, four missionaries from India joined Bengalee in the U.S.<sup>686</sup> They were each made head of one of the larger mosques and Bengalee traveled across the country to visit and help train them until 1948 when he left the U.S. for the final time. Dr. Khalil Ahmad Nasir was left in charge of the U.S. mission and in 1950 moved the headquarters from Chicago to Washington, D.C. From the latter city, he was eventually able to increase membership numbers.<sup>687</sup> It must be kept in mind, however, that the rise in African-American interest in the Ahmadiyya movement in the 1950s was not simply the result of Nasir's efforts. First of all, this rise in interest was paralleled by—and most likely benefitted from—the much stronger interest in the Nation of Islam at that time, which will be explored in chapter 7. Another reason was that there was a second wave of Lahori missionizing, which probably produced a greater general interest in Ahmadi Islam. Lahoris had been generating interest in their movement since the early 1930s, when they made a concerted effort to send their English-language publications to

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<sup>685</sup> Turner claims that by 1940 the U.S. mission had “somewhere between 5,000 and 10,000 members” (Turner, 134). However, he cites no source for this number and (writing before Dannin had done his interviews) does not seem to be aware of the full impact of the schism in the mid-1930s. In fact, by the late 1940s, the Pittsburgh mosque, which was one of the largest of the sixteen Qadiani mosques in the country, had fewer than 100 members; see “Hill District Has”; “Head of Moslem Mission Dies,” *Pittsburgh Press*, September 18, 1948, 2. In 1950, when the group only had five mosques, the Chicago mosque, which was the largest in the U.S. at the time, only had fifty members, and the vast majority did not even attend regularly (see Sahib, 54). This suggests that that there probably only around 200-300 Qadiani Ahmadi at that time.

<sup>686</sup> American, 13; Anees, 12-13.

<sup>687</sup> In 1950, the group had five branches (Chicago, New York, St. Louis, Cincinnati, and Washington, D.C.), and its largest, the Chicago branch, had at most fifty members, only five of which attended on a regular basis. This suggests that the Qadianis at this time had at most 200 members, perhaps fifty of whom were regularly active. See Sahib, 54.

numerous libraries across the country. This produced a small group of converts, most of whom were white, who made a handful of short-lived attempts to promote Islam. Lahori prospects changed in 1947 when Bashir Ahmad Minto, a Lahori missionary, arrived in San Francisco, California and incorporated the Moslem Society of the U.S.A., Inc.<sup>688</sup> Though a number of white Californians were known to have converted to the Qadiani movement going back to, perhaps, the 1920s, they had done so by sending letters to the missionaries in the eastern U.S. Now, with an active missionary in California, Californians would have direct contact with the Ahmadiyya movement, and African Americans would be Minto's largest source of converts. Interestingly, Minto's replacement in 1957, Muhammad Abdullah, had already been corresponding with Elijah Muhammad and would continue to do so after his arrival.<sup>689</sup>

#### The Importance of Ahmadi Jazz Musicians

In addition to these dynamics, there was one other major current that was serving to increase African-American interest in Ahmadi Islam: music. Because it was frequently avoided in Sunni communities, music was one of the most distinct forms of expression for African-American Muslims. The MST under Drew Ali, for example, following the practice of the UNIA, chanted songs in their meetings and held musical concerts.<sup>690</sup> In the

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<sup>688</sup> See the incorporation record of the Moslem Society of the U.S.A., Inc., dated October 28, 1947, on file with the State of California. Turner (p. 194) incorrectly claims that Minto arrived and set up his organization in 1949. Interestingly, Minto was not the first Ahmadi to come to California. A newspaper article from 1930 indicates that an Indian Ahmadi named Mohammed Basheer was living in Los Angeles and desired to build a mosque there to serve the immigrant Muslim community. His views on converting non-Muslims are not mentioned, nor is his Ahmadi sectarian affiliation (Qadiani or Lahori). Basheer's name is not mentioned in any other Qadiani materials that I have come across, so I suspect that he was a Lahori. See "Mosque of Islam May Rise Here," *Los Angeles Times*, February 18, 1930, A3.

<sup>689</sup> Turner, 194-195.

<sup>690</sup> *Moorish Guide*, February 1, 1929, 1.

1940s, however, other African Americans started combining music and Islam, as several black jazz musicians converted to the religion. Islam brought them the inner peace and strength to resist the debasing temptations of the music industry and many discovered that when they wore their robes, fezzes, and turbans they were not treated as regular “negroes”: when traveling across the country, whites tended to show them some courtesy and respect.

Dannin tells us that 303 125<sup>th</sup> Street in Harlem was “where bebop jazz musicians first encountered Islam.”<sup>691</sup> At that address was both the Somali-led International Moslem Society, a Sunni group with African-American members (see chapter 6), and an Apollo Café, which was sometimes frequented by Duke Ellington and his entourage, which over the years included Muslim converts.<sup>692</sup> Whatever the true beginnings were, by the late 1940s, an African-American Muslim jazz community had formed in New York City. In 1947 Brooklyn, musicians gathered under the leadership of the saxophonist Sahib Shihab.<sup>693</sup> Shihab, another Muslim convert later recalled, was one of the first black jazz musician to become a Muslim, converting to the Qadiani movement sometime before 1945.<sup>694</sup>

In the 1940s there were two other key figures who were responsible for the popularity that Islam would gain among jazz musicians. The first was Art Blakely, who,

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<sup>691</sup> Dannin, *Pilgrimage*, 34.

<sup>692</sup> Bowen, “The Search for ‘Islam’,” 269.

<sup>693</sup> “Billy Rowe’s Note Book,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, August 9, 1947, 16.

<sup>694</sup> Yusef Lateef and Herb Boyd, *The Gentle Giant: The Autobiography of Yusef Lateef* (Irvington, NJ: Morton Books, 2006), 58. An article from the 1950s indicates that the first black musicians started converting in 1940; see “Moslems Take Firm Stand against Racism,” *Ebony* (April 1953): 107.

after being introduced to Islam in Pittsburgh, traveled to Africa for a year to study the religion.<sup>695</sup> Upon his return, he formed in New York the Jazz Messengers,<sup>696</sup> a seventeen-piece band composed entirely of Qadiani converts. In 1947, he started a mission out of his apartment in Harlem and within five years the group grew to over 100 members (only twelve of which were musicians) and had moved to a different building on 30<sup>th</sup> Street.<sup>697</sup> The other important person bringing black musicians to Islam at the time was the trumpeter Talib Dawud. Dawud was part of the earliest wave of jazz converts, having turned to Ahmadiyya Islam around 1940 under Sheik Nasir Ahmad in Philadelphia.<sup>698</sup> Dawud's later Sunni-influenced efforts will be discussed in chapter 6, but in the late 1940s, through his job as a traveling musician, he, like other Ahmadi Muslims, converted several African Americans throughout the country.<sup>699</sup>

By the early 1950s, conversion to Islam had become extremely popular among jazz musicians, with an estimated 200 Muslims counted among them.<sup>700</sup> It was even rumored that Dizzy Gillespie, probably the most well-known jazz artist at the time, was considering conversion after many of his band members had picked up turbans.<sup>701</sup> The

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<sup>695</sup> Lateef and Boyd, 57-58; Yawu Miller, "Art Blakey Biography," <http://www.artblakey.com/> (accessed July 11, 2012).

<sup>696</sup> "Messenger" was an Islamic reference, being the term used for those throughout history divinely chosen to relay God's message.

<sup>697</sup> "Ancient Religion Attracts Moderns," *Ebony* (April 1953): 108. It is unknown if this was the same group with which Shihab was affiliated.

<sup>698</sup> Dannin, 58; Essien-Udom, 313.

<sup>699</sup> See, for example, Lateef and Boyd, 56.

<sup>700</sup> "Moslem Musicians," *Ebony* (April 1953): 104.

<sup>701</sup> "Bop King Gillespie, Forsaken by Christianity, Now Ready for Islam," *Chicago Defender* (Ntl ed.), May 21, 1949, 1.

Muslim musician who received the most press, however, was Lynn Hope. Hope had been first exposed to Islam by Talib Dawud in 1947 while performing in Pittsburgh.<sup>702</sup> Quickly taking to the religion, he learned Arabic and then made the hajj in 1952, becoming perhaps the first African-American to do so.<sup>703</sup> He also began leading in Philadelphia a branch of the Sunni-oriented Addeynu Allahe-Universal Arabic Association (AAUAA), of which Nasir Ahmad (whom Hope had probably known through Talib Dawud) was a founding member (on the AAUAA, see chapter 6).<sup>704</sup>

Due to the missionary work of the jazz musicians and the attention they were receiving in the press (the turbans they wore when they performed made them a subject of interest among white jazz fans), several hundred non-musician African Americans began converting to Islam. Those who followed the musicians were often becoming Qadiani, but, because some of the musicians had Lahori and Sunni influences, there was also rise a slight rise in Lahori and Sunni converts at the time. Lynn Hope was particularly important in the Ohio-Pennsylvania region, as it was reported in 1954 that the Cleveland African-American Muslim community had recently grown to over 1,000 people largely due to his influence.<sup>705</sup>

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<sup>702</sup> “Polygamy Question Puzzles Moslems,” *Ebony* (April 1953): 111.

<sup>703</sup> “Polygamy Question”; “Lynn Hope in Pilgrimage to Mecca Following Farewell Dance Aug. 14,” *Cleveland Call and Post*, August 9, 1942, 6D; “Turbaned Maestro Beckoned to Mecca,” *Atlanta Daily World*, October 5, 1952, 2; “Lynn Back from Mecca, Playing Ebony Lounge,” *Cleveland Call and Post*, October 11, 1952, 7B. GhaneaBassiri incorrectly puts the date of Hope’s hajj at 1958 (GhaneaBassiri, 248)—perhaps he has confused this with Talib Dawud, who took his hajj in 1959 (see “He Returns from a Visit to Mecca,” *New York Amsterdam News*, July 18, 1959, 24).

<sup>704</sup> “Ancient Religion Attracts,” 109.

<sup>705</sup> Marty Richardson, “They Face Toward the East,” *Cleveland Call and Post*, March 14, 1954, 1D. It is not clear if this included the mosque led by Wali Akram. In 1951, Akram claimed his mosque had only 125

The mid-1950s, however, would be the peak of the Muslim jazz musician movement. It was at this point that the Nation of Islam began overtaking all other forms of African-American Islam. By 1959, it was estimated that there were only about 500 Qadiani Ahmadis in the U.S., and of these, only 200 were regularly active, while the rest were “more or less lax in their practices.”<sup>706</sup>

### **Paul Nathaniel Johnson and the Fahamme Temples of Islam and Culture**

A history of the Ahmadis in the AAIR would not be complete without discussing what became of Paul Nathaniel Johnson, the influential African-American Ahmadi sheik in the early 1920s. Johnson’s story is important not only because it shows how Islam began to take hold in African-American culture, but it also exemplifies the “renaissance” aspect of the AAIR.

Johnson’s first appearance in the U.S. Ahmadi magazine, the *Moslem Sunrise*, was in the July 1922 issue. Here, he and his wife were listed among the 116 individuals who had become Ahmadis since the previous April.<sup>707</sup> Interestingly, although he had only just been made an Ahmadi, his “new convert” listing identified him as a sheik—and this was the *only* instance ever of a “new convert” being identified as a sheik in the magazine during the AAIR. While at first glance this suggests that Johnson (known as Ahmad Din) had been a Muslim prior to Muhammad Sadiq’s arrival, that conclusion is probably not

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members, and many of them were not black. See “The Moslems in Cleveland,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer Pictorial Magazine*, November 11, 1951, 19.

<sup>706</sup> Charles S. Braden, “Islam in America,” *International Review of Missions* 48 (1959): 21.

<sup>707</sup> “New Converts,” *Moslem Sunrise* 1, no. 5 (1922): 115. It was later reported by A.T. Hoffert that he had first come into contact with Sadiq while in Chicago (Hoffert, “Moslem Propaganda,” 141), and when Johnson wrote a response to Hoffert’s article correcting a mistake Hoffert had made concerning Johnson’s background, the Chicago assertion was not corrected.

accurate, considering the fact that the early issues of the *Moslem Sunrise* distinguished non-Muslim converts from non-Ahmadi Muslims who had aligned themselves with the Ahmadi movement. Furthermore, individuals who had converted to Islam prior to joining the Ahmadis were not considered “new converts”<sup>708</sup> and were also not automatically made sheiks. Still, Johnson may have had some sort of Islamic background. In 1923, he told a reporter that while his mother was African-American, his father was an Arab, and in 1927 he clarified that his father was “of Arab-Spanish mixture.”<sup>709</sup> The truth of either claim is not known; it is possible that he was simply making the first claim in order to legitimize Muhammad Din’s assertion that Islam and Arabic were the religion and languages of African Americans’ “forefathers,” and his supposed “Arab-Spanish” background had possibly been influenced by the interest in Moors promoted by the UNIA and then the MST. Without more evidence, however, I am not able to conclusively say one way or the other.

Leaving aside the question of his Islamic background, it is likely that Johnson’s earning of the sheik title was largely due to both his eagerness to spread Islam and Muhammad Sadiq seeing that Johnson had the skills and respectability that he looked for in his sheiks. Johnson, born in Arkansas in 1888, had served as a sergeant during the First World War and claimed to have earned a bachelor’s degree.<sup>710</sup> In addition, he was clearly

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<sup>708</sup> This was the case for Ella May Garber (Siddica tun-Nisa Rahatulla); see *Moslem Sunrise* 1, no. 1 (1921): 13.

<sup>709</sup> “Colored People of St. Louis”; “From a Moslem,” *Chicago Defender* (Ntl ed.), June 4, 1927, A2; Rev. Sheikh Ahmad Din, “Nice Words from a Sheikh,” *Messenger* 9 (July 1927): 222.

<sup>710</sup> Johnson’s World War I draft registration card from 1917 and his U.S. National Cemetery Internment (burial) forms can both be found on Ancestry.com. In his 1927 letters the *Chicago Defender* and the

an able writer, as can be seen in the six pieces he published in St. Louis newspapers and the *Moslem Sunrise* between 1923 and 1924.<sup>711</sup> Johnson may have also been involved in “mystical” studies at the time, which would have been attractive to Sadiq who was cultivating “mystical” ties as a way to promote Islam to individuals open to other forms of “mystical” or “oriental” religion.<sup>712</sup> Whatever the reasons, by 1924, Johnson was not only the most prominent black Ahmadi, but was also the only U.S. American of any race listed as an official Ahmadi missionary.<sup>713</sup> In 1923, Johnson—who, like other Ahmadis at the time, was adding UNIA themes to his Islamic message<sup>714</sup>—quickly gained around 100 St. Louis converts,<sup>715</sup> and had retained seventy-five by as late as 1927.<sup>716</sup> He was so influential for the early U.S. Ahmadi community that his saying “Get back your language

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*Messenger*, Johnson claims to have a bachelor’s degree, while the later Fahamme community says he had attended Philander Smith College at Little Rock, AK.

<sup>711</sup> These were as follows: two letters printed in the St. Louis *Star*, reprinted in “Press Notices,” *Moslem Sunrise* 2, no. 2 & 3 (1923): 193-194; a letter printed in the St. Louis *Post Dispatch*, reprinted in “Brother Shaikh Ahmad Din. 22 N. Compton Ave., St. Louis, Mo., Writes the Post Dispatch, St. Louis,” *Moslem Sunrise* [2], no. 4 (1923): 270, 272; a poem, Sheik Armad [sic] Din, “An Ode to the Prophet of the Day,” *Moslem Sunrise* 3, no. 1 (1924): 11; a portion of his “Expose” tract: Sheikh Ahmad Din, “False Alarmists,” *Moslem Sunrise* 3, no. 1 (1924): 12; and two original articles for the *Moslem Sunrise*: Sheik Ahmad Din, “Living Flora—and Dead,” *Moslem Sunrise* 3, no. 1 (1924): 14-15 and Shaikh Ahmad Din, “Did Jesus Indorse Polygamy?,” *Moslem Sunrise* 3, no. 2 (1924): 76-77.

<sup>712</sup> This possibility is suggested by the fact that the first mention of St. Louis—Johnson’s home at the time—in the pages of the *Moslem Sunrise* is within a reprinting of a “Doctor of Divinity” degree presented to Sadiq in St. Louis in 1921 by the College of Divine Metaphysics (*Moslem Sunrise* 2, no. 2 (1921): 35). Johnson’s early interest in the occult is also suggested by his followers today who say on their website that he was “[s]trange from youth, Adept, apt and mysterious; Interpreter of Dreams and Visions”; see “What is Fahamme?,” *Fahamme: THE OFFICIAL WEBSITE OF FAHAMME ISLAM*, <http://www.fahamme.org/fahamme.html> (accessed July 12, 2012).

<sup>713</sup> “Ahmadia Movement in Islam,” *Moslem Sunrise* 3, no. 2 (1924): inside cover.

<sup>714</sup> Such as promoting the idea that African Americans should move to Africa; see “Colored People of St. Louis.”

<sup>715</sup> “Colored People of St. Louis.”

<sup>716</sup> Hoffert, “Moslem Propaganda.”

and your religion, and you won't be a Negro anymore"—which implied Din's claim about African Americans' "forefathers" believing in Islam and speaking Arabic—was popular among *Pittsburgh's* black Sunnis (who were former Ahmadis) in as late as the 1940s.<sup>717</sup>

It appears, however, that Johnson was not willing to align with Sufi Bengalee after his arrival in 1928. Perhaps Bengalee did not respect Johnson's missionary abilities or perhaps Johnson did not like Bengalee's focus on white Americans. Johnson, it was reported, had, despite attempts, been unable to convince a single white person to start promoting Islam,<sup>718</sup> and as a result he may have been turning more and more towards dealing with African Americans exclusively. In any case, by the early 1930s Johnson was no longer part of the Ahmadi movement and had started a new organization.

A doctoral student in the 1970s researched Johnson's group and explained that, despite its claim of having organized in 1919, the group dates from around 1930.<sup>719</sup> After reportedly having dreams in which he communicated with various major religious figures, Johnson, now frequently going as Paul J. Achamad, was proclaiming himself the prophet of Fahamme (a transliteration of the Arabic word for "understanding"). By 1933, advertisements for his organization, called at that time the Ethiopian Temples of Islam, were appearing in St. Louis:

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<sup>717</sup> Dannin, *Pilgrimage*, 37; Noshir, "Pittsburgh," 30.

<sup>718</sup> Holmes, 266.

<sup>719</sup> See Patrick Chike Onwuachi, "Religious Concepts and Socio-Cultural Dynamics of Afro-American Religious Cults in Saint Louis, Missouri" (PhD diss., Saint Louis University, 1963). The section in Onwuachi's dissertation which deals with the Fahamme Temple was in reprinted by Magribine Press as *Religious Concepts and Socio-Cultural Dynamics of The Fahamme Temple of Islam and Culture* (Chicago, 2006). I will only cite from the Magribine Press edition.

NEGROES! HEAR THIS PROPHET!  
In the name of the most high God  
*A Teacher and Apostle of a New Negro Culture and Religion*

Introducing Ancestor Worship among  
Negroes for the first time in the history of the world.  
We Must Be Saved! We need a new Outlook and Philosophy.

Paul J. Achmadin, the Prophet Fahame:  
Your Fellow Citizen of America,  
Founder of the Ethiopian Temples of Islam; 1919  
Bases his creed on Divine Inspiration and  
Upon the History and Culture and Faith of  
Our Noble Ancestors. Producing Documentary  
And Revealed proofs of our Most Ancient  
And Holy, Spiritual and Material greatness.  
Unveiling Hidden Truths, and Reciting Revealed  
History dating back to fifty thousand years ago.

Know the exact Geographical location of  
the Garden of Eden and the Lands of Nod.  
Know the name of Cain's wife,  
Monogamy is the Moral rule in Islam.

Ninety-six Negro Virgins, Saints and  
Prophets, together with Nineteen Dynasties  
Of Kings and Queens who ruled the world  
Before Adam. We have a Divine Creed,  
Language and Culture of our own.  
The only road to self-respect.<sup>720</sup>

Though he was of course influenced by the Ahmadis, Johnson's central claim in his new organization was very much a unique one in the AAIR. According to Johnson, African Americans are "not themselves and [are] not acting and speaking their own minds at all, but are obeying the gods, spirits, and angels and demons of other races."<sup>721</sup>

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<sup>720</sup> See "Americana," *American Mercury* 29, no. 115 (1933): 293-294.

<sup>721</sup> A[liah] B[aalkis] Walay, "Prophet Will Pay for Self-Respect," *Pittsburgh Courier*, May 5, 1934, 5.

Both the Ahmadis and the MST told African Americans to return to the non-racist Islam, the religion of their “forefathers,” but Johnson brought into the conversation another type of religious justification for conversion. He argued that the spirits of African Americans’ ancestors, particularly the leaders of the great black civilizations, were still present in this world. In fact, these spirits of ancestors are gods; the great black civilizations were led by gods in human flesh (a doctrine that shares some similarities with that of the Nation of Islam, as will be shown). Furthermore, if these black ancestor spirit-gods are worshipped properly, they will give the worshipper their powers. Knowledge about the great ancient black civilizations—which Johnson sometimes referred to simply as “culture”—is absolutely necessary for African Americans to worship properly and gain access to this power. Indeed, “culture” is much more important than religion. Religion is merely “a state of mind”; true “understanding” (Fahamme) will reveal that all religions can be traced back to a particular group’s ancestors. This means that a member of the Temples could believe in the gods of any religion because these are merely historical figures. Fahamme, then, is at the same time both not a religion and a religion—and because of its accepting all gods, it was probably the most inclusive AAIR religion.<sup>722</sup> What most sets Johnson’s group apart from the other AAIR organizations, though, is its emphasis on Egyptian civilization and mythology, which Johnson understood was, following many

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<sup>722</sup> See Paul Johnson, *Holy Fahamme Gospel or Divine Understanding* ([St. Louis]: Fahamme Temples of Islam and Culture, 1943), *passim* and Onwuachi, *Fahamme*, *passim*.

nineteenth-century western occultists, primarily based around the importance of the sun.<sup>723</sup>

What Johnson had created was in many ways very similar to the MST. Both groups, notably, had black prophets<sup>724</sup> and used “temple” (as opposed to mosque) in their names; both, like the Ahmadis, claimed to know the “hidden truth” about the Bible; both combined the “know thyself” instructions of Garvey and the Ahmadis to support their claim of a dignified African Muslim history; and both said that African Americans will only obtain improvement in their lives when they stop following the religion of other people. In fact, Johnson’s 1927 claim that his father was, essentially, a Moor and his group’s use of the fez for male members and headscarves and dresses for females—costumes similar to what were used by the MST—suggest Johnson had been inspired by the MST movement.<sup>725</sup> He even claimed that it was his group that was the “true” Shriners, thus seemingly borrowing from the Abdul Hamid Suleiman practice.<sup>726</sup> Given these similarities and the fact that his organization only appeared after the MST’s Great

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<sup>723</sup> On the modern (since late eighteenth century) fascination with Egyptian and sun-based religions, see Godwin. Interestingly, Johnson may have already had some of his ideas in as early as 1923, as a January 1924 issue of the *Moslem Sunrise* contains an article in which he gives importance to the “Sun” and “Mythology”—he distinctively capitalizes both words; see Din, “Living Flora—And Dead,” 14.

<sup>724</sup> The group’s understanding of “the seal of the prophets” follows the Ahmadi interpretation, which is that the seal is essentially an approval of the prophets, like a “seal of approval,” and not like a seal that closes something, such as an envelope (which is the Sunni interpretation). In fact, Johnson explicitly accepts Drew Ali as a prophet. See Johnson, *Holy Fahamme Gospel*, 26. On the Ahmadi understanding of “seal,” see Friedmann.

<sup>725</sup> As stated above, Johnson was aware of Drew Ali and considered him a prophet; see Johnson, *Holy Fahamme Gospel*, 26.

<sup>726</sup> Johnson, *Holy Fahamme Gospel*, 30.

Schism had begun, I believe it is likely that Johnson had used his knowledge about the MST to strengthen his own message.<sup>727</sup>

But Johnson added an element to his movement that was only at most secondary in the other AAIR groups, although non-denominational black nationalists had been using it for decades. In his opinion, the best hope for gaining the psychological and cultural power necessary to change their condition in the U.S. was to focus on the greatest examples of black achievement, worldly and spiritually. This well-known black nationalist strategy was uniquely and somewhat successfully altered by Johnson to better appeal to and reflect the African-American interest in “mystical” and Islamic themes. Johnson’s Ethiopian Temples of Islam, which was later called the Fahamme Temple(s) of Islam, experienced a surge of popularity in the late 1930s, receiving regular updates in national black newspapers, such as the *Pittsburgh Courier* and *New York Age*. Indeed, it seems to have been the most popular African-American Islamic current in St. Louis during the AAIR. However, it does not appear to have gained a large following outside of St. Louis, and by the 1940s, interest had significantly died down. By 1954, the year of Johnson’s death as well as the year that the Nation of Islam would begin to take over

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<sup>727</sup> Interestingly, the Temples of Islam also shared some similarities with the Nation of Islam. In addition to the similarities that both the Fahamme and the NOI shared with the MST, Johnson, like Fard, provided new definitions of English words to make them seem that they have Islamic/African-American significance. Johnson’s overt references to outside esoteric sources, such as Masonry and Egyptian history, is more reminiscent of Fard’s instructions for NOI members to refer to Masonic and Jehovah’s Witness sources than it was to the MST’s tradition of having followers focus almost exclusively on its own publications. Finally, the idea that African-Americans had within them, physically, elements of divinity inherited from their ancestors is much closer to Fard’s ideas than it is to Drew Ali’s conception of inner divinity. In the end, however, these are very general similarities and it seems highly unlikely that Johnson had been influenced by Fard or vice versa.

African-American Islamic culture, the legacy of his important work in propagating Islam to African Americans had largely been forgotten.

### **Muslim-Influenced Factions of the Development of Our Own and Pacific Movement of the Eastern World**

As was mentioned in chapter 4, in the 1930s and 1940s, the MST came under the influence of pro-Japanese black nationalist thought, which largely spread under the leadership of a Japanese national, Nakane Naka (a.k.a. Satokata Takahashi), and a Filipino named Policarpio Manansala (a.k.a. Ashima Takis, a.k.a. Mimo De Guzman).<sup>728</sup> On a few occasions, the organizations started by these two men were able to draw in African Americans who had already converted to the MST and the NOI by appealing to those two groups' stress on the Asiatic origins of African Americans and their feelings of antipathy towards U.S. society. The most successful merger of Naka and Manansala's efforts with African-American Muslims was in Michigan in the mid-1930s, where a number of NOI and MST members joined up with Naka (whom I will refer to as Takahashi, the name he used among the Muslims) in a group called the Development of Our Own (DOO). Like many of the other AAIR organizations, however, the Takahashi/Manansala groups produced several factions and African-American Muslims were highly influential in at least six of these.

Takahashi arrived in Detroit around early 1933 and by the fall had become the leader of the DOO. The idea for the DOO, whose name recalls Drew Ali's stress on

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<sup>728</sup> On these two figures and their movements, see Ernest Allen, Jr.'s "When Japan Was 'Champion of the Darker Races': Satokata Takahashi and the Flowering of Black Messianic Nationalism," *The Black Scholar* 24, no. 1 (Winter 1994): 23-46 and "Waiting for Tojo: The Pro-Japan Vigil of Black Missourians, 1932-1943," *Gateway Heritage* (Fall 1995): 38-55.

African Americans having businesses and other institutions of “our own,” had most likely come from a former Moor and current Nation of Islam minister named Abdul Mohammed, though Takahashi seems to have been responsible for establishing the most successful organizational form of the group.<sup>729</sup> Although Mohammed was primarily

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<sup>729</sup> Given the conflicting evidence, it is rather difficult to date the beginning of the DOO and Mohammed’s involvement in it. However, while some authors suggest that it was Takahashi who probably organized this group and that this may have taken place in 1930, in my opinion the evidence points more towards Abdul doing so in around late 1932/early 1933. The source of the claim that Takahashi had been working with Abdul since 1930 was Takahashi himself who said in one FBI interview that he had come to Detroit in 1930 at the request of the African-American Reverend John White from Tacoma, Washington, where Takahashi was living at the time. White, according to Takahashi, had been in contact with Abdul who was asking White to send a Japanese person to Detroit to lead the African Americans there. This story was reprinted several times in the FBI’s file on Fard and it is probably because it appeared so often in that file that scholars have accepted elements of it. However, no scholar has pointed out that, as Takahashi’s (the DOO’s) FBI file indicates, the FBI in 1941 was unable to find anyone in Tacoma who remembered there *ever even being* a black minister there named John White (a John White is, however, listed in city directories from the time). We also have the following facts: A) Takahashi gave different and apparently conflicting versions of his whereabouts in the early 1930s; B) there is evidence that places him in Chicago for most of 1932; C) a black reporter from 1930s Detroit, Ulysses Boykin, claimed that the DOO was started in 1933 not by Takahashi, but by a “city worker” named George Grimes and that Takahashi took over Grimes’ group (no other evidence has been found about a George Grimes, though he may have been the same person as the Samuel Grimes, vice-president of the DOO in 1934); D) the earliest newspaper report concerning Takahashi appears in April of 1933 and, though in it Takahashi is promoting Japanese nationalism among Detroit African Americans, it contains no mention of the DOO and reads as if Takahashi is only at that point trying to begin a pro-Japanese movement in the city; E) days after his December 1, 1933 arrest, Takahashi told reporters that it was only “several months ago” when he “conceived ... the idea of elevating the people of the darker races” and he told police that he had only been in Detroit for six months; F) the FBI could find no one in Detroit that remembered hearing about the DOO before 1933 or 1932; and G) The FBI had discovered that Abdul’s wife later claimed that “[Abdul] Muhammad had taken one Satakata Takahashi into his home when Takahashi was ill at which time Takahashi learned the principles of Muhammad’s organization and when he was well, approached Muhammad, with the thought in mind that the two of them could utilise the organization to make a great deal of money. Muhammad’s wife related that Muhammad refused this approach”—it is certainly possible, as Allen presumes, that the organization referred to here is the NOI (and that Abdul did not form any other group of his own until around 1935), but H) this is refuted by the several DOO members, who explained to the FBI that they were told (and one was told from Abdul himself) that Abdul had created the DOO, while Takahashi had merely attempted to take control of the group (and one member put the time of Abdul’s meeting Takahashi around 1933); and I) historians of the NOI have shown that around 1932/1933 Abdul was already trying to form a break-off from Fard’s group. See the DOO FBI file, Report, 3/20/1940, Detroit file 68-709, 16, 58; DOO FBI file, Report, 5/29/1941, Seattle file 61-142, 1-2; Fard FBI file, Memorandum, SAC, Detroit to Director, FBI, 1/31/1958, 2-3; Fard FBI file, Memorandum, SAC, Chicago to Director, FBI, 10/30/1957, 3-6; Fard FBI file, Memorandum, [name withheld] to SAC, Detroit, 12/11/1957, 2; Boykin, 46; Allen, “Tojo,” 40-41; Allen, “When Japan,” 31-37 and accompanying notes; “Japan to Protect the Darker Races,” *Detroit Tribune*, April 22, 1933, 1; “Jap Arrested in Raid on Club,” *Detroit News*, December 2, 1933, 2; Seward E. Bower, “Mysterious Japanese Held; No Mystery about Disposal,” *Detroit News*, December 3, 1933, 5; “Government to Deport Jailed Jap Organizer,” *Detroit Tribune*, December 9, 1933, 1; Sahib, 74; Clegg, 35; MSTA FBI file, Memorandum, United States Naval Intelligence Service

concerned with black uplift, under Takahashi, the DOO promoted an anti-American millennial message in which blacks and the Japanese would be allies when the Japanese invaded the U.S., killing all its white citizens.<sup>730</sup> Takahashi's success in Detroit was largely due to both the Great Schism, which in 1933 still had many Moors looking for new a leader, and the fact that at that time, as I will show in chapter 7, the NOI, which was based in Detroit, was beginning to lose members and experience its own internal rifts. Ultimately, Takahashi was so successful that local black community leaders, who found his message troubling, informed the police about his efforts, leading to an investigation for seditious activities and his eventual arrest. In April 1934, Takahashi was deported.

With its leader gone, like when Muhammad Sadiq left the country and Drew Ali died, the DOO soon underwent several schisms.<sup>731</sup> Manansala, Takahashi's associate, began running a DOO in Pittsburgh, which may have had African-American Lahori/"Sunni" members.<sup>732</sup> Abdul Mohammed, meanwhile, established his own DOO faction, which folded upon his death in 1938. The main new faction—the one that Takahashi personally continued to support—was known as the Onward Movement of

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Ninth Naval District B-7-O, "Topical Study Memorandum on Moorish Science Temple of America," 5/28/1943.

<sup>730</sup> See the MSTA FBI file, MID [9?]04.4, 4/2/1943, interviews in Flint, MI.

<sup>731</sup> See Allen, "When Japan," 35.

<sup>732</sup> See *Correspondence of the Military Intelligence Division*, Report, 4/17/1934, Immigration Office, 4-5. Interestingly, this report indicates that Manansala had set up the Pittsburgh DOO at the hall at 2040 Rose Street, which was the address that the local Ahmadi-influenced African-American Sunnis (see chapter 6) met; see Hakim, 7.

America (OMA).<sup>733</sup> This group was the product of Takahashi separating from his wife, who was leading her own DOO faction, in September 1938. One Cash C. Bates, an early member of the DOO, aligned with Takahashi and incorporated the OMA during the next year. However, when Takahashi—who had returned to Detroit to deal with his wife and the schisms—was arrested and sent to prison that year, interest in the group began to wane significantly. By 1941, the OMA had become inactive.<sup>734</sup> Bates then decided to join up with the Kirkman Bey’s MSTA and he quickly gained an important role, becoming the primary person responsible for printing the MST’s *Holy Koran* and catechism; and through this influential position he maintained regular communication with MST leaders throughout the country and was able to continue to spread the DOO/OMA message.<sup>735</sup>

After the OMA folded, in 1941 one Emanuel Pharr revived the DOO in Gary and Detroit.<sup>736</sup> His group at first retained a strong pro-Japanese stance, but in 1944 the FBI learned that Pharr’s DOO, which at the time only had around 170 total members in its five branches,<sup>737</sup> had departed from the original DOO teachings and had become primarily an Islamic organization.<sup>738</sup> Interestingly, although the group’s form of Islam was mostly NOI-influenced—it had several former NOI and MST members, but the

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<sup>733</sup> On the OMA, see Allen, “When Japan,” 35-37 and United States Naval Intelligence Service Ninth Naval District B-7-O, “Topical Study Memorandum.”

<sup>734</sup> DOO FBI file, Report, 12/7/1942, Detroit file 100-5209.

<sup>735</sup> United States Naval Intelligence Service Ninth Naval District B-7-O, “Topical Study Memorandum,” 3, 7.

<sup>736</sup> DOO FBI file, Report, 3/11/1943, Indianapolis file 100-4087.

<sup>737</sup> Hill, *RACON*, 517.

<sup>738</sup> DOO FBI file, Report, 8/1/1944, Detroit file 100-5209, 2. Also see from the DOO FBI file, Reports dated 6/1/1942 and 8/20/1942, Indianapolis file 100-4087 and Report, 9/27/1943, Detroit file 100-5209.

evidence suggests that the NOI teachings played a bigger role—on a number of occasions Pharr visited the African-American Sunni leader Muhammad Ezaldeen (the former James Lomax) who was heading in Detroit an organization called the Uniting Islamic Society of America (see chapter 6).<sup>739</sup>

Another group that the DOO schism produced rivaled the Fahamme Temple for being the most doctrinally eclectic of the AAIR organizations: the Moorish Science Temple of I AM (MSTIAM).<sup>740</sup> Although this group could be and has been accurately classified as part of Kirkman Bey’s faction, the available evidence suggests that it was in many ways doctrinally distinct. The “I AM” in the MSTIAM’s name, first of all, suggests that the group was in some way influenced by I AM teachings. The white Guy Ballard claimed that he had encountered Saint Germain, an “Ascended Master” (one meaning of the AM in I AM), in California in September 1930. He then returned to his home in Chicago from where he published a number of books expounding on the teachings of the Saint and he also established numerous groups to study these teachings. The core notion for the group is that God—who referred to Himself in Exodus 3:14 as “I AM”—is within all people, and that through a process of purification (done through studying the lessons of the Ascended Masters) humans can access the power of God and create peace in the world. The ideas in his writings resonated with those who were reading other New Age materials, particularly those in groups like the MST and the NOI that stressed the

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<sup>739</sup> DOO FBI file, Report, 8/1/1944, Detroit file 100-5209, 2. Also see from the DOO FBI file, Reports dated 6/1/1942 and 8/20/1942, Indianapolis file 100-4087; Report, 9/27/1943, Detroit file, 100-5209; Report, 3/11/1943, Indianapolis file 100-4087, 10.

<sup>740</sup> Besides its doctrinal eclecticism, this group is also interesting because the FBI suspected that its leader was in fact Wallace Fard, the founder of the NOI. This was, however, never confirmed, and, in my opinion, is highly unlikely.

individual's divinity and the use of that knowledge to create change in the world. By the mid-1930s, I AM circles were being set up throughout the country.<sup>741</sup> The movement was so popular that, although the vast majority of members were white, at least one African-American I AM group was established (in Chicago) sometime before 1940.<sup>742</sup> As was noted above, Drew Ali's *Holy Koran* had borrowed from similar New Age literature, including *Unto Thee I Grant* and Dowling's extremely popular *Aquarian Gospel*, and Kirkman Bey plagiarized other parts of Dowling's book for his *Mysteries of the Silent Brotherhood of the East*; therefore Moors could certainly find commonalities in their and Ballard's writings.<sup>743</sup> While I cannot say with certainty that there was a direct influence of Ballard, I think it is at least probable that the MSTIAM was using the "I AM" phrase to represent the divinity within people.

In its investigation into the MST, the FBI discovered that the MSTIAM had been established in 1938 Detroit at 9316 Oakland Avenue.<sup>744</sup> Originally the group was known as the Development of Our AM (DOAM) and, as its name suggests, it was very DOO-oriented, though the FBI learned that it was also highly influenced by NOI teachings.<sup>745</sup> At some point in the late 1930s or early 1940s, however, the DOAM became affiliated with Kirkman Bey's MSTIA faction; thereafter it was sometimes referred to as MST

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<sup>741</sup> J. Gordon Melton, Jerome Clark and Aidan A. Kelly, eds., *New Age Encyclopedia* (Detroit: Gale Research, 1990), 55-56.

<sup>742</sup> Works Progress Administration, 23, 82.

<sup>743</sup> Charles Kirkman Bey, *The Mysteries of the Silent Brotherhood of the East* (Chicago: Magribine Press, 2006).

<sup>744</sup> MSTIA FBI file, Report, 4/21/1943, Detroit file 100-6603, 2; FBI file on the DOO, letter, 6/2/1942, P.E. Foxworth (Assistant Director) to J. Edgar Hoover.

<sup>745</sup> *Ibid.*

Temple No. 25; its head, Walter Davis-El, became one of the leading figures in Kirkman Bey's MSTA; and in 1942 the temple hosted over 1,000 Moors for a MSTA conference.<sup>746</sup> But its having an MST influence did not mean that the group had shed its old doctrines. The FBI discovered that the MSTIAM retained many NOI, anti-American, and anti-white teachings—in fact the MSTIAM was probably the most radicalized of the MST temples, and was even known to some people as the Black Dragon group or Black Legion (suggesting a connection with the nationalistic Black Dragon Society in Japan for which Takahashi claimed membership). In 1942, the MSTIAM had approximately 300 members, an accomplishment that was at least partially attributable to the fact that this particular temple was located in a neighborhood that was reportedly almost entirely composed of African-American Muslims,<sup>747</sup> but its numbers dropped off significantly by the next year when there were only an estimated seventy-five members.<sup>748</sup>

Another Takahashi/Manansala organization that the U.S. intelligence departments investigated was the Pacific Movement of the Eastern World (PMEW), an organization, which had been set up by Takahashi and Manansala in Chicago in 1932, that was

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<sup>746</sup> MSTA FBI file, Report, 4/21/1943, Detroit file 100-6603, 2; MSTA FBI file, Report, 3/16/1943, Detroit file 100-6603, 3; MSTA FBI file, Report, 11/12/1942, Detroit file 100-6603, 10, 13; MSTA FBI file, Memorandum, United States Naval Intelligence Service Ninth Naval District B-7-O, "Topical Study Memorandum on Moorish Science Temple of America," 5/28/1943, 7. Due to factionalism, there were two Temple No. 25s in Michigan, though I do not know if this is the same MST-NOI break-off mentioned in mentioned in Adeyemi Ademola, "Nation of Islam Deserted," *African Mirror* (Aug-Sept 1979): 41. It might be thought that because this group, like Cash C. Bates, joined up with the MST only in the early 1940s or so, that this was the group Bates was a part of; however, Bates is never identified as a member and in fact he is associated with several other addresses in Detroit.

<sup>747</sup> MSTA FBI file, Report, 11/12/1942, Detroit file 100-6603, 10, 13.

<sup>748</sup> FBI file on the DOO, letter, 6/2/1942, P.E. Foxworth (Assistant Director) to J. Edgar Hoover; Report, 3/16/1943, Detroit file 100-6603, 3; United States Naval Intelligence Service Ninth Naval District B-7-O, "Topical Study Memorandum," viii.

ideologically very close to Takahashi's DOO, but was more directly modeled on the UNIA.<sup>749</sup> By late 1932, Takahashi, who would soon appear in Detroit where he would lead the DOO, had left Manansala in charge of the PMEW. Under Manansala, the PMEW became one of the most influential pro-Japanese organizations, with branches as far west as Oklahoma, though its strongest following was in St. Louis. Unlike the DOO, the PMEW did not have a significant African-American Muslim element, a result most likely due to the fact that its seat of power was a location that had neither a strong MST presence nor any NOI group, so it could not as easily connect with the "Asiatic" feelings of the African-American Muslims who were in St. Louis (these were primarily followers of Paul Nathaniel Johnson). However, because he kept in touch with Takahashi, Manansala presumably knew the value of allying with the Muslims, and when the opportunity presented itself, he did attempt to do so.<sup>750</sup>

It appears that Manansala's most notable connection to African-American Muslims came as a result of a schism in the PMEW. Mittie Maude Lena Gordon, a former Garveyite, was an original member of the PMEW, but had a brief falling out with Manansala in late 1932 and decided to form her own organization.<sup>751</sup> In December that year, she and twelve other African Americans established in Chicago the Peace

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<sup>749</sup> For general information on the PMEW, see Allen's "When Japan" and "Waiting for Tojo."

<sup>750</sup> As noted above, Manansala led a group in Pittsburgh that was located at the same address of an African-American Sunni organization, and it was reported that in 1935 the PMEW meetings were being held at the same location a local MST group held its meetings; see *Correspondence of the Military Intelligence Division*, Letter, 9/16/1935, Assistant Chief of Staff, G-2, 79<sup>th</sup> Division to Paul Murray, Lt. Col., Infantry.

<sup>751</sup> Hill, *RACON*, 523-524.

Movement of Ethiopia (PME).<sup>752</sup> As mentioned in chapter 4, Gordon was reportedly kin to Ira and George Johnson, and George testified to this at her 1942 sedition trial.<sup>753</sup> George explained that in 1933 or 1934, Gordon—who believed that George should walk in the footsteps of his father, Ira—sent George to St. Louis to organize there a MST with a PME leaning.<sup>754</sup> George was hesitant at first, so Gordon took him to see either Manansala or Takahashi, who offered George start-up money for the group. When George declined the money, he was assaulted by individuals loyal to Gordon. In the following year, Gordon tracked down George, and this time he accepted money from Manansala to start an MST in West Virginia. George would later claim that he feared being assaulted again, and intentionally violated his probation so he could go to prison where he would be safe.<sup>755</sup> Meanwhile, the PME, according to the FBI,

openly embraced [Islam,] but members did not adopt “Moslem” names ... Madame Gordon related that she and her members talked at their rallies of worshipping Allah, their God, and Mohammed, his prophet. There was no indication of a sincere or thoughtful effort to learn and follow the precepts of that religion but rather the mere use of Mohammedan terms as a device to further distinguish the negro from the white races. This is expressed in one of the objects of the constitution of the [PME], “We believe in the God of our forefathers, the history, language and Islam religion,” and by their speeches urging the negroes not to follow the “white man’s religion.” Yet, at the same time, the by-laws claim the organization is built “on a Biblical standpoint” and refers to the scriptures to illustrate this contention.<sup>756</sup>

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<sup>752</sup> Ethel Wolfskill Hedlin, “Earnest Cox and Colonization: A White Racist’s Response to Black Repatriation, 1923-1966” (PhD diss., Duke University, 1974), 112.

<sup>753</sup> Hedlin, 154.

<sup>754</sup> “Jap Payoffs to Cult Bared at Trial; Bilbo Linked to Plotters by Leader,” *Chicago Defender* (Ntl ed.), February 6, 1943, 3; MSTA FBI file, Report, 9/21/1943, Chicago file 14-39, 24.

<sup>755</sup> “Jap Payoffs to Cult Bared at Trial”; MSTA FBI file, Report, 9/21/1943, Chicago file 14-39, 25-26.

<sup>756</sup> Hill, *RACON*, 525.

While there is no known solid evidence concerning what type of Islam Gordon was influenced by, knowing about the existence of a strong Islamic element in Gordon's PME does increase the likelihood that George's story contains some truth.

Government investigations in 1940s Detroit revealed another organization with a close, but slightly different name from the PMEW: the Eastern Pacific Movement (EPM). Because there were break-off groups from the PMEW that used names that were similar to the PMEW's (such as the PME and the Ethiopian Pacific Movement) and because Manansala's PMEW sometimes referred to itself as, simply, the Pacific Movement or the Pacific Movement, Inc., I cannot be sure whether the EPM was a distinct organization or just another name for the PMEW. Whatever its exact relationship with the PMEW and other Takahashi/Manansala groups, however, it still almost definitely was related in some way to them, and, like the DOOs, OMA, MSTIAM, and PME, it may have had a significant Muslim presence. The first mention of the EPM comes in 1942, when government agents discovered this group in Chicago and Detroit.<sup>757</sup> At the time, they found very little information about these branches, other than the fact that the Chicago leader was a Japanese national named Harry Ito and that he had been trying to connect his group with the DOO in that city. The next piece of evidence concerning the EPM comes from a U.S. army intelligence report from 1950 that indicates that by that year this group, which was being led at 1474 Frederick Street by two individuals who had the MST surnames of Bey (Jackson Bey and Wilfred Bey), was now the group known as the

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<sup>757</sup> DOO FBI file, MID 201, Development of Our Own, 12/5/1942, 3-4; MSTA FBI file, letter, J. Edgar Hoover to SAC, Detroit, 12/8/1942.

Moslem Holy Temple of Islam—i.e., the Nation of Islam.<sup>758</sup> The available evidence does not tell us the exact relationship between the EPM, the MST, and the NOI, but it seems that a number of former Moors and EPM members had joined the ranks of the NOI, which was growing at the time (see chapter 7).

Despite their claims of having a combined total of tens of thousands of members, the various Takahashi/Manansala groups had, at their peak, a few thousand, and probably only a few hundred by 1944. In fact, pro-Japanese sentiment was held only by a small minority of African Americans in the 1940s.<sup>759</sup> Nonetheless, the impact of Takahashi and Manansala's groups, due to their geographic spread, was significant, and the fact that they had a number of different factions exemplifies the diversity that could exist even within one single community in the AAIR.

### **The *Clock of Destiny* and the Moorish Constitution Cultural National Club**

When the Second World War came to an end without the destruction of white America and the rise of Asia, many of those influenced by the MST and NOI began to lose faith that African Americans would be redeemed. Membership in the MST as well as the Takahashi/Manansala groups seems to have fallen off considerably; as for the NOI, only Elijah Muhammad's faction—which was at the time undergoing unique experiences that were giving it new life (see chapter 7)—was able to survive.

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<sup>758</sup> Letter, 9/22/1950, [unknown] to Assistant Chief of Staff, G-2, Intelligence. Wilfred Bey may have been Wilfred Little, who joined the NOI in 1947, later became the Detroit temple leader, and is notable for being the first of Malcolm X's siblings to join the NOI. The Detroit NOI used the 1474 Frederick Street address through the early 1950s, and it was the temple that Malcolm joined after his release from prison; see Malcolm X FBI file, Report, 3/18/1953, Detroit file, 1; Malcolm X FBI file, Report, 3/16/1954, Detroit file 100-21719, 12, 13.

<sup>759</sup> "Poll Proves Sympathy for Japanese is False," *Pittsburgh Courier*, November 7, 1942, 4.

It was amidst the soul-searching in the aftermath of World War II that a new prophecy and teaching appeared that not only explained why Asia had not yet risen as the world's leader, but offered a whole new revelation about the history and destiny of the "Moors" and white people. In 1947, the fez-wearing Cleveland resident C.M. (Charles Mosely) Bey published *Clock of Destiny*,<sup>760</sup> a booklet that, though it was clearly influenced by both MST and NOI teachings, contained what was virtually a complete new set of doctrines. Bey, who claimed to be an astrologer and a "3<sup>rd</sup> 33<sup>rd</sup> 360 Degree Master Mason," explained, following the NOI (see chapter 7), that the original people on the earth were all "Asiatics" and that white people were created through "animalistic experimentation" by an Asiatic scientist named Yaqub.<sup>761</sup> However, unlike in the NOI narrative, this experimentation and creation was done in Central and South America and, subsequently, whites and Asiatics "amalgamated," populating the whole globe with people of a mixed ancestry.<sup>762</sup> In the year 580 A.D.,<sup>763</sup> the people of the Moorish Nation, descendants of the biblical Moabite Nation, established throughout the world the Moorish Empire of the Order of Islam, the first civilization. These Moors followed Islam (which was also, notably, known as "I AM"),<sup>764</sup> which is not a "mystery religion" that revolves around a "God," but rather a "Universal Law"—or "mathematics"—based on "facts."

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<sup>760</sup> C.M. [Charles Mosely] Bey, *Clock of Destiny* ([Cleveland]: Clock of Destiny, [1947] 200-).

<sup>761</sup> Bey, *Clock of Destiny*, 60.

<sup>762</sup> Bey, *Clock of Destiny*, 60-62.

<sup>763</sup> It is likely that Bey chose this date because he believed that this was the birth of Muhammad, the prophet of Islam, though scholarship typically dates his actual birth to circa 571.

<sup>764</sup> Bey, *Clock of Destiny*, 57-58. The reason "Islam" is also known as "I AM" is because "we have expressed the highest phrase of creation, namely: Ourselves which symbolizes the letter one (1) or (I)."

The principal knowledge in the Universal Law is the “science of the 12 signs of the Zodiac,” otherwise known as the Clock of Destiny. This “science” is essentially a standard system of astrology mixed with Masonic references and numerology; human lives are determined by the position of the earth relative to astrological signs. Once a person understands these teachings, he or she can fulfill his or her destiny and help create peace on the earth.

However, by around the fifteenth century,<sup>765</sup> many of the Moorish rulers had become corrupt, despotic, and greedy. To increase their in oppression of people, instead of teaching true Islam, they kept the Universal Law secret and forced people to believe in mysteries and superstitions—what Bey calls “Islamism”—and the resulting widespread ignorance of the Truth led to the corruption of Islamic society.<sup>766</sup> To resist their rulers’ tyranny, a group of blond women in Patagonia (in South America) invented the mystery and emotional doctrine of a white Christ and Mary: Christianity. This was a racist and destructive religion inspired by Islamism, and it helped the Patagonians mobilize to liberate themselves from their oppressive Moorish rulers.<sup>767</sup> The creation of this aggressive doctrine resulted in the rise of the Empire of the Order of Christ, which quickly spread and was adhered to by many of the “ruddy”-skinned people of the world who soon, because they were guided by their emotional, non-rational, destructive, unjust, and racist religion, conquered and oppressed the world’s Moors/Asiatics. The U.S., in

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<sup>765</sup> The dating of this is not clear in Bey’s book, but there are frequent references to events taking place around 400 years ago.

<sup>766</sup> Bey, *Clock of Destiny*, 16.

<sup>767</sup> *Ibid.*

fact, was founded (in 1863—the year of the Emancipation Proclamation) as a union between the various Christian peoples; therefore its Constitution reflects the Order of Christ’s racist and oppressive ideas, which are contrary to those of the Moorish Zodiac Constitution,<sup>768</sup> the only true constitution (because it is based on Universal Law), which promotes social and economic freedom and peace.

The Moors and the Christians fought for 364 years, but this ended in 1914 when the Christians submitted to the “grim Law of Retribution,” which is part of the Universal Law.<sup>769</sup> Through this Law of Retribution, the Moors would be redeemed. The final stage of this Law would take place from 1947 to 1954, during which there would be a significant social and economic revolution and much blood would be shed, ultimately leading to the removal of the white Christians from the position of the world’s rulers. Asiatics, however, should not hate all whites; on the contrary, they should realize that all Asiatics have mixed ancestry<sup>770</sup> and should work to help inspire whites to abandon their unjust religion, and the country that uses that religion as its foundation, by denouncing those things themselves.<sup>771</sup>

It was largely because of this last instruction that Bey’s following of a few hundred<sup>772</sup> received a disproportionate amount of attention in the 1950s. Several

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<sup>768</sup> Also sometimes referred to as the Universal Constitution.

<sup>769</sup> Bey, *Clock of Destiny*, 16.

<sup>770</sup> Bey, *Clock of Destiny*, 62.

<sup>771</sup> Bey, *Clock of Destiny*, 62.

<sup>772</sup> In 1958, it was reported that his followers number 250; I have not seen other estimates of the group’s size. See Sanford Watzman, “Tax Men Crack Down on ‘Moors’,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, January 10, 1958, 11.

members of Bey's Moorish Constitution Cultural National Club believed not only that they should not have to remove their red fezzes in American courts (a, by that time, twenty-year-old tradition in the MST), but also that they did not have to register for the draft. As a result, in 1952 and 1953, the group was investigated by the FBI and three young members were convicted for draft evasion.<sup>773</sup> By 1956, after the expected end of white supremacy in 1954 had passed without significant change for African Americans, Bey had become more critical and separatist, and was issuing cards to members that stated that the U.S. "never allowed descendants of the defeated Moorish nation of this hemisphere to ever become citizens of this Union States Republic."<sup>774</sup> "Legally," the card continued, "the Dred Scott decision oaths in 1854 and the union of 1863 exempted me from all taxation of the 48 union states."<sup>775</sup> Influenced by this claim, some of the Club's members began refusing to pay all taxes—including sales taxes—and were, as a result, convicted for actions related to their tax evasion.<sup>776</sup>

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<sup>773</sup> Dannin, 32; "Red-Fezzed Youth Jailed as Evader," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, August 28, 1952, 8; "Probes Report of 'Draft Free' Club," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, September 11, 1952, 4; "Lawyer-Client Rift is Patched," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, May 28, 1953, 14. Unfortunately, it appears that the FBI file concerning this incident (file 25-HQ-354772) was destroyed in 1996; letter, Department of Justice to the author, January 14, 2013.

<sup>774</sup> Jerrold Ballinger, "Tax? No Moor'll Pay; It's Jail Cell for Bey," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, December 3, 1956, 1, 9.

<sup>775</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>776</sup> See Ballinger, "Tax?"; "Melancholy Bey Is Judged again in Tax Refusal Case," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, December 17, 1956, 43; "'Moorish American' Sentenced to Jail," *Cleveland Call and Post*, May 4, 1957, 6A; Sanford Watzman, "Tax Men Crack Down on 'Moors'," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, January 10, 1958, 11; "'Moorish' Leader Given Chance to Avoid Contempt," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, January 17, 1958, 31. C.M. Bey appears to have been opposed to the actions of at least one of these individuals—the unidentified person who broke off from C.M. Bey and formed his own organization using the Clock of Destiny name; see Charles Mosley Bey FBI file, 63-HQ-4276.

The most publicized of Bey's followers, was Emmett "Tonelli" Cobb (Ahmad El), whose sensational trial in 1954 left a lasting impression for Cleveland's African-American residents and likely influenced the stronger stance taken by the Club members in the late 1950s. Cobb had been a well-respected figure in Cleveland's black community since the late 1930s when he, while still a teenager, began receiving attention for his dancing skills, impressive looks, moral behavior, unwavering confidence, and race pride.<sup>777</sup> Cobb, however, had many sides. His ardent race pride and inner strength had likely developed in response to both his father's own defiance of white oppression and his mother's murder at the hands of the Ku Klux Klan when he was around four years old.<sup>778</sup> It was likely primarily due to this background that Cobb, much like Malcolm X, was drawn to Islam. He donned a fez, grew a beard, began studying various "mystical" teachings, became a member of C.M. Bey's Moorish Constitution Cultural National Club, and taught Bey's ideas to his numerous hangers-on, who called Cobb "the Prophet."<sup>779</sup> Perhaps partially because of the influence of Bey's teachings on race, and certainly because the popular Cobb had many white female admirers, it was becoming

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<sup>777</sup> See, e.g., "Quinzette Social Swingsters," *Cleveland Call and Post*, September 29, 1938, 4; Gympsey, "Social Whirl," *Cleveland Call and Post*, December 11, 1943, 6A; "Gay Associates Give Popularity Contest," *Cleveland Call and Post*, May 3, 1947, 14B; "Social Lights," *Cleveland Call and Post*, April 10, 1948, 7A; Bob Ferguson, "Emmett Cobb's Life Made Headlines, Death Goes Unnoticed," *Cleveland Call and Post*, December 16, 1999, 6C; Ryan Miday, "Cleveland Legend Emmett Cobb, a.k.a. 'Tonelli'," *Cleveland Call and Post*, February 2012 (appeared in five parts). Cobb, notably, even danced with Josephine Baker when she was performing in Cleveland in 1951; see Raoul Abdul, "The Truth about Youth," *Cleveland Call and Post*, June 23, 1951, 5B.

<sup>778</sup> June V. Williams, "Sister Devotes Life to Winning Brother's Freedom," *Cleveland Call and Post*, December 20, 1969, 11C; "Death Ends Long Battle for Her Brother's Freedom," *Cleveland Call and Post*, March 6, 1971, 6A.

<sup>779</sup> See Marty Richardson, "Parade of Girls Put Finger on 'Prophet'," *Cleveland Call and Post*, April 17, 1954, 1A, 3A; Woody L. Taylor, "Tonelli Denies Charges; Will Be Own Lawyer," *Cleveland Call and Post*, April 24, 1954, 1A; Cobb claimed to have earned three degrees—one from the Neotarian Fellowship in Kansas City, one from the School of Applied Hypnology in New York, and one from Bey's Moorish Constitution Cultural National Club.

common knowledge that he had several white girlfriends and even a white wife, whom he married in 1949.<sup>780</sup>

Cobb's defiance of white expectations for African Americans in the early 1950s had irritated many of Cleveland's residents, especially, it seems, the local police. In 1950, a white police officer initiated a fight with Cobb that ended when Cobb fractured the officer's skull. Cobb was arrested, but, because he was acting in self-defense, was found innocent of any wrongdoing.<sup>781</sup> The next year, Cleveland police accused Cobb of threatening young women to work as prostitutes for him, a charge that Cobb vehemently denied.<sup>782</sup> The police's antagonism came to a head in April 1954 when Cobb was charged with the rape of a fifteen year-old African-American girl and with using hypnotism to make several young women—mostly white and from Cleveland's nicer neighborhoods—to work as prostitutes and petty criminals for him.<sup>783</sup> When he appeared in court, Cobb, citing Bey's teachings, refused to take off his fez; the judge then had the bailiff forcibly remove it, cited Cobb for contempt, and made him undergo a psychiatric evaluation.<sup>784</sup> Cobb, who denied all charges, refused a court-appointed lawyer, and during the trial did not cross-examine any of the state's witnesses, nor did he call to the stand any of the

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<sup>780</sup> Richardson, "Parade of Girls."

<sup>781</sup> "'Tonelli' Freed of Fracturing Officer's Skull in Night Brawl," *Cleveland Call and Post*, August 12, 1950, 8A.

<sup>782</sup> "Probe Gang Terror against Domestics," *Cleveland Call and Post*, June 30, 1951, 5D; "Denies Threats Made to Girls Were His," *Cleveland Call and Post*, July 7, 1951, 2A.

<sup>783</sup> Richardson, "Parade of Girls"; Woody L. Taylor, "\$35,000 Bail Set by Judge on 11 Counts," *Cleveland Call and Post*, April 17, 1954, 1A; Taylor, "Tonelli Denies Charges";

<sup>784</sup> Woody L. Taylor, "Sets Sanity Test for Tonelli," *Cleveland Call and Post*, May 8, 1954, 1A.

forty-one witnesses he had subpoenaed for his defense.<sup>785</sup> Throughout the trial, he yelled at the judge for being biased and for not having the authority to try Cobb, who, he claimed, was not subject to the U.S. Constitution. C.M. Bey, meanwhile, sent a telegram to the Attorney General to make him aware of supposed injustice being committed in Cobb's case, claiming that "a Moorish American under the Great Seal Law of Islam, cannot legally be tried by a Christian Jury of the Court."<sup>786</sup> The sensational nature of the case made it the subject of intense interest in Cleveland and even garnered it some national attention in the black press.

Despite the fact that the state's case rested solely on the testimonies of Cobb's female accusers, in mid-May, Cobb was found guilty on all counts. He received a sentence of fourteen to sixty-eight years, though was eventually sent to a hospital for the insane for an undetermined amount of time. But just weeks after the verdict was handed down, the reporter covering the case for the *Call and Post* interviewed Cobb's accusers who now were being tried for their participation in the crimes. At this time, they publicly recanted their statements, saying that the police had promised them lighter sentences in exchange for them saying that Cobb was leading a prostitution and crime ring.<sup>787</sup> Their new stories, however, went ignored and Cobb would not see his case reopened until 1971.

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<sup>785</sup> Woody L. Taylor, "Tonelli Gets 14 to 68 Years," *Cleveland Call and Post*, May 15, 1954, 1A, 2A.

<sup>786</sup> "Sidelights from Tonelli Trial," *Cleveland Call and Post*, May 15, 1954, 7D.

<sup>787</sup> Woody L. Taylor, "Bitter 'Prophet' Snarls in Cell," *Cleveland Call and Post*, May 29, 1954, 1A, 3A; Woody L. Taylor, "Prison Looms for Witnesses in Trial of 'Prophet' Tonelli; Two Charg 'Doublecross'," *Cleveland Call and Post*, June 5, 1954, 1A, 3A.

More than simply being a demonstration of yet another doctrine in the AAIR, the story of Cobb and the rest of C.M. Bey's group gives us some background to one of the more well-known directions that those believing in "Moorish nationality" would take. Since the time of the AAIR, throughout the country there have been a number of news reports about Moorish Americans who openly reject being bound by the U.S. Constitution and have been charged because of their refusal to pay taxes.<sup>788</sup> In several of these cases, these individuals have cited C.M. Bey's teachings.

### **Independent Muslim Mystics and "Sufis"**

One of the main goals of this dissertation is to point out that, particularly after the first phase of the AAIR (1920-1925), Islam had become popular enough in the black community that the period saw thousands of African Americans from a wide variety of backgrounds and drawing from very different sources, begin claiming to have Islamic identities. In one interesting case from 1928, the British press discovered that a fez-wearing African American named George was selling coffee on London streets and claiming to be a Muslim Turk.<sup>789</sup> Although most black Americans embracing Islamic identities were involved with one of the numerous Islamic organizations in the AAIR, others, like George, for whatever reason, were essentially independent figures who used their own knowledge and experiences to create distinct Islamic identities.

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<sup>788</sup> E.g., Dan Barry, "In Tax Scheme, Greed is Linked to Separatism," *New York Times*, December 8, 1997, 1A. It appears that in the 1970s, Richardson Dingle-El's faction (for which Sheik Clarence R. Reynolds-El was its spokesman) was possibly influenced by C.M. Bey's teachings; see Carl Schoettler, "Howard Street Temple Guides Moorish Science in U.S." *Baltimore Evening Sun*, January 20, 1978, B1. In 2011, a number of Moors made headlines across the country when they began claiming to have deeds that gave them rights to foreclosed homes. These individuals were apparently believers in Bey's idea that the U.S. Constitution did not apply to them.

<sup>789</sup> "Turkish Coffee Vender Turns out as American," *Chicago Defender* (City ed.), June 30, 1928, sect. I, 1.

A few of these types of figures from the AAIR's first phase were already examined: the Muslim mystics in New York. After 1925, probably largely due to the popularity of Drew Ali's MST and the UNIA's Islamophilia, there was for a few years a surge in numbers of these Muslim mystics. 1927, however, seems to be the peak year, after which mystics in the black community for the most part returned to promoting a vaguer "oriental" identity. But because Islam was increasingly held as a legitimate identity for African Americans, the distinctly-Muslim mystics did not completely disappear. These mystics capitalized on the fact that Islam in African-American culture was still far from standardized. The Islam that they promoted, just like the Islam in African-American Islamic organizations, was drawn from the various deterritorialized sources of religion: literature about Islam, various existing cultural expressions of Islam, and Muslim immigrants. The mystics, notably, frequently called themselves "Sufis," perhaps because of the growing popularity of the Sufi mystic in the U.S. due to the efforts of Gurdjieff, Inayat Khan, and even the Ahmadis.

Most of these mystics, like most entrepreneurs generally, had short or at least very modest careers. One example is Hazrat Inayet Ali, a West Indian who posed as a beard-wearing, long-haired East Indian Hindu "Sufi Mystic."<sup>790</sup> Ali traveled between Milwaukee and Hartford from 1926 to 1929, setting up his main headquarters in New York City.<sup>791</sup> Like the other New York City mystics, he sold spiritual services, though

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<sup>790</sup> I know of only one instance in which he employed the term "Sufi": in his advertisement in the *Detroit Free Press*, September 22, 1928, 8.

<sup>791</sup> See, for example, "8 Free Lectures by the Great Oriental Mystic" [advertisement], *Milwaukee Sentinel*, July 28, 1926, 7; "Hazrat Ismet Ali To Lecture Here," *Hartford Courant*, May 7, 1927, 7; "Your Only Opportunity" [advertisement], *Bridgeport Telegram*, May 28, 1927; "Wife Lost in Cult Mystery," *Dubois Courier*, July 31, 1929, 6; also see his advertisements that appeared every Saturday in the *Detroit Free*

like Suleiman he started a small religious organization, the Kabaa Alif, before being arrested for fraud in 1929, for which he was sentenced to serve one to five years in prison.<sup>792</sup> Another small-time mystic was Sufi Akbar, whose advertisements appeared in Detroit's black newspaper in 1934 and who may have briefly shown up in New York City in 1938.<sup>793</sup> Though these two figures made little impact, a few of the other mystics and "Sufis" in the AAIR had a notable influence, and this section provides brief profiles of them.

#### "Sufi" Muhammad Yusuf Khan

Although I have already discussed Khan's work as an Ahmadi and mentioned in passing his identity as a mystic, because he had a separate and relatively successful career as a Muslim mystic, it is important to include him in this section. Khan, it should be first understood, was not a complete charlatan, as one might suspect after learning about the displeasure of the Ohio-Pennsylvania community and Sufi Bengalee's denouncement. Being an Indian Muslim immigrant, Khan probably had exposure to Sufism as a child, and these ties were surely reinforced when he joined with the Ahmadis, a group that drew from the Sufi tradition. In the U.S., as has been mentioned, Sadiq in fact promoted the association of the Ahmadiyya movement with mystical and occult groups and in a few issues during 1921-1922, the *Moslem Sunrise* ran advertisements for an "Occult Circle"

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*Press* from August 25 to September 29, 1928 and the frequent mention of him in the religious sections of New York City newspapers from 1927 to 1929.

<sup>792</sup> "Ali's Mysticism Didn't Foretell Prison Term," *Chicago Defender* (City ed.), January 11, 1930, 11; "Cult Leader's Nationality Puzzles New Yorkers; Claim Man A Fakir," *New Journal and Guide*, August 3, 1929, 12.

<sup>793</sup> See the fall 1934 issues of Detroit's *Tribune-Independent*. His 1938 appearance will be discussed below, in connection with Sufi Abdul Hamid.

that was probably led by Latina/o Ahmadi converts in Tampa, Florida.<sup>794</sup> The occult, then, was understood as an acceptable part of U.S. Ahmadi Islam.

Khan, however, was different from Sadiq in that he sold spiritual services in the same way the Muslim mystics had. Khan was not an official Ahmadi missionary, so he had to support himself financially, and this was probably one of his means for doing so. Using the titles of “doctor” and “Sufi,” he began advertising himself as a Sufi lecturer in as early as 1929.<sup>795</sup> From a business perspective, emphasizing Sufism was a smart decision, as Gurdjieff and Inayat Khan had begun popularizing Sufism as a legitimate practice for Americans.

After his expulsion from the Bengalee’s Ahmadi community in 1934, Khan left for India and eventually returned to Cincinnati, where the group he first founded remained loyal to him into the 1940s.<sup>796</sup> However, he appears to have increasingly focused his energy into selling spiritualistic services. He apparently (probably because it was more popular for U.S. audiences) frequently shed his overtly Islamic identity and promoted himself as a vague oriental astrologist and “metaphysician.” For the next twenty-five years, “Dr. Yusuf Khan” gave speeches at various churches and sold his services all around the eastern U.S., including, surprisingly, in the Ohio River Valley

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<sup>794</sup> *Moslem Sunrise* 1 (October 1921): 47; *Moslem Sunrise* 1 (January 1922): 74; *Moslem Sunrise* 1 (April 1922): 82.

<sup>795</sup> For example, see his advertisements in the *Washington Post* on January 22 and 23, 1929.

<sup>796</sup> See MOA FBI file, Report, 1/15/1944, Pittsburgh file 100-6685, 2; Dannin, *Pilgrimage*, 99 and notes (which points out that he briefly retained the loyalty of Akram); as well as Khan’s name in Cincinnati city directories from the 1930s, available on Ancestry.com. The MOA FBI file also shows that in the 1940s he occasionally visited the group of Muslims in Braddock, which had been led by the Lahori-Sunni Saeed Akmal until around 1941.

region.<sup>797</sup> Khan may have even had a black imitator: another Dr. Yusuf Khan, who claimed to be from Liberia, advertised himself in Cleveland's African-American newspaper in the 1950s.<sup>798</sup>

### Sufi Rajaba

Ohio was in fact a rather popular location for Muslim mystics, probably because of the strong presence of African-American Islam there. In addition to the two Dr. Yusuf Khans, a Sufi Akbar Khan from India—who may have been the same person as the Sufi Akbar in Detroit and New York—lectured on Yogic philosophy and “mental control” in Youngstown in 1936.<sup>799</sup> Perhaps the most popular independent Muslim mystic in Ohio, however, was Sufi Rajaba.

In 1915, A. Gilmo Rodez and his wife, Alia, a black couple, moved to Chicago<sup>800</sup> where Alia soon opened an “Oriental Beauty Shop” at which she manufactured various “oriental” clothes.<sup>801</sup> In 1919 and 1920 she claimed to have spent significant time in the “East” where she gained knowledge to improve her products.<sup>802</sup> Her husband, who used

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<sup>797</sup> “Astrologist and Metaphysician at Radcliffe Church,” *Atlanta Daily World*, October 28, 1941, 2; “Don’t Tip Ht to Moslem Girls,” *Zanesville Signal* (Ohio), June 18, 1943, 10; “Church News,” *Atlanta Daily World*, November 24, 1955, 2; the advertisement “Hear Dr. Yusuf Khan (of Pakistan)” appeared in several issues of the *Atlanta Daily World* in 1955 and 1956; Khan also continued to appear in advertisements in the *Pittsburgh Courier* and *Cleveland Call and Post* in the mid-1950s.

<sup>798</sup> “Dr. Yusuf Khan,” *Cleveland Call and Post*, March 21, 1953, 4A.

<sup>799</sup> “Sufi Akbar Khan to Talk Here on Yoga Philosophy,” *Youngstown Vindicator*, March 13, 1936, 10.

<sup>800</sup> “Beauty Has Brilliant Opening,” *Chicago Defender* (Ntl ed.), July 27, 1928, 12; “Mme. Rodez [M]oves into New and Better Quarters,” *Chicago Defender* (Ntl ed.), July 20, 1918, 19.

<sup>801</sup> “The Law of Retaliation,” *Chicago Defender* (Ntl ed.), June 10, 1920, 12; “Beauty”; “Mme. Rodez [M]oves.”

<sup>802</sup> “Mme. Rodez Returns from Vacation,” *Chicago Defender* (Ntl ed.), September 27, 1919, 16; “Display Ad 46,” *Chicago Defender* (Ntl ed.), September 25, 1920, 11.

the title of “doctor,” would himself open what he promised “to be the largest lodge regalia and church supply house of its kind owned and operated by [an African American].”<sup>803</sup> The “lodge regalia” reference here perhaps helps explain why, in 1919, the couple hosted at their home the white Shriner head of the Pennsylvania region.<sup>804</sup> By the early 1930s, when the couple was heard of next, which was after they had moved to Cleveland, Gilmo—who now often went by the title Sufi Rajaba and claimed to be from the “East” himself—was claiming for himself an Islamic heritage and held a number of parties for his nephew, “Sufit Ali Raza [Rodez],” purportedly from Calcutta.<sup>805</sup> Attending those parties were apparently individuals from a variety of ethnic and religious backgrounds, including local immigrant Muslims. It seems that before his death in 1948, Rodez sometimes acted as a local Muslim leader, even taking responsibility for ensuring a respectful religious burial of a fellow Muslim.<sup>806</sup> In addition to his activities with Cleveland’s Muslims, the turbaned Rodez ran a “Spiritual Advice Shop” from where he reportedly promised to heal minds by using various rituals.<sup>807</sup> Despite his Muslim and “Eastern” origin claims, however, census and draft records confirm that he was born in Puerto Rico, and his obituary notes that apparently because of his skin tone and other

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<sup>803</sup> “City News in Brief,” *Chicago Defender* (Ntl ed.), June 3, 1922, 4.

<sup>804</sup> “Prominent Mason in City,” *Chicago Defender* (Ntl ed.), April 12, 1919, 14.

<sup>805</sup> Alexander O. Taylor, “Ohio State News,” *Chicago Defender* (Ntl ed.), March 11, 1933, 24; Vernon E. Williams, “Cleveland,” *Afro-American*, March 4, 1933, 14. This last source says that Rodez was currently (1933) planning on making Cleveland his home.

<sup>806</sup> “Hamid Abdul Buried with Ancient Moslem Rites,” *Cleveland Call and Post*, May 12, 1934, 7.

<sup>807</sup> “Dr. Rodez of East India to Appear at Local Church,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, January 18, 1941, 3; “Display Ad 18,” *Cleveland Call and Post*, April 19, 1947, 11A; “Dr. Rodez Denies He’s Spiritualist, ‘No Turban Wearer’,” *Cleveland Call and Post*, June 26, 1948, 11B; “Spiritual Aides Hit Police Snag,” *Cleveland Call and Post*, June 19, 1948, 12A.

physical features, “[e]arly in life his similarity in appearance to an East Indian seer caused him to make a serious study of East Indian customs; [and] to affect the dress, habits, and religious demeanor of the Moslems.”<sup>808</sup>

Father Hurley, Elias Mohammed Abraham, and “Arabian Science”

The ease with which an African American might begin to take on in his or her identity elements of Islam can also be seen in the case of Father George W. Hurley. Hurley, an African-American “mystical”/“spiritual” preacher whose message was very much based in Christian discourse, established in 1923 the Universal Hagar Spiritual Church in Detroit.<sup>809</sup> While it is likely that Hagar was chosen not because of her connection to Ishmael and thus Muslims (as Islamic tradition holds that Muhammad is a descendant of Ishmael), but rather because she was a well-known biblical slave, it reflects how close an African-American could get to taking on an “Islamic” identity. Hurley’s church, in fact, shared much with the “mystical” Islam movements of the AAIR. This “prophet,” like Wallace Fard later, claimed divinity; like Paul Nathaniel Johnson (who also, to a degree, claimed divinity), he stressed identification with Ethiopia and Egypt; and, similar to Johnson, Suleiman, and Drew Ali, he used elements of Islam-styled Freemasonry, creating for his Church’s members a Masonry-like fraternal order in which they wore on special occasions a scarf, a fez, an apron, and an image of the All

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<sup>808</sup> “Hold Final Rites for ‘Dr.’ Rodez Spiritual Advisor,” *Cleveland Call and Post*, December 11, 1948, 11B; U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Fourteenth Census: 1920: Population (Cook County, Illinois, 1920), 5A; World War I U.S. Draft Registration Card A-1702. After researching Rodez, I came across the following web page which reminded me to look for Rodez in census records. “Cleveland’s Sufi Rajaba,” Cleveland SGS, Dec. 6, 2008, <http://clevelandsgs.com/blog/?p=157> (accessed November 20, 2010).

<sup>809</sup> On Hurley, see Hans A. Baer, *The Black Spiritual Movement: A Religious Response to Racism* (Knoxville, 1984), 86-94.

Seeing Eye—all pieces employed by Drew Ali. In addition, Hurley stressed “mystical” and oriental knowledge, and his movement frequently used Levi Dowling’s *Aquarian Gospel*, the same book used by Drew Ali for his *Holy Koran*.

Hurley developed some of his ideas under the direct influence of a self-proclaimed Muslim spiritualist. Jacob S. Dorman is the first scholar to discuss the figure known as Elias Mohammed Abraham, who was an important influence on Father Hurley in 1930.<sup>810</sup> That year, “Reverend” Abraham was the group’s “Professor of the Arabic School.”<sup>811</sup> Hurley believed not only that Arabic was “the language ... spoken by the prophets, from Adam to Prophet Jesus, then to Mohammed,” but also that Arabic was important “in case we need our Arabian brethren’s help.”<sup>812</sup> He, in addition, felt that Islamic doctrine was “a Spiritual doctrine and the same doctrine that we are preaching,” and, therefore, that Muslims could legitimately believe that he was a legitimate prophet.<sup>813</sup> This last assertion may have been an attempt to bring African-American Muslims into his community.

In 1930, Hurley (under the name Aboonah Adam), with Abraham as a co-author, produced the booklet “Arabian Science,” which contained introductory lessons in Arabic,

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<sup>810</sup> Jacob S. Dorman, “‘A True Moslem is a True Spiritualist’: Black Orientalism and *Black Gods of the Metropolis*,” in *The New Black Gods: Arthur Huff Fauset and the Study of African American Religions*, eds. Edward E. Curtis IV and Danielle Brune Sigler (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2010), 116-42. Also see Aboonah Adam [George W. Hurley] and Elias Mohammed Abraham, “Arabian Science” (Detroit: Universal Hagar’s Spiritual Association, 1930), in the Father George W. Hurley Collection, Wayne State University, Detroit. I would like to thank Jacob Dorman for providing me with a copy of this booklet.

<sup>811</sup> Adam and Abraham, 4.

<sup>812</sup> *Ibid.*, 3, 2.

<sup>813</sup> *Ibid.*

a brief biography of Muhammad (emphasizing his spiritualist qualities), some sayings attributed to Muhammad, and common Islamic expressions. In addition, at the end of the preface to the booklet, Huley told readers that he believed the very “mystical” Islam-type idea that “a true Moslem is a true Spiritualist.”<sup>814</sup>

Who Elias Mohammed Abraham was is somewhat of a mystery. Like Abdul Hamid Suleiman, interestingly, he claimed to be an Arabian who could speak twenty-one languages. While Dorman proposes that Abraham was possibly a man known alternatively as Elijah Martin, Elias Martin, and, possibly, Elijah Mohammed—an African-American Sunni convert under Satti Majid, (see the next chapter)—there is no direct evidence to support this.<sup>815</sup> It is possible that Abraham was in fact an alias of Suleiman, though it is more likely, given the fact that Detroit was home to the largest Muslim community in the U.S., that Abraham was a Muslim immigrant living in Detroit. However, given his affiliation with someone who saw Islam as a “spiritualist” religion, it is also possible that Abraham was a former Muslim mystic or perhaps an Ahmadi. It is noteworthy that Paul Nathaniel Johnson, in the second-to-last issue of the *Moslem Sunrise* to be published in the 1920s, conveyed to readers that:

The Quran is a poem, a code of laws, a prayer book, and the word’s best Bible combined. **THE MAN UNIQUE! THE BOOK UNIQUE!** As in a looking-glass we behold the **MASTER SPIRITUALIST** of the world intoxicated with the gifts of God.<sup>816</sup>

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<sup>814</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>815</sup> Dorman, “A True Moslem,” 118.

<sup>816</sup> Din, “Living Flora—And Dead,” 15.

In other words, Muhammad, the prophet of Islam, is “the master spiritualist”—an idea that was popular in Western “mystical” Islam tradition<sup>817</sup>—and readers of the Qur’an might have access to this spiritualism. This idea corresponds with Hurley’s view of Muhammad. It is not known if Elias Mohammed Abraham agreed with Hurley’s interpretations, but if he did, Paul Nathaniel Johnson may have been the reason why.

#### Sufi Abdul Hamid

Perhaps the most well-known independent Muslim mystic in the AAIR was Sufi Abdul Hamid. Throughout his career he told varying stories about his supposed African (Sudanese-Egyptian) background and international travels, but when faced with serious legal issues he stated that he was born in Philadelphia<sup>818</sup> and had in fact changed his name from Eugene Brown to Sufi Abdul Hamid in 1925 when he converted to Islam, possibly while affiliated with the Ahmadis in Chicago.<sup>819</sup> There was a rumor that later, in the late 1920s/early 1930s, while still in Chicago, he had transformed his persona into an oriental mystic named Bishop Conshankin<sup>820</sup> and led a movement trying to obtain jobs

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<sup>817</sup> The idea that Muhammad was specifically a “spiritualist”—a genuine communicator with God—can be traced back, in the modern West, to Emmanuel Swedenborg and was an idea popular in the American spiritualist movement; see Bowen “Scientific Religion,” 315-316. Perhaps not coincidentally, in the very same issue of the *Moslem Sunrise* that Johnson’s “master spiritualist” comment appeared in, there is an article on Swedenborg and the similarities of his doctrines to the Ahmadis’; see “Swedenborgian Church,” *Moslem Sunrise* 3, no. 1 (1924): 36-37.

<sup>818</sup> However, another account holds that he was born in Lowell, MA.

<sup>819</sup> Works Progress Administration, *Negroes of New York* (New York: Works Progress Administration, 1939); Roi Ottley, *New World A-Coming* (New York: Arno Press, 1968), 116; Claude McKay, *Harlem: Negro Metropolis* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Company, Inc. [1940]), 190; “‘Egyptian’ Born in Philadelphia, Pa.,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, July 4, 1935, 14; Marvel Cooke, “Mme. Sufi Up for Sentence,” *New York Amsterdam News*, March 19, 1938, 1.

<sup>820</sup> Unfortunately, I know of no direct evidence of this. Sufi was reportedly affiliated with the *Chicago Whip* newspaper at the time, but I have not been able to locate copies of the paper’s issues from the late 1920s and early 1930s.

for African Americans.<sup>821</sup> Whatever the truth of these stories, by the early 1930s, *Sufi* Abdul Hamid had emerged in Harlem as a boisterous, caped, and turbaned, black labor activist.<sup>822</sup>

The earliest extant reports about Sufi come from 1932. That May, he began giving long and apparently inspiring speeches at UNIA meetings in New York, making him one of the most popular black nationalist speakers in the city that summer.<sup>823</sup> He quickly took on the role of an activist leader and in June he was arrested leading (probably with several UNIA followers) a picket of a Woolworth's store for not hiring African Americans.<sup>824</sup> At that point, Sufi was affiliated with a labor organization known as the Industrial and Clerical Association of Harlem, but by late summer he was representing what was called the Oriental and Occidental Scientific Philosophical Society.<sup>825</sup> Preaching from Harlem street corners a pro-Garvey message about the necessity of blacks to organize to ensure that they would have jobs, he had gained enough of a following that he decided to run for the Assemblyman position in Manhattan.<sup>826</sup> By September, after

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<sup>821</sup> McKay, 185-186. One report indicates that Hamid was nicknamed "Philadelphia Slim"; Ebenezer Ray, "'Race-Uplift' Groups Stage Early Morning Battle at 133<sup>rd</sup> Street and Lenox Ave.," *New York Age*, September 10, 1932, 1.

<sup>822</sup> William Muraskin, "The Harlem Boycott of 1934: Black Nationalism and the Rise of Labor-Union Consciousness," *Labor History* 13, no. 3 (1972): 361-73; Ethel Payne, "Sufi Changed Harlem's Spirit in Early Days," *New York Age Defender*, Nov. 12, 1955, 1-2.

<sup>823</sup> Hon. L.W. McCartney and [William] Van Reid, "New York Division," *Negro World*, May 28, 1932, 2; Hon. L.W. McCartney and [William] Van Reid, "New York Division," *Negro World*, June 18, 1932, 2; "New York Division," *Negro World*, July 2, 1932, 2.

<sup>824</sup> "13 Jailed for Picketing N.Y. Woolworth Store," *Chicago Defender* (Ntl. ed.), June 25, 1932, 4.

<sup>825</sup> "'Race-Uplift' Groups," 1.

<sup>826</sup> Vere E. Johns, "U.N.I.A. Inc. Opens Convention Here with Extensive Program; Garvey Withdraws From The Negro World," *New York Age*, August 13, 1932, 1, 7; "Tammany Bars Post Renaming," *New York Evening Post*, August 24, 1932, 3.

failing to be elected, he led his Oriental and Occidental Society in a raid of the New York's UNIA Tiger Division (which itself had some Islamic influences),<sup>827</sup> with whom he was frustrated because they had refused to align with his efforts to boycott businesses that refused to hire African Americans.<sup>828</sup> Almost nothing is known about Sufi's Oriental and Occidental Society, other than it being said that it was "made up for the most part of [black] people who have some East Indian blood."<sup>829</sup> It is certainly likely that a number of its members also had connections to the UNIA, and that, just like the Moors and the NOI during the Great Schism, Sufi was able to draw these individuals to his organization precisely because of his Islamic identity would have resonated with those who had been exposed to the UNIA's Islamophilia.

However, it seems that with the raid on the Tiger Division, Sufi had significantly overstepped his boundaries. Both the UNIA and Harlem had had enough of his activities for one year,<sup>830</sup> and Sufi seems to have left the city. He did not appear again in the press until the summer of 1934 when he became a major figure in the popular picketing campaign calling for jobs for African Americans.<sup>831</sup> Then, in January 1935, after disappearing for a few months due to an unsuccessful legal attack against him, Sufi made headlines again when he was arrested for making a public speech without a permit and

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<sup>827</sup> On the Tiger division, see Hill, *Garvey Papers*, 7: 308, n. 2. The Tiger division was a militant UNIA division that in 1931 hosted in New York several Muslim military men from overseas as speakers (as well as, interestingly, Manansala); see "Tiger Division, N.Y.," *Negro World*, May 2, 1931, 3.

<sup>828</sup> Johns, "U.N.I.A.," 7; "Two Injured When Garvey Factions Riot," *Chicago Defender* (Ntl ed.), September 10, 1932, 13; "Wreck Club Rooms in 'Boycott' Drive," *New York Times*, August 31, 1932, 2.

<sup>829</sup> "Two Injured."

<sup>830</sup> See, for example, The Man at the Window, "Looking at Life," *New York Age*, October 1, 1932, 5.

<sup>831</sup> See Muraskin, "Harlem Boycott."

selling a book without a license.<sup>832</sup> While in one newspaper report it was said that Sufi had been charged for preaching atheism,<sup>833</sup> the booklet that he was selling used “mystical” religious—and even Islamic—themes and symbols. Claude McKay described the booklet as follows:

The frontispiece contained a photograph of the turbaned Sufi and under it this verse from Omar Khayyam<sup>834</sup>:

Oh! My beloved, fill the cup that clears  
Today of past Regret and future Fears:  
Tomorrow:—Why tomorrow I may be  
Myself with yesterday’s Seven Thousand Years.

The thin pamphlet of 24 pages purports to be a history of the Negro race and ranges through the ancient world of Egypt. It extols Hermes Trismegistus as the greatest black man—he had discovered and created the “immortal works known as the ‘Caballah’ which is now in the hands of the Jewish Race and considered one of the world’s greatest philosophical achievements.”<sup>835</sup>

Even if, as Sufi’s lawyer claimed, this booklet contained “absolutely nothing relevant to Sufi’s actual avowed doctrines,”<sup>836</sup> it is still important that this booklet was, like Sufi’s appearance and message, clearly drawing from both the “mystical” Islam and black nationalist traditions that had been inspiring so many of the Islamic movements in the AAIR. Other reports indicate that when preaching, Sufi read from the Qur’an and

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<sup>832</sup> Lou Layne, “Sufi Abdul Hamid, In Stormy Court Scene, Held Without Bail,” *New York Age*, January 19, 1935, 1, 2; “Harlem’s Hitler Gets 20 Days,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, January 21, 1935, 2.

<sup>833</sup> Layne, 1.

<sup>834</sup> Omar Khayyam was an eleventh-century Muslim poet and astronomer whose poetry was popularized for English-speaking audiences in the mid-nineteenth century through Edward Fitzgerald’s translations.

<sup>835</sup> McKay, *Harlem*, 205.

<sup>836</sup> “Sufi Abdul Hamid Sentenced to 10 Days in Workhouse; Magistrate Brands Him Professional Faker,” *New York Age*, January 26, 1935, 1.

sometimes had Muslim immigrants in his organizations, such as a purported Egyptian “sheikh” named Hafiz Mandalay<sup>837</sup> and a man called Sufi Akbar (perhaps the same person as the Sufi Akbar in Detroit in 1934 or the Sufi Akbar Khan in Youngstown in 1936) who performed the Islamic ritual part of Hamid’s funeral in 1938, which also had Buddhist and Christian rituals.<sup>838</sup>

Over the next few years, while he continued both organizing labor activities and facing legal prosecution, he was working on additional projects. In 1935, he began traveling through North Carolina to gain support and financing for an African-American pilot, Ace Hawkins, to serve in Ethiopia’s military.<sup>839</sup> He also married two of Harlem’s most influential female fortune tellers. First was Madame St. Clair, the “Queen” of Harlem who in 1935 had allied with Ellsworth “Bumpy” Johnson to prevent the white gangster Dutch Schultz from taking over Harlem’s “numbers” (lotto) racket that she dominated.<sup>840</sup> Their rocky marriage ended with St. Clair’s arrest in March 1938 after she shot several times at her husband, purportedly grazing his front teeth.<sup>841</sup> Soon after, Sufi

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<sup>837</sup> Al-Maqdissi, “The Muslims”: 29-30.

<sup>838</sup> “Old Hymns Stir Sufi Mourners,” *Afro-American*, August 13, 1938, 6; “Plane Crash Fatal to ‘Harlem Hitler,’” *New York Times*, August 1, 1938, 1. For the Sufi Akbar in Detroit, see the October through December 1934 issues of Detroit’s *Tribune Independent*.

<sup>839</sup> See Archie Waters, “Flying Club Established in Brooklyn Store by Ace Hawkins, Former Lightweight Boxer,” *New York Age*, December 31, 1938, 5; Sherry Sherrod DuPree and Herbert C. DuPree, eds., *Exposed!: Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Unclassified Reports on Churches and Church Leaders* (Washington, D.C.: Middle Atlantic Regional Press, 1993), 28-29. I have not been able to acquire Sufi’s full FBI file.

<sup>840</sup> The St. Clair-“Bumpy” Johnson-Schultz drama was the subject of the 1997 film *Hoodlum*. Sufi, however, does not appear in this movie.

<sup>841</sup> Cooke, 1.

married Madame Fu Futtam, another fortune teller and author of a dream book.<sup>842</sup>

Together, they led Sufi's Universal Temple of Tranquility, which Sufi had opened in early 1938. While this organization did not have a strong Islamic element—it was primarily Buddhist-inspired<sup>843</sup>—its “temple priest” used an Islamic name, Yusef Mohamid, and Hafiz Mandalay and Sufi Akbar may have also been members.<sup>844</sup> Only a few months later, on July 31<sup>st</sup>, Sufi's life was cut short when he died in a plane crash on Long Island. His new wife, who claimed to be able to communicate with Sufi's spirit and believed that he would soon resurrect, continued to run the Temple for a few months; but there are no reports of it existing after 1938.<sup>845</sup>

### **The Relative Prominence of Sectarian Groups in the AAIR**

The existence of a number of smaller sects and independent mystics in the AAIR reflects the degree to which the AAIR was very much the product of deterritorialized Islam. During this period, Islamic ideas and symbols were circulating and being combined in very novel ways. In almost any Northern city east of the Mississippi River, one could find multiple forms of Islam in the local black community. Although most forms had a Garvey/black nationalist tinge, “mystical” Islam remained a strong current, and more and more African Americans were going beyond the Islam they were first

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<sup>842</sup> “Negro Cultist Dies in Plane,” *New York Sun*, August 1, 1938, 6. Her dream book was *The 5 & 7 Race Magical, Spiritual Dream Book*. She also possibly wrote *Fu Futtam's New Startling Facts*.

<sup>843</sup> Raymond Julius Jones, “A Comparative Study of Religious Cult Behavior Among Negroes with Special Reference to Emotional Corporation Conditioning Factors,” *Howard University Studies in the Social Sciences* 2, no. 2 (1939): 120-23

<sup>844</sup> “Widow Smiles at ‘Black Hitler’s’ Rites,” *Chicago Defender* (Ntl ed.), August 13, 1938, 3.

<sup>845</sup> “Widow Smiles”; “Sufi's Widow Tells of Contact with Dead Mate,” *Chicago Defender* (Ntl ed.), October 22, 1938, 3.

exposed to, exploring and eventually incorporating other ideas. The AAIR's diversity was growing.

After the AAIR, there would continue to be several sectarian Islamic groups in the U.S.'s black community, but they would never have the relative prominence and influence that they did in the AAIR. Sectarian groups like the Ahmadis and the Fahamme Temples both were dominant African-American Islamic sects in certain regions at certain times during the AAIR. The Takahashi/Manansala factions, the Moorish Constitution Cultural National Club, and the various independent mystics, while less influential than the other two groups, still played significant roles in the development of Islamic identities in their own regions. In comparison, for at least the twenty years after the rise of the Nation of Islam in the mid-to-late 1950s, with very few exceptions the Nation was the dominant African-American Muslim group in almost every major city and region in the U.S. It was only in the AAIR, then, that sectarianism was a pervasive, defining feature of African-American Islam.

## **Chapter Six: “Sunni” Islam in the AAIR**

Two competing factors drove the development of African-American Sunni Islam in the AAIR: deterritorialization and the reterritorializing desire for Islamic strength and unity to counter the growing number of schisms and sectarianism. Although deterritorialization would eventually win out, the efforts to form a unified Sunni community in the AAIR reveal that African-American approaches to Islam in the AAIR were maturing, reflecting a growing ability to respond to the challenges that building an African-American Islamic community posed.

The first of the two major factors shaping Sunni Islam in the AAIR, deterritorialization, was reflected in the fact that African Americans were increasingly coming into contact with Sunni Muslims. Though there were a few cases of African Americans meeting Muslims while traveling overseas, contact with Muslims born in foreign countries was primarily due to Muslim immigration to the U.S. While the immigrant Muslims African Americans encountered during the period were almost always Sunni, they represented a wide variety of ethnic, cultural, and ideological groups, and this meant that African Americans were exposed to multiple understandings of what it meant to be a Sunni Muslim. Some of the immigrants, for example, taught African Americans cultural practices that were unique to their homelands as if they were universal in the entire Sunni world. Sometimes immigrant Muslims, because these were

often people without formal Islamic training, did not have clear concepts about the boundaries of their religious culture and therefore accepted Islamic sectarian influences—including, in a few instances, those from the Ahmadis and even the MST—as Islamic, thereby legitimizing these ideas and practices for African Americans. In other cases, African Americans met Sunnis who were committed to modern Pan-Islamic movements that rejected all non-Sunni sectarian ideas as well as local variations of Sunni practice. Ultimately, because of the multiple and sometimes conflicting influences, and because there was very little standardization of Sunni education for African Americans, for most African-American Sunnis in the AAIR, “Sunni” simply meant the larger Muslim world. They did not distinguish Sunni Islam from Shi’ism and Lahori Ahmadiyya Islam, and sometimes they even retained Christian and Islamic sectarian (especially MST) elements in their understandings of Islam.<sup>846</sup> In the AAIR, then, “Sunni” Islam was frequently a very blended tradition that reflected the deterritorialization and diversity that characterized the period.

The second major factor shaping the AAIR’s Sunni Islam was a desire to find a form of Islam that could provide African-American Muslims with greater religious legitimacy, stronger unity, and more influential allies so that they could limit A) the number of alternative expressions of Islam that were leading to so many community-handicapping schisms and B) the chances of being exploited by individuals who, like Muhammad Yusuf Khan, might claim superior religious knowledge. It is notable that several of the black Sunni leaders in the AAIR had come to their desire for unification

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<sup>846</sup> McCloud, 22, n. 30.

around Sunni Islam after having been personally involved in the schismatic, sectarian Islam that was becoming so prevalent during the AAIR. In fact, it was precisely the Ohio-Pennsylvania region that would serve as the core region of the AAIR's Sunni movement. While ultimately the early African-American Sunni leaders would not create the fully unified Sunni community that they desired, their ability to form a Sunni network, stretching along the east coast and as far west as St. Louis, reveals a deep trend in the African-American Islamic experience: with increasing frustration with the schisms in sectarian groups and a growing awareness of and contact with Sunni Muslims, more and more African Americans would be drawn to Sunni Islam as a means of finding a stronger Islamic community to which they could belong.

Sunni Islam developed in the AAIR over the course of four distinct phases. The first phase lasted from the 1920s to the early 1930s. Duseé Mohamed Ali and the UNIA's Islamophilia may have contributed to this somewhat, but the person most responsible for bringing African Americans to Sunni Islam at the time was a Sudanese Muslim missionary named Satti Majid. Though he worked mostly with Muslim immigrants, being black himself and having come from a colonized country, he was sensitive to the needs of African Americans and helped introduce a number to Islam before his departure from the country in 1929. While in the U.S., Majid learned from and developed ties with Muslims from a wide variety of backgrounds, and this added to the richness of the Islamic ideals that he taught the converts.

Although the evidence is still somewhat meager, it appears that Majid may have even influenced the man most responsible for the second phase of Sunni Islam, which

began in the mid-1930s and lasted until around 1942: Muhammad Ezaldeen. In the second phase of the development of the AAIR's Sunni community, Ezaldeen spent the majority of his time building up Sunni Islam in the Ohio-Pennsylvania region, and he also helped establish African-American Sunni Islam in New York City. However, because the Muslim immigrant population was relatively larger in New York City, a number of African-American Muslims began independently encountering immigrant Muslims there, and this eventually produced a distinct Sunni culture.

In phase three, which lasted from 1943 to 1947, the ties between New York City and the Ohio-Pennsylvania regions were formalized with the creation of a national African-American Sunni organization, the Uniting Islamic Society of America. Also during this phase, a number of influential immigrant Muslims began, through teaching African-American Sunnis and publishing books, to significantly increase religious knowledge among African-American Sunnis. With this new knowledge, African-American Sunnis were now less dependent on their early leaders and more willing to explore Sunni Islam for themselves. As a result, after 1947 the first national African-American Sunni organization came to an end and in its place rose new dynamics and new leaders. Though national unity somewhat decreased in this fourth and final phase, an informal African-American Sunni network remained intact and African-American Sunnis' voices were becoming louder and having a greater impact than ever before.

This chapter concludes by examining the one important outpost of Sunni Islam in the AAIR: California. There, the UNIA's Islamophilia was complimented by contact with race-conscious immigrant Muslims, including Indians, Egyptians, and, perhaps, a man of

Afghan/Pashtun heritage going by the name Wallace D. Fard. Although this region was almost completely separated from the major events taking place out East, Islam's presence among California's African Americans still contained some of the major elements that were in the eastern US and would also have its own unique impact on the development of the AAIR.

### **Phase I: Satti Majid and the Early African-American Sunni Community**

As I demonstrated in chapter 3, in the early AAIR a number of immigrant Sunni Muslims were interacting with African Americans. In most cases, however, either their impact was minimal or, as probably was the case with Dusé Mohamed Ali, they only made African Americans aware of Islam and did not actually convert people. One notable exception to this was Satti Majid, a Sudanese Muslim missionary who worked with immigrant and African-American Muslims in several cities during the 1910s and 1920s.<sup>847</sup> Through Majid, early African-American Sunnis were exposed to Muslims and Islamic ideas from a wide variety of provenances, which gave them a strong feeling of connection to the global community of Sunni Muslims. Although the Islamic organizations that Majid had established did not have a significant impact in the second phase of Sunni Islam in the period, the story of his efforts sheds light on both the diversity and deterritorialization of Islam in the AAIR and on the religious backgrounds of two key figures who would play leading roles during the remainder of the AAIR.

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<sup>847</sup> This section primarily builds on Patrick D. Bowen, "Satti Majid: A Sudanese Founder of American Islam," *Journal of Africana Religions* 1, no. 2 (2013): 194-209; Ahmed I. Abu Shouk, J.O. Hunwick & R.S. O'Fahey, "A Sudanese Missionary to the United States," *Sudanic Africa* 8 (1997): 137-191; Rogaia Musafa Abusharaf, *Wanderings: Sudanese Migrants and Exiles in North America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), 17-32; and GhaneaBassiri, 172-78.

Born in 1883, as a young man, Majid, who was raised in a family of Islamic clerics and judges, studied Islam under Sudanese sheikhs in his home province of Old Dongola. In the late 1890s or early 1900s, he left the Sudan for Egypt, where he attempted to attend the renowned Islamic university al-Azhar.<sup>848</sup> Sometime before 1904, Majid made his way to Britain where he began proselytization efforts. It appears that prior to arriving in England, he had already desired to spread Islam abroad, and he may have been particularly interested in coming to the U.S. where, some sources claim, he believed anti-Islamic propaganda was being spread, particularly in New York.<sup>849</sup> In addition, in the 1920s he claimed that he came to the U.S. with “the avowed purpose of aiding his fellow countrymen and of founding a nation-wide association for their political, industrial and social betterment.”<sup>850</sup> Both of these aims suggest that prior to leaving for the U.S., Majid had already become a committed Muslim missionary and, perhaps, also a proponent of Pan-Islam.<sup>851</sup>

The evidence concerning Majid’s earliest years in the U.S. is conflicting, so I can say with certainty only that he arrived in the country sometime between 1904 and 1915,

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<sup>848</sup> The cultural value he placed in the school is reflected in the fact that although he did not graduate from there, later, while acting as a religious leader in the U.S., he claimed that he had in fact graduated from there with honors. See Abu Shouk et al., 140; Abusharaf, *Wanderings*, 20; Jessie S. Butler, “Descendant of the Great Prophet Mohammed Labors Here for his Countrymen,” *Buffalo Sunday Express*, September 2, 1924, 12.

<sup>849</sup> Abu Shouk et al., 140-42; Abusharaf, *Wanderings*, 20.

<sup>850</sup> “Descendant.”

<sup>851</sup> The term “Pan-Islam” generally refers to efforts made by the Ottoman government and various Islamic organizations in the late nineteenth/early twentieth century to promote Muslim political unity. As will be shown, Majid seems to have been influenced by Pan-Islamic ideologies coming out of the Ottoman state and Egypt. For a discussion of Pan-Islam and its many manifestations, see Jacob M. Landau, *The Politics of Pan-Islam: Ideology and Organization* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1990).

and almost certainly before 1912.<sup>852</sup> His first home in the U.S. was in New York City; there he connected with Shaykh Mehmed Ali.<sup>853</sup> Mehmed, in addition to being the imam for the Ottoman Embassy, led religious worship at one of the earliest immigrant mosques in the U.S. when, in 1910, the Ottoman consulate began paying the rent for an apartment on the third floor of 17 Rector Street in lower Manhattan to be used as a mosque.<sup>854</sup> The building at this address, in fact, had been, at least since the early 1890s, a popular destination for immigrant Muslims, many of whom resided there, including several who also ran “oriental wares” businesses out of the bottom floors.<sup>855</sup> From this building, Mehmed was a very influential Muslim leader in the city. It was reported in 1912 that, as a result of Mehmed becoming the imam two years earlier, local Muslims had begun more closely adhering to Islamic practices, and as many as seventy-five to one hundred Muslims “often” visited the Manhattan mosque for prayer. Mehmed, whom the Turkish government had named head “of the spiritual affairs of the Mohammedans in this part of the world,” even had an influence that went beyond New York.<sup>856</sup> He regularly traveled to and was the religious leader for Muslims in various New England cities (including

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<sup>852</sup> Bowen, “Satti Majid,” 195-196.

<sup>853</sup> Bowen, “Satti Majid,” 196.

<sup>854</sup> “Mohammedans Now Have a Place of Worship Here,” *The Sun* (New York), February 25, 1912, 15. This article gives extensive biographical details for Mehmed Ali.

<sup>855</sup> “Mohammedans Now Have.” This is confirmed by the fact that searches for 17 Rector Street in New York newspapers often reveal Muslim surnames affiliated with this address, at least until the early 1920s. It seems that these Muslims represented a wide variety of ethnicities and nationalities. Apparently, this characteristic of 17 Rector Street had earned it the title which appeared on the front doors of the building: “The Oriental.”

<sup>856</sup> “Mohammedans Now Have.”

Lowell, Boston, and Worcester<sup>857</sup>—all in Massachusetts—as well as Providence, Rhode Island). News of Mehmed’s religious work had made its way back to Muslim-majority lands where it attracted several Syrian sheikhs to come to the U.S., and may have been part of what drew Majid to New York.<sup>858</sup>

It is certainly suggestive that the activities in which Majid claimed to have partaken in during 1908 and 1912—collecting funds to support the Ottoman State and the creation of a Red Crescent Society to provide assistance for Muslims in North Africa and the Balkans<sup>859</sup>—were the same activities that Mehmed was participating in at the time.<sup>860</sup> It is likely, then, given Mehmed’s own passion for Islam, that he was also the unnamed attaché who had enthusiastically supported Majid’s efforts to spread and defend Islam in the U.S.<sup>861</sup> This concern with promoting Islam, along with Majid’s efforts to help support the Ottomans and other Muslims from various parts of the world, suggest that while in his early years in the U.S., Majid was cultivating—with the help of Mehmed—a professional and religious identity as a promoter of Pan-Islam. Majid’s dedication to Pan-Islam and the skills he was learning about organizing and leading Muslims would play important roles in his ability to win the confidence of immigrant Muslims and converts.

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<sup>857</sup> For those interested in the history of Islam in the U.S., it is interesting to note that in 1924 Majid told a reporter that a mosque (which presumably had nothing to do with him, and may have instead been connected to Mehmed Ali or to the multi-religious Arab community there) had already been constructed in Worcester, Massachusetts (see “Mohammedans to Build”).

<sup>858</sup> Abu Shouk et al., 141-42.

<sup>859</sup> GhaneaBassiri, 174, 175. The Red Crescent Society is a Muslim humanitarian organization modeled after the Red Cross.

<sup>860</sup> “Mohammedans Now Have.”

<sup>861</sup> Abusharaf, *Wanderings*, 21.

I have not been able to determine how long Mehmed and the Rector Street mosque stayed active, but it almost certainly remained open at least through the mid-1910s and probably until the 1920s.<sup>862</sup> This would explain why Majid, whose potential would likely not have been realized as long as he stayed in the shadow of Mehmed, traveled to the newly-growing Muslim community in Detroit, where he probably appeared around 1912 or 1913. Over the next ten years, Majid, along with several local immigrant Muslims, purchased land for a Muslim cemetery and additional burial plots in other cemeteries, attempted to construct a mosque, and led a Detroit chapter of the Red Crescent Society.<sup>863</sup> Majid also established at least one local Islamic benevolence society and possibly also a national organization.<sup>864</sup>

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<sup>862</sup> In April 1917, the Ottoman Empire broke diplomatic relations with the U.S., and the attachés were officially required to leave the country. Whether this caused Mehmed Ali to leave the U.S. and the Rector Street mosque to close is unknown. However, a writer in 1923 observed that New York did have, at least in 1922, a Turkish imam “dispatched . . . from Constantinople” who had “charge of Moslems in New York.” See Clair Price, “The New Era in Islam,” *The Forum* (February 1923): 1208.

<sup>863</sup> Barbara Bilge, “Voluntary Associations in the Old Turkish Community of Metropolitan Detroit” in *Muslim Communities in North America*, eds. Yvonne Y. Haddad and Jane I. Smith (Albany: State University of New York, 1994), 393-94; Abu Shouk et al., 154; GhaneaBassiri, 175. As GhaneaBassiri points out, however, there is no independent record of Majid attempting to build a mosque in Detroit.

<sup>864</sup> There remains some confusion about how many societies exactly he set up in Detroit, their names, and their functions. Majid claimed to have led in Detroit benevolence societies with the following names: 1) Islamic Benevolence Society, 2) Islamic Union (supposedly established around 1912/13), 3) Moslem Welfare Society (which was supposedly established around 1922), and 4) “Benevolence Society” (referred to in 1924). The only one of these groups for which there are known independent records is number 3 (a copy of their charter has circulated among scholars). In the *Detroit Free Press* newspaper during this period, there are mentions of groups that are not clearly connected to Majid but that have names that are similar to those that Majid was connected to in Detroit and in other cities: 5) United Moslem Association (Majid claimed that in 1923 his Benevolence Society—number 4 and possibly numbers 1 and 3—absorbed this group), 6) Moslem Welfare Association (mentioned in 1922, located at 1002 Hastings Street; this name is very close to Moslem Welfare Society, which Majid used in Detroit (number 3), but whose charter gave a different address, and 7) United Moslem Society (mentioned in 1915; this name is somewhat close to Islamic Union—number 2—but is also the exact same name as the national umbrella organization Majid would claim to be leading in 1924; if they are the same, that would make the establishment of this group much earlier than the early 1920s, as Bowen suggests, which supports the identification of it with number 2). The most likely scenario, in my opinion, is that numbers 1, 3, 4, and 6 were all, essentially, the same organization—Majid’s *local* benevolence organization, which he usually referred to as the Moslem Welfare Society. Numbers 2 and 7 were most likely what Majid referred to in 1924 as the United Moslem Society, a

In addition to organizing Detroit's Muslims, Majid also attempted to publicly defend his religion. After an editorial portraying Islam in a negative light ran in the *Detroit Free Press* in 1922,<sup>865</sup> Majid, who considered himself to be a leader of the local Muslims,<sup>866</sup> wrote an open letter<sup>867</sup> to the paper

tak[ing] exception to the frequent press attacks on the character of the modern Mohammedan, especially in Turkey, and state[d] as his belief that the men of his faith in the Near East and in India have not been stirring up trouble of their own volition, but because "they have been forced to it by the imperialists of Europe, who desire to keep the Moslem under their yoke as a slave forever."<sup>868</sup>

This is evidence that, consistent with his reported motive for his journey to the U.S., Satti Majid was indeed actively battling negative presentations of Islam, an activity

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*national umbrella* organization in which his local groups were members. I believe that he used these various organizational names interchangeably, even sometimes referring to the Moslem Welfare Society as the national umbrella group. Finally, number 5 was probably, as Majid claimed, absorbed into one of his other groups. See Bowen, "Satti Majid," 196-200 (and notes) and "Suburban Settings," *Detroit Free Press*, October 10, 1915, 6.

<sup>865</sup> This was most likely the editorial entitled "How Islam Looks at It" (*Detroit Free Press*, September 20, 1922, 6). Later, either Majid or the reporter interviewing him mistakenly identified the title of the editorial as "As Islam Looks at It"; see "Descendant."

<sup>866</sup> It is not known to what degree he was actually seen as such by Detroit Muslims. It is notable that he is neither listed as a religious leader affiliated with the Eid celebration and parade at the as yet-completed mosque in Highland Park in 1921, nor is he even pictured the group photograph taken at the time; see "Moslems Celebrate Feast of Id-Ul-Filtr," *Detroit Free Press*, June 8, 1921, 3 and Samuel M. Zwemer, "A Mohammedan Mosque at Detroit, Mich.," *Missionary Review of the World* XLIV, no. 10 (1921): 787. And, in fact, while Detroit Muslims and local leaders were discussed in the *Detroit Free Press* on numerous occasions in the 1910s and 1920s, I have not found a single mention of Satti Majid in that newspaper.

<sup>867</sup> The article, "Descendant," indicates that Majid still had and "proudly exhibit[ed]" this letter, though I have not been able to find it in the *Detroit Free Press*. It most likely was not printed in newspaper. Majid, later in life, conveyed that during his time in the U.S., while he attempted to have various articles published defending Islam, he had little success, and that failure motivated him to establish an Islamic Benevolent Society. See Abu Shouk et al., 141, 142.

<sup>868</sup> "Descendant."

he probably did in many locations throughout his time in the U.S.<sup>869</sup> It also demonstrates both a Pan-Islamic and an anti-colonial perspective, which may have been important in his proselytization to African Americans and perhaps his later work in Egypt.

During the same year that the anti-Islam editorial ran, Majid was dealing with growing tension in the Detroit Muslim community. Muhammad Sadiq, the Ahmadiyya missionary, had come to the community a year before and at first, before local Muslims had become aware of the sectarian nature of his beliefs, he was respected for his religious knowledge and work. Soon, however, local Muslims noticed that the converts he made—most of whom were probably UNIA-influenced African Americans—were insisting that they could continue some of their Christian practices.<sup>870</sup> This angered many of the immigrants, and they demanded that Sadiq leave the city, a demand to which he acquiesced in 1922.<sup>871</sup>

The ever-vocal Majid almost certainly had a say in the controversy. As a committed Sunni Muslim, Majid was not accepting of the Ahmadis' beliefs, and a few years later he even attempted to obtain a religious ruling (*fatwa*) against the U.S. Ahmadi missionaries.<sup>872</sup> However, as a missionary himself, Majid would have been happy to try

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<sup>869</sup> Abusharaf, *Wanderings*, 21-23. That Majid participated in interfaith events is related by both Abusharaf (pp. 22-23) and "Mohammedans to Build." Such types of activities were taking place in New York City somewhat frequently at the time (e.g., see Rabbi Jacob S. Minkin, "News of the Jewish World," *Syracuse Herald*, July 22, 1923, 32; "Buddhists, Mohammedans, Christians, Worship Together in New York Church," *Youngstown Vindicator*, October 28, 1925, 5), though it is unknown if Majid attended any of these.

<sup>870</sup> "Actress Returns as Moslem Wife," *New York Amsterdam News*, March 19, 1930, 9.

<sup>871</sup> GhaneaBassiri, 188.

<sup>872</sup> See Abu Shouk et al., 154.

to instruct the Ahmadi converts on Sunni religious beliefs and practices, and these were mostly likely among Majid's first converts to Sunni Islam.

Among the 1,000 people whom Majid dubiously claimed to have converted by 1924,<sup>873</sup> the most prominent of these was “[a] wealthy and highly educated New York woman of Near Eastern background who has received the appellation of Sadiha . . . , and who is now engaged in social service work in Detroit among folk of Near Eastern birth.”<sup>874</sup> This “Sadiha” was probably Siddica-tun-Nisa Rahatulla, one of the most active converts to Islam affiliated with the Ahmadi missionary in Detroit. Born Ella May Garber, this white woman (her precise ethnic background is not identified in the available literature) had, consistent with Majid's description, lived in New York prior to coming to Detroit in 1922, and had also attended a college in San Francisco. In the latter city, she converted to Sufism in 1910 or 1911 after reading Sufi poets and likely after having come into contact with Inayat Khan, who was promoting Sufism in San Francisco at the time.<sup>875</sup> In Sufism, however, Siddica felt she had only “first beg[un] to see Islam's light, [and] not in a very serious way.”<sup>876</sup> In 1915, she began corresponding with the Muslim religious leader who was visiting the country at the time, Sayid Muhammad Wajih Gilani, a Syrian who worked for the Ottomoan government as the Sheikh al-Islam for the

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<sup>873</sup> “Mohammedans to Build Real Mosque Here,” *Buffalo Morning Express*, September 11, 1924, 5. On other occasions, Majid claimed to have converted 45,000 (see Abusharaf, *Wanderings*, 30; Abu Shouk et al., 189). Majid had a tendency to give very exaggerated numbers.

<sup>874</sup> “Mohammedans to Build.”

<sup>875</sup> See *Moslem Sunrise* 1, no. 6 (1922): 147. I am dating her conversion based on comments made in this source, as well as one found in *Moslem Sunrise* 1, no. 1 (1921): 13.

<sup>876</sup> *Moslem Sunrise* 1, no. 6 (1922): 147. The Sufism Khan promoted was universalistic, not Islamic.

Philippines, and this led her to convert to Sunni Islam.<sup>877</sup> Because Gilani died the following May, and because there were so few Muslim missionaries in the U.S. at the time, Siddica was relieved to come into contact with the Ahmadi missionary in 1921. During the next year, she married a Muslim immigrant and moved to Detroit.<sup>878</sup> There, Siddica, who published several books, articles, and poems on Islam-related topics,<sup>879</sup> was an influential promoter of the religion.<sup>880</sup> Given her position in the Detroit Muslim community and her tendency to both seek out Islamic religious leaders and look past sectarian affiliations, it is very likely that she and Majid worked together there to promote Islam. Majid would have exposed her to his Turkish-influenced Pan-Islamic thought and his community-organizing skills. Siddica, in return, would have informed Majid about the various Islamic teachings she had encountered in the U.S. and introduced him to other Ahmadi converts, most of whom were African Americans. Majid's Detroit period, then, was one in which he gained important experiences—with both Muslims from a wide variety of backgrounds and U.S. culture generally—and knowledge that he would use later on.

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<sup>877</sup> *Ibid.* Gilani was the Sheikh al-Islam for the Philippines at the time. Due to his contact with Siddica, as well as his being an Ottoman imam—and one who was in New York in the 1910s—it is likely that Majid also had contact with him. On Gilani, see “Sheikh here to Lecture,” *New York Times*, August 13, 1915; “Descendant of Mohammed,” *Le Grand Reporter*, November 12, 1915, 6; “Moros Regret Maj. Finley’s Departure after Ten Years of Peaceful Rule,” *The Sun* (New York), August 2, 1914, 3; “Finley Solves Moro Problem,” *Oswego Daily Times*, May 27, 1914, 7. “Sheikh-ul-Islam of Philippines, is Dead,” *New York Herald*, May 6, 1916, 7. In one report, it is said he claimed to have had “spent several years in the Philippines”—see “Skyscrapers as Prayer Towers,” *Miami Herald*, August 28, 1915, 10—but this is almost certainly incorrect.

<sup>878</sup> *Moslem Sunrise* 1, no. 4 (1922): 97; *Moslem Sunrise* 2, no. 1 (1923): 167.

<sup>879</sup> *Moslem Sunrise* 1, no. 6 (1922): 146. I have not been able to locate any of these.

<sup>880</sup> In fact, her conversion story—a rather rare type of article in the Ahmadi magazine—deeply moved at least one reader, an African-American male convert in Street Louis. See *Moslem Sunrise* 2, no. 1 (1923): 176, 177-78.

### Buffalo: Majid's headquarters

Muslim immigrants from a various ethnic backgrounds began arriving in Buffalo, New York in the early twentieth century,<sup>881</sup> making it an attractive location for a man who was seeking out young Muslim communities in need of a religious leader. By 1922, Buffalo's Muslims congregated at a Muslim-owned coffee house located at 450 Seneca Street,<sup>882</sup> and it was in an apartment above that very coffee house that Satti Majid was residing (possibly with his family)<sup>883</sup> from at least 1924 to 1927.<sup>884</sup> From this address Majid not only organized what was probably his most successful local Islamic benevolence society, he also set up there the headquarters for his national umbrella organization, the United Moslem Society.<sup>885</sup> Buffalo, then, was the center of Majid's religious work in the U.S.

In Buffalo, Majid was an important community and religious leader. In June 1924, he and five other local Muslims incorporated the Buffalo Moslem Welfare

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<sup>881</sup> Dannin, 285, n. 1; Vivek Bald, "Hands Across the Water: Indian Sailors, Peddlers, and Radicals in the U.S. 1890-1965" (PhD diss., New York University, 2009), 211, 230, 233.

<sup>882</sup> Dannin, 285 n. 1; "Descendant."

<sup>883</sup> A reporter noted that "In the sheik's apartment was a good sized family of youths, women and children, whether kin or fellow boarders he divulged not," see "Descendant." In a 1926 article it was relayed that one Mary Huldy, eighty-eight years old, of 448 Seneca Street, claimed that she had "[given] herself to" Majid six years earlier. It was implied that a Muslim marriage ceremony had been held at the time, but in 1926 Majid was contesting the marriage in a local secular court, where the judge found in favor of Majid. See "Moslem High Priest Wins Court Fight," *Buffalo Morning Express*, February 16, 1926, 16.

<sup>884</sup> "Descendant." Abu Shouk et al., 154 n. 41. Buffalo, in fact, was the very city in which Majid was said to be residing (at 24 Seneca Street) on his undated certificate of emigration form (see Abu Shouk et al., 152). The fact that Buffalo is listed on Majid's emigration form adds to our confusion about his early years and it almost certainly indicates that he had been in Buffalo prior to 1924.

<sup>885</sup> "Descendant." See the footnote discussing Majid's organizations in Detroit for information about the likely beginnings of this group, which was—contrary to Bowen's suggestion—most likely originally established around 1913.

Society,<sup>886</sup> a group that was an immediate success. By early September 1924, it was reported in the local newspaper that “[s]even hundred young men have already signed up and meetings are taking place frequently in halls in the Seneca street section, at Lackawanna, where many of the members live and work in the big mills, and at Niagara Falls.”<sup>887</sup> In addition to the typical duties required of a head of a benevolence society—collecting and managing money as well as organizing the members’ activities—Majid was very much also concerned with assisting immigrant Muslims in the process of becoming Americans. He appeared in courts as an interpreter<sup>888</sup> and religious expert<sup>889</sup> when needed, and helped the immigrants learn English and U.S. customs. On at least one occasion, he held a meeting for Buffalo Muslims, many of whom were unemployed, at which he discussed “[i]ndustrial problems” and ways to inform local employers about the Muslim employees’ culture.<sup>890</sup>

As a religious leader, Majid stressed the idea that it was possible to be both a true Muslim and a true American. The incorporation papers for his Buffalo Society endorsed “adherence to American principles and the eradicating of all racial differences that might lead to disloyalty to the [U.S.]”<sup>891</sup> At the same time, he stressed that Islam should be

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<sup>886</sup> This is the official name given in “Descendant” whose author claimed to have seen the incorporation records. In another article (see “Moslem High”), however, the name of the group is reported as being the Moslem Welfare Society for the Betterment of Arabians, Syrians and Tripolitans.

<sup>887</sup> “Descendant.” It is unclear as to how long Satti Majid had already been in Buffalo.

<sup>888</sup> “Descendant.”

<sup>889</sup> “Real Mohammedan Sheik, Federal Court Witness,” *Buffalo Morning Express*, June 20, 1925, 5.

<sup>890</sup> “Mohammedans to Build.”

<sup>891</sup> “Descendant.”

“kept bright by the faithful even under the new conditions of life in America.”<sup>892</sup> To encourage this maintenance of faith, Majid attempted to both obtain Islamic reading materials and build a mosque.<sup>893</sup>

While at this time it cannot be said with certainty how the Muslim community in *Detroit* felt about Majid, particularly as a religious leader, it was clear that Majid—who, because he lived above the coffee shop, was physically at the social center of the Buffalo community—was the social and religious leader of *Buffalo’s* Muslims.<sup>894</sup> It was here, then, that Majid felt comfortable enough to plant his roots<sup>895</sup> and attempt to strengthen a national organization that he had set up in Detroit to connect and coordinate his various local benevolence societies. This was the United Moslem Society (UMS), an organization that Majid boasted was supported by “at least 100,000” Muslims.<sup>896</sup> This group, however, most likely only had affiliated with it the people, numbering no more than a few thousand, who were involved in his local benevolence societies.

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<sup>892</sup> “Descendant.”

<sup>893</sup> On acquiring literature for U.S. Muslims both while he was in the U.S. and after he had left, see Abusharaf, *Wanderings*, 29, 30, 32. On mosque-building: “Mohammedans to Build” discusses Majid’s plans to build a mosque in Buffalo. However, we do not hear about this ever being accomplished by Majid. In fact, in a letter from 1930, Majid explains that his return to the Sudan in 1929 was partially motivated by a desire to acquire support there for building a mosque in New York (whether he meant New York State in general or New York City is not clear) (see Abusharaf, *Wanderings*, 30).

<sup>894</sup> This was true even despite the fact that at least one local immigrant had challenged Majid’s authority. See “Arabian Appeals Sentence to Pen, Charging Perjury,” *Buffalo Morning Express*, December 31, 1925, 12.

<sup>895</sup> The fact that he apparently had a family in Buffalo (see above) is even more evidence that he considered Buffalo his principal home while in the U.S.

<sup>896</sup> “Descendant”; “Mohammedans to Build.” This is, of course, another example of Majid’s tendency to exaggerate his influence.

It seems that part of the difficulty of assessing Satti Majid's work in the U.S. has been the result of the fact that this UMS's name was not employed or even mentioned consistently, and was rarely—if ever—used for the names of its local branches. In fact, Majid's local groups—such as those in 1920s Detroit, Pittsburgh, and Buffalo—were usually named “Moslem Welfare Society.”<sup>897</sup> I know of only one reference to a UMS prior to 1924, and it is not at all clear that this was Majid's group: in a 1915 news brief in a Detroit newspaper, which indicated that this group had sent \$2,000 to Turkish soldiers.<sup>898</sup> If this UMS was Majid's, this fact suggests that this UMS was the same organization as the aforementioned Islamic Union, for which Majid claimed had made a similar effort. In any case, because there is no known mention of the UMS after 1924, it is likely that the project was abandoned soon after that year.

Despite the fact that the UMS may have failed as an umbrella organization, however, its creation was an important event in the history of Majid's U.S. work for a number of reasons. First of all, it demonstrates that he had established enough local groups in multiple U.S. cities to justify a national organization. Majid, in other words,

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<sup>897</sup> While it might be thought that the UMS was distinct from Majid's benevolence societies, reference to the Detroit benevolence society being a “branch” of the UMS suggests otherwise. Furthermore, in one of the previously-mentioned motives he gave for coming to the U.S., Majid referred to having hoped to form a *single* national organization that dealt with U.S. Muslims' “political, industrial *and* social betterment” (my italics). Also, it should be pointed out that the UMS is most likely the same entity as the Muslim Unity Society which is a group name that scholars had previously associated with Majid, but had not been able to connect to an existing organization in the U.S. See Abu Shouk et al., 143.

It is not known whether the UMS was the parent organization of a number of other groups with similar names created throughout the U.S. during this period. While it is notable that neither the Moslem Unity Association, Inc. (incorporated in Brooklyn in 1927) nor the United Mohammedan American Friends, Inc. (also incorporated in Brooklyn, but in 1937) have, in their incorporation forms, any direct indication that they had been affiliated with Majid, neither does the incorporation form for the African Moslem Welfare Society of America, a group verified to have been organized by Majid.

<sup>898</sup> “Suburban Settings,” *Detroit Free Press*, October 10, 1915, 6.

had become a relatively successful Muslim missionary, one who could work with Muslim immigrants from a variety of backgrounds and negotiate the culture and laws of both the U.S. and its different states. The UMS's creation shows as well that Majid did not just *think* about building a Muslim organization on a national level, but he was one of the first Muslims in the U.S. who took actions to do so. During the time it did exist, then, the UMS would have been significant for the Muslims connected to it as they could now see an actual example of a nationwide Islamic organization, thus helping to foster a national, multiracial Islamic identity. Finally, the UMS is important because later, in the 1930s while in Egypt, Majid would use his experience with the UMS as he built another umbrella Islamic organization.

#### Expansion: Pittsburgh, New York City, and beyond?

The UMS may have failed as an umbrella organization, but Majid did succeed in creating a loose network of Moslem Welfare Societies. The one for which the most information exists is the group in Pittsburgh, known as the African Moslem Welfare Society of America (AMWSA).<sup>899</sup> Originally organized in 1927 by Majid, the AMWSA filed for incorporation in January of the next year with an explicitly Pan-Islamic purpose: “to unite the Moslem people; ... eradicate racial differences due to their color and nationality, and bring them in closer association with each other.”<sup>900</sup> Its incorporation records also show that the group had the same goals as the Buffalo organization, such as educating members about “Americanism” and providing them financial assistance.

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<sup>899</sup> See Bowen, “Satti Majid,” 201 and notes.

<sup>900</sup> See the incorporation records of the AMWSA on file with the state of Pennsylvania. Interestingly, the AMWSA was said to have possession of Egyptian, Turkish, and Moroccan flags.

Though its name suggests that the majority of its members were recent African immigrants like Majid, FBI files (which were made in the 1940s when some AMWSA members began refusing to be drafted and made speeches against the U.S. government) reveal that the congregation was primarily composed of Arab immigrants—some of whom were probably “black” by American racial standards—and African-American converts, both U.S.-born and Caribbean-born. The members, like Majid, wore fezzes and long robes, and speakers at its meetings read from the Qur’an.<sup>901</sup>

Majid left the country in 1929, and, just one year later, the AMWSA let its incorporation lapse. Nevertheless, the group, which at the time was being led by one Elijah Martin,<sup>902</sup> remained intact, staying in touch with Majid and even opening an Arabic school.<sup>903</sup> In 1938, a Mooree James<sup>904</sup> led a faction of five individuals who had chosen not to be associated with Martin to reactivate the original charter, thus creating a split in the organization. Though a number of the AMWSA converts identified with the UNIA,<sup>905</sup> it appears that Mooree’s faction was much more politically active.<sup>906</sup> In 1942, in fact, several members of the AMWSA—primarily from Mooree’s faction—became influenced by pro-Japanese beliefs. It was for this reason that the FBI, which had recently

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<sup>901</sup> See Nyang, “Growing of Islam” and Hill, *RACON*.

<sup>902</sup> Elijah Martin also went as Elias Martin and, possibly, Elijah Mohammed. However, he was not the same person as the eventual leader of the Nation of Islam.

<sup>903</sup> See Abu Shouk et al., 183-88.

<sup>904</sup> James—who also used the spelling Muree James and the names Ishmael Moore, Abraham Moore, and, probably, Murad Jemel—was one of the original members of the AMWSA. He was reportedly born in Arabia.

<sup>905</sup> Nyang, “Growing of Islam”; Abu Shouk et al., 184-85.

<sup>906</sup> Hill, *RACON*, 545-46.

arrested several leaders of the Nation of Islam because of its own anti-U.S. leanings, briefly investigated the AMWSA. Soon after this investigation, both AMWSA factions appear to have petered out.<sup>907</sup>

The AMWSA's records indicate that by 1928 "branches" of the group had already been established in Detroit, New York City, and Cleveland,<sup>908</sup> the last two of which are confirmed in letters sent by AMWSA members.<sup>909</sup> However, the only Ohio Islamic organization from that period for which incorporation records currently exist is the Association of the Islamic Union of Cleveland. The use of "Union" in its name suggests that it might have been linked to Majid's UMS, but there is no clear evidence of this. In fact, the records for this group raise more questions than answers: the first set of its incorporation records is dated September 17, 1917,<sup>910</sup> and a set for a group with the exact same name is dated November 19 of the same year. All but two of the names of the incorporators are different on the second form, and Majid's name never appears. Merely a month after the second group of records was signed, paperwork for a certificate of dissolution (signed by the same two men who had signed both of the previous forms) for the group was started, being finalized on January 7, 1918.<sup>911</sup> Our knowledge about a Moslem Welfare Society in Cleveland is further clouded by the fact that in none of the interviews which Majid conducted with Buffalo reporters in the 1920s is Cleveland ever

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<sup>907</sup> Nyang, "Growing of Islam."

<sup>908</sup> Hill, *RACON*, 545.

<sup>909</sup> Abu Shouk et al., 184-85.

<sup>910</sup> Previous authors have incorrectly claimed that 1918 was the first date.

<sup>911</sup> The group appears to have either continued to exist or was re-established. Dannin notes them as existing in the late 1920s; see Dannin, 97.

mentioned—the only reference to Ohio is a note in a 1924 newspaper article that a UMS group had already been established in Canton, a city sixty miles south of Cleveland.<sup>912</sup> The FBI files also connect the AMWSA to Muslim communities in Chicago, Cincinnati, and Washington, D.C.<sup>913</sup> Next to nothing is known about these particular groups, other than it being possible that Majid had been personally responsible for starting them.<sup>914</sup> Only further research will be able to explain these clues.

The one other location for which there is strong evidence concerning Majid's efforts is New York City. By 1921, a half dozen years before he would establish the AMWSA in Pittsburgh, Majid had set up an office near the Rector Street mosque in Manhattan at 22 West Street.<sup>915</sup> From there he would stay connected to New York City Muslims for almost a decade, until his departure in early 1929. During those nine years, Majid's time in New York City was devoted primarily to two activities. The first of these was attempting to find financial assistance and employment for Muslim seamen who were living in the City.<sup>916</sup> Majid, who had most likely been a maritime worker himself as a young man,<sup>917</sup> wrote letters to the British Consulate-General<sup>918</sup> asking for this assistance, explaining that these sailors—who were probably Sudanese, Yemeni, and

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<sup>912</sup> "Descendant."

<sup>913</sup> Nyang, "Growing of Islam."

<sup>914</sup> One newspaper article from the Buffalo indicated that Majid "travels much of the time, working to establish other branches"; see "Descendant." We also know that Majid did live, at some point, in Washington, D.C.

<sup>915</sup> Abu Shouk et al., 143; "Descendant."

<sup>916</sup> Abu Shouk et al., 144.

<sup>917</sup> Abu Shouk et al., 140.

<sup>918</sup> And, apparently, John D. Rockefeller. See Abu Shouk et al., 140.

South Asian<sup>919</sup>—had lived in British territory and had worked on British ships, so therefore, in Majid’s opinion, they deserved the British government’s aid.<sup>920</sup> Evidence suggests that through these efforts Majid developed a reputation, particularly with the local Sudanese community, as a caring religious figure.

The second activity that Majid devoted his time to in New York City had a longer lasting and deeper impact on Muslims in America. This activity was promoting Islam to New York City’s African Americans. However, while there is evidence that Majid made a number of African-American converts in New York City,<sup>921</sup> the most important black American who joined with Majid and proselytized in his name was most likely not himself a convert: Sheikh Daoud Ahmed Faisal. Though he would only come to prominence in the second phase of Sunni Islam in the AAIR, in the late 1920s Faisal—then known as David A. Donald—was Majid’s representative at 128<sup>th</sup> and Lenox Avenue in Harlem, where he, like Majid, reached out to Muslim maritime workers and African-American converts.<sup>922</sup> While very little is known about Faisal’s 1920s Islamic activities, his professional and personal life at the time, and his later religious work, is relatively well documented and will be discussed in connection to the next phases.

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<sup>919</sup> On early South Asian seamen in the U.S., see Bald.

<sup>920</sup> Abu Shouk et al., 140.

<sup>921</sup> Abusharaf, *Wanderings*, 22-23, 30-32.

<sup>922</sup> See the section on Sheikh Daoud below for citations.

## 1929 and After

Majid left the U.S. on January 13, 1929 with the intent of obtaining *fatwas* from al-Azhar and Sudanese clerics against Noble Drew Ali.<sup>923</sup> Though a proponent of Pan-Islam, Majid, as exemplified by his response to the Ahmadis, had no tolerance for Islamic movements that ignored some of the core widely-held beliefs of Sunni Muslims; in the case of the MST, the group's use of its own "Koran" and its belief in the prophethood of Drew Ali were seen as highly heretical. When MSTs began appearing in the mid-1920s, they were often in towns that Majid had contact with, so the chances were good that African Americans interested in Islam in any of those cities were exposed to both Majid and Drew Ali's teachings, and apparently that is how Majid had come to learn about Drew Ali.<sup>924</sup> Majid had never met Drew Ali personally, but he reportedly sent him missives urging him to cease spreading his MST doctrines. When this failed, Majid felt it necessary to seek the support of greater religious authority, and set off to obtain the *fatwas*, a goal which he succeeded in accomplishing by late 1930.

During the rest of the 1930s, Majid unsuccessfully attempted to raise funds to return to the U.S. and become an official missionary recognized by al-Azhar.<sup>925</sup> It seems that he also spent his time divided between Egypt and the Sudan, and in Cairo he participated in a number of activities: Islamic conventions;<sup>926</sup> the founding of an Arabic-language Islamic magazine; and the establishment a society known as the Islamic Unity

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<sup>923</sup> GhaneaBassiri, 177; Abu Shouk et al., 155.

<sup>924</sup> Abu Shouk et al., 147.

<sup>925</sup> Abu Shouk et al., 150-51, 188-89.

<sup>926</sup> Abu Shouk et al., 184, 185, 187.

Association, based at al-Azhar but with branches in other locations.<sup>927</sup> His success in accomplishing these projects was in many ways the result of the skills, experiences, and knowledge he had acquired in the U.S. Majid had left Africa a young man with moderate religious training and life experience; he had returned as a seasoned *da`i* (missionary), apologist, community organizer, and religious leader.

His Egyptian activities, furthermore, reflected the key ideology that he had refined over the years in the U.S.: Pan-Islam. And, because of his experiences in the multicultural U.S., Majid had a particularly strong sense of what Pan-Islam meant, a sense that he communicated with his African co-religionists. Majid informed several African Muslims about his prior work in the U.S. and the populations of immigrants and converts there. U.S. converts were mailed the magazine he worked on, they were included as members of his Association, and he told various religious leaders about their existence (he might have even given the converts' names to religious officials in Cairo).<sup>928</sup> Majid was thus serving as an important conduit for the knowledge and practices of Muslims in the U.S. to reach Egypt.

This conduit in fact transported knowledge and practices in the other direction too. The U.S. converts themselves continued to correspond with Majid during the 1930s, learning of his activities abroad and reading his Pan-Islamic, Arabic-language magazine. They were very much interested in Majid's efforts as well as those of the greater Muslim and African world, and they demonstrated a growing sense of both Pan-Islamic and Pan-

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<sup>927</sup> Abu Shouk et al., 184, 188. Majid writes that the group was also known as "Islam Men."

<sup>928</sup> Abu Shouk et al., 188. This was perhaps the first example of African Americans belonging to an international Sunni movement.

African identity.<sup>929</sup> It is likely, too, that some of the African Americans whom Majid had converted were among those African-American Muslims who emigrated to Egypt in the 1930s.<sup>930</sup> Majid, therefore, had a profound affect on at least some African-American Muslims, who, through Majid, were exposed to a diverse group of Muslims and Islamic ideas as well as evidence that forming Pan-Islamic connections both within the U.S. and internationally was a realistic goal. Majid, then, had helped lay the foundations for both of the factors shaping African-American Islam in the AAIR: deterritorialization and the reterritorializing desire to seek unity with Muslims from around the world. It would not be until phase two, however, that this reterritorialization began having a lasting influence on African-American Islamic organizations.

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<sup>929</sup> Abu Shouk et al., 184-87. It is not known how much Majid contributed to their Pan-African interest, which was almost certainly heightened by their Garvey leanings.

<sup>930</sup> In 1933, an American judge living in Cairo wrote about African-American converts in Egypt in an article that ran in Christian periodicals. One of the converts, the judge reported, “told fabulous stories of growing Mohammedan congregations in Detroit, Chicago, Buffalo, Worcester ... and Gary (Indiana)”—all places (except for Gary) to which, as we have seen, Majid had been connected; see Pierre Crabites, “American Negro Mohammedans,” *Moslem World* 23, no. 3 (1933): 272-84.

## Phase II: 1935-1942, The Development of Two Sunni Regions

Muhammad Ezaldeen and the Addeynu Allaha-Universal Arabic Association<sup>931</sup>

In 1932, Satti Majid's followers in Pittsburgh sent two letters to their leader, who was living in Cairo at the time, in which they addressed a Mohammad E.L. Deen, whom they expected to either read their letters or hear about them from Satti Majid.<sup>932</sup> Mr. Deen had recently attended an unidentified "convention" with Majid in Cairo and the AMWSA members had been waiting to hear from him about the convention's "outcome."<sup>933</sup> The converts' interest in this man suggests that he was a person of some importance to them and, therefore, was possibly a convert himself, perhaps one of those who had arrived in the country in the early 1930s. If that is the case, then it is very likely that the person these Pittsburgh Muslims were addressing was a man who was going by the name

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<sup>931</sup> Recently, a number of scholars (including Dannin, Walker, Nash, and Mamiya) have produced conflicting reports on the origins of the AAUAA and the background of Ezaldeen. Dannin, in fact, offers in his book two completely different accounts of the events surrounding these two things. On page 33, Dannin says Ezaldeen left the U.S. in 1929 and returned in the "late 1930s," but on pages 121-122—and in the accompanying notes—he argues that Ezaldeen and the AAUAA were in Buffalo in as early as 1929/1930. Based on my analysis of the evidence presented in this section and in the section concerning the Ahmadis in the previous chapter, I believe the evidence Dannin has about Islam in Buffalo in the *early* 1930s is connected to the Ahmadis, both the Qadianis and Moslems of America. Perhaps the best piece of evidence for this is the obituary for al-Sheikh Dawoud Ghani, a leading member of Ezaldeen's group since its beginnings in western New York and one of Dannin's main informants. Consistent with Dannin's narrative, the obituary reports that Ghani had lived in Buffalo since 1929, but unlike the part in Dannin's book that describes Ghani starting to follow Ezaldeen in the *early* 1930s, the obituary says this took place in the *late* 1930s, and that Ezaldeen's group was not started in Buffalo until 1938, which is consistent with the other data presented in this dissertation. See "Al-Sheikh Dawoud Ghani, 93, Local Islamic Leader," *Buffalo News*, June 30, 1996, C19. I believe the narrative I present here, which has been documented to the best of my ability, clears up the conflicting dates given by Dannin and other scholars.

<sup>932</sup> Abu Shouk et al., 183-185. In one letter, there is reference to a "Mr. Mohammad S.L. Deen" and a "Mr. E.L. Deen." I believe that these refer to the same person not only because of the obvious similarity in their names, but also because, as we will see, I believe the "E." in E.L. Deen stands for "Ez," which might have been mistakenly written as "S." in the case of the first name.

<sup>933</sup> Abu Shouk et al., 184. The only indication of a date for this convention is that it had taken place "a short while ago."

Muhammad Ez Al Deen.<sup>934</sup> Muhammad Ez Al Deen—or Ezaldeen, as it is usually spelled today—would, in a few years, return to the U.S. and become probably the single most important figure in the early development of African-American Sunni Islam. It was largely due to his efforts that Sunni Islam began to reterritorialize and grow in two distinct regions in the eastern U.S. during the AAIR.

Ezaldeen was born James Lomax<sup>935</sup> in Abbeville, South Carolina on October 14, 1886.<sup>936</sup> In the 1940s he claimed that his father was a Libyan immigrant by the name of Yaqub Lomax, and that his mother was a Cherokee Indian named Allacia. There is some doubt as to the truth of these assertions, as these kind of claims were common among early African-American MST members and, furthermore, Ezaldeen sometimes falsely stated that he himself was born in Libya.<sup>937</sup> Whatever his parental heritage, throughout his childhood and young adult life Ezaldeen moved to different cities, and eventually ended up in Chicago. It was there in the mid-1920s where he met Drew Ali and became James Lomax Bey, head of the MST's "Grand Temple." After the Detroit MST community began rapidly growing, around 1927, Lomax moved there and was made the

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<sup>934</sup> This particular spelling of Ezaldeen—with "Ez," "Al," and "Deen" each separated by a space—was used by Ezaldeen in 1938 on the incorporation form for the AAUAA in Buffalo, on file with the state of New York.

<sup>935</sup> Though the identification of Ezaldeen with James Lomax had been known almost entirely through oral tradition, the name "James Lomax" appears on several forms connected with Ezaldeen, such as a December 1936 ship manifest for a date and ship Ezaldeen claimed to be on and on the incorporation form for the AAUAA in Camden, on file with the State of New Jersey.

<sup>936</sup> AAUAA FBI file, Report, 3/22/1944, Newark file 100-18924, 34.

<sup>937</sup> AAUAA FBI file, Report, 5/24/1943, Newark file 100-18924, 8.

Grand Governor for Michigan.<sup>938</sup> Lomax's Detroit group was immensely popular, earning revenues far exceeding those of almost all other temples, and, according to some, this created jealousy within the movement.<sup>939</sup>

As noted in the chapter 4, in early 1929, Claude Greene began working with Lomax to break off from Drew Ali's organization and, perhaps, to try to wrest control of the MST from Drew Ali.<sup>940</sup> In around late February/early March, Drew Ali told Lomax to step down as head of the Detroit group, but Lomax refused and instead formed his own organization (purportedly called the Mohammedan or Moorish Church Temple), reportedly taking with him MST followers and funds.<sup>941</sup> A local Drew Ali partisan complained to police that Lomax had embezzled from the MST, and on Monday, March 11, he was arrested for this.<sup>942</sup> Lomax may have been bailed out, because in the following evening he was reportedly speaking at an MST meeting that was hosting both his members of his faction and the Drew Ali partisans. When a shot was fired, both sides brought out weapons, resulting in a shootout that left two police and two Moors

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<sup>938</sup> "Prophet's Trip to Detroit a Success," *Moorish Guide*, September 14, 1928, 1. Despite the fact that he was clearly an influential leader in the early Chicago MST, later, when interviewed by the FBI, he denied being the James Lomax whose name appears on the earliest known (1926) incorporation form for the MST and said his name might have been used without his knowledge. AAUAA FBI file, Report, 3/22, 1944, Newark file 100-18924, 35; Detroit Moorish Temple of Science incorporation form.

<sup>939</sup> "Prophet's Trip"; "Report of Temples," *Moorish Guide*, October 26, 1928, 4. Under Lomax Bey, Detroit's temple had two grocery stores and a meat "market"; see "Moorish Leader is Postmaster's Guest" and "Moorish Head Makes Plans for Conclave," *Chicago Defender* (Ntl ed.), July 21, 1928, A4.

<sup>940</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the evidence connected to the following events, see Patrick D. Bowen, *Notes on the MSTA Schisms in Detroit and Pittsburgh, 1928-29* (Baltimore: East Coast Moorish Men's Brotherhood Summit, 2013).

<sup>941</sup> "Hold Moorish Temple 'Prophet'"; "Cult Leader Lured Girls to His Harem," *Chicago Defender* (City ed.), March 23, 1929, sect. I, 1; AAUAA FBI file, Report, 4/13/1944, Chicago file 100-11280, 3.

<sup>942</sup> AAUAA FBI file, Report, 3/18/1944, Buffalo file 100-6320, 11-12.

wounded, one critically.<sup>943</sup> Then, on Friday the 15<sup>th</sup>, Greene was murdered in Chicago. By Sunday, Ira Johnson, who was probably Greene’s killer, was in Detroit ready to murder Lomax as well, and word had spread that Lomax was a “marked” man.<sup>944</sup> Around that time, Drew Ali traveled to Detroit and personally told police that Lomax had embezzled \$8,000 from the MST.<sup>945</sup> In April, however, a Detroit judge dismissed the embezzlement charge. After being released from jail, Lomax, fearing for his life, fled to Brooklyn.<sup>946</sup> Some MST members would later claim that immediately before he left Detroit, Lomax stole around \$20,000 from the Detroit temple, but Lomax would later deny this and all the other charges of embezzlement.<sup>947</sup>

For the next year, Lomax stayed in New York City, where he likely developed contacts with sympathetic immigrant Muslims and Moors, some of whom he may have

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<sup>943</sup> “Detroit Followers Riot”; “Four Men Shot in Gun Battle,” *Detroit News*, March 13, 1929, 14; “2 Police, 2 Negroes Shot in Battle at Moorish Temple,” *Detroit Free Press*, March 13, 1929, 1; “4 Wounded in Lodge Riot,” *Detroit Times*, March 13, 1929, 2, 4; “Man is Arraigned in Lodge Battle,” *Detroit Free Press*, March 15, 1929, 5; “Moorish Head to Stay in Jail,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, April 27, 1929, 2. The reports differ somewhat in their accounts of the event. The article published in Chicago over a week after the fact claims that Lomax, who was speaking to the audience, was fired upon, and that was when guns were drawn. However, the articles from Detroit that were published a day after the incident make no mention of Lomax and instead indicate that Zack Lowe, the group’s treasurer, and one Stan Stone Bey were disputing over leadership in the lodge. Someone exposed their gun, police were called, when the police came in Stone Bey told them to leave and shot at them, then a full shoot-out occurred. Two police officers and Lowe were shot in the leg and Stone Bey was reportedly shot twice in the head. An Allan Jordan was also charged with assaulting a police officer during the melee. This shootout occurred at 632 Livingstone Avenue, which was the current meeting hall of the MST in the city (the original location was at 1023 Illinois Street, but the group had moved by January—see the January and February 1929 issues of the *Moorish Guide*) and would become the Detroit headquarters of the Kirkman Bey branch. Another interesting fact about this event is that one newspaper reported that of the 200 people in attendance, 150 were women.

<sup>944</sup> “Claude Greene Shot”; “Cult Leader Lured.”

<sup>945</sup> “Detroit Followers Riot.”

<sup>946</sup> AAUAA FBI file, Report, 3/22/1944, Newark file 100-18924, 35.

<sup>947</sup> AAUAA FBI file, Report, 4/13/1944, Chicago file 100-11280, 3.

converted himself. In fact, it is possible that Lomax was responsible for organizing the group discussed below called the Moorish Science Temple Church, which had a title reminiscent of Lomax's Mohammedan or Moorish Church Temple. In May 1930, Lomax changed his name to Ali Mehmed Bey and, along with a few followers, left the country for Turkey, where he hoped the government would grant him and his followers back in Detroit citizenship and farm land.<sup>948</sup> This hope, however, was not fulfilled, and the group was having to scrape by on whatever resources they could acquire.<sup>949</sup> While by late 1931 it was reported that Mehmed Bey had "shown no inclination to leave Turkey for America,"<sup>950</sup> he apparently decided to travel to Cairo where he would stay "in the hospitality and good care of the General Centre [of the Young Men's Muslim Association (YMMA)] for five years."<sup>951</sup> During this time, Lomax "worked in a restaurant for 50 [cents] a day to educate [himself] about Egypt"<sup>952</sup> and was prepared by the YMMA to preach Islam in the U.S.<sup>953</sup> Lomax changed his name to Muhammad Ez Al Deen and, most likely, connected with Satti Majid and the AMWSA members in Pittsburgh.<sup>954</sup>

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<sup>948</sup> AAUAA FBI file, Report, 3/22/1944, Newark file 100-18924, 35; "Negro Moslems Urged to Colonize Anatolia," *Washington Post*, May 25, 1930, 10; George S. Schuyler, "Views and Reviews," *Pittsburgh Courier*, June 14, 1930, 10; "Detroit's Negro Moslems Hunt Jobs in Turkey," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 13, 1930, G6.

<sup>949</sup> "Founders of Ill-Fated Colony Now Dig Sewers in Turkey," *Gettysburg Times*, November 18, 1931, 2.

<sup>950</sup> "Fails to Found Negro Colony in Turkey," *New Journal and Guide*, December 12, 1931, A14.

<sup>951</sup> Nash, *Islam*, 41; AAUAA FBI file, Report, 3/22/1944, Newark file 100-18924, 35-36. In the FBI report, Ezaldeen says that the person who paid for his passage back to New York in 1936 was Abdul Hamid Bey, who was indeed the president of the YMMA at the time.

<sup>952</sup> AAUAA FBI file, Report, 10/9/1943, Philadelphia file 100-19940, 13.

<sup>953</sup> Nash, *Islam*, 41.

<sup>954</sup> Ezaldeen may have known Majid through contacts in Detroit. Majid, who was likely plugged into Cairo's Islamic movement scene probably helped Ezaldeen join the YMMA.

The YMMA had been organized in Cairo in 1927 by influential Muslim men from various professions in order to counter Christian missionary efforts in Muslim-majority lands.<sup>955</sup> The organization had four principal aims: teaching Islamic morals and ethics; spreading knowledge suited to the modern way of life; discouraging dissensions and abuses among Muslims; and using the best of both Eastern and Western cultures, while rejecting that which was bad in each. Its religious views were largely shaped by one of its leaders, Muhibb al-Din al-Khatib, who owned a Salafi bookstore and published a Salafi journal.<sup>956</sup> Salafi Islam at the time was different from how it is often understood today; many Salafis, including the Muslim Brotherhood's Hassan al-Banna, were influenced by both Salafi-influenced Islam and Sufism, which contemporary Salafism generally rejects. Salafis of the period, like Al-Khatib, focused on promoting the idea that the thought of contemporary scholars was corrupted, and lay Muslims should be responsible for interpreting the Qur'an. This would be balanced with a willingness to learn useful ideas from any society, even if a society was not Islamic—a principle similar to the “scientific” understanding of the world promoted by the uplift leaders, Garvey, and even Drew Ali. The YMMA was therefore at once an Islamic revival group, an Islamic modernist group, and a Pan-Islamic group. And, although it was organized on an ostensibly apolitical basis, because many of its leaders were involved in politics and because, generally, political

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<sup>955</sup> On the YMMA, see J. Heyworth-Dunne, *Religious and Political Trends in Modern Egypt* (Washington: J. Heyworth-Dunne, 1950), 11-14; Sayyid Muhammad Rizvi, “Muhibb Al-Din Al-Khatib: A Portrait of a Salafi-Arabist (1886-1969)” (MA thesis, Simon Fraser University, 1991), esp. 74-82; G. Kampffmeyer, “Egypt and Western Asia,” in *Whither Islam?: A Survey of Modern Movements in the Moslem World*, ed. H.A.R. Gibb (New York: AMS Press, [1932] 1973), 101-170.

<sup>956</sup> Al-Khattib was actually an important influence for Hasan al-Banna, who organized the Muslim Brotherhood in 1928; see Richard P. Mitchell, *The Society of Muslim Brothers* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), 5-8, 322-325.

issues were of high concern for Muslims of the Middle East at the time, the YMMA occasionally supported political movements across the Muslim world as well as pro-Muslim policies in Muslim-majority countries.

The YMMA had several strategies for generating enthusiasm for its movement. In addition to cultivating the ideas listed above, it fostered a militant mentality, it discouraged Muslims from attending schools run by non-Muslims, it stressed the use of Arabic as a unifying identity marker as opposed to race or nationality, and it was very active in spreading its doctrines both throughout Egypt and in other countries. In fact, the YMMA had set up a branch in New York City by 1933, and may have even had proponents there during the time Ezaldeen was living in Brooklyn.<sup>957</sup> Whatever the circumstances for his first encounter with the group, however, Ezaldeen picked up from the YMMA many skills and a very new kind of Islamic identity. He, then, following the YMMA's principle of allowing for the use of beneficial local ideas, created a doctrine about African-American genealogy that was reminiscent of the MST's. Instead of African Americans being "Moors" and descendants of the Moabites and Canaanites, Ezaldeen emphasized the association of African-descended people with Ham, claiming that African Americans were descendants of him and, later in the genealogical line, Hagar, whom Muslims recognize as Muhammad's ancestor.<sup>958</sup> By combining this MST-connected genealogy with Sunni Islam, Ezaldeen had found a way to give the MST—which had

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<sup>957</sup> "Islam in America," *Muslim Revival* 2, no. 2 (1933): 170; "Islam in America," *Moslem World* 24 (1934): 190. It is also possible that Ezaldeen had learned about the YMMA through contact with converts who had been associated with Satti Majid, who had many Egyptian ties.

<sup>958</sup> AAUAA FBI file, Report, 10/9/1943, Philadelphia file 100-19940, 11, 19. Ham, though, was indeed included in the MST genealogy, see its *Holy Koran*, chapter XLVII.

incredible appeal for African Americans—more legitimacy in the eyes of international Muslims, thereby increasing African-American Islam’s own legitimacy and authority, at least in the eyes of his followers.<sup>959</sup>

On December 4, 1936, Muhammad Ezaldeen—the former successful MST leader who was now well-versed in Sunni teachings and, possibly, well-connected to MST members and African-American Sunnis throughout the country—returned to the U.S., arriving in New York City and using the title “professor.”<sup>960</sup> There, he, along with another Egyptian immigrant, began teaching the Arabic language and Islamic doctrines for an MST break-off group called the Moorish National Islamic Center.<sup>961</sup> It is likely that sometime during the late 1930s Ezaldeen encountered a man named David A. Donald, Satti Majid’s former representative in Harlem. Ezaldeen became Donald’s mentor in Islam, and, probably largely due to Ezaldeen’s influence, by 1939 Donald adopted an Islamic name (Daoud Faisal), quit his career as a musician, and opened an Islamic mosque and mission.<sup>962</sup> In 1937, Ezaldeen would also serve as a teacher in a

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<sup>959</sup> The FBI even remarked on how close Ezaldeen’s group was organizationally and ideologically to the MST; see Hill, *RACON*, 547. Notably, Ezaldeen’s followers continued the MST practice of wearing red fezzes; see Jeff Diamant, “Elizabeth Loses Imam of Historic Courage,” *Star-Ledger* (Newark), July 6, 2007, 17.

<sup>960</sup> AAUAA FBI file, Report, 3/22/1944, Newark file 100-18924, 35-36; Ancestry.com. New York Passenger Lists, 1820-1957 [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010., , accessed September 22, 2011.

<sup>961</sup> MST FBI file, Report, 8/18/1943, New York, 100-33742, *passim*; AAUAA FBI file, Report, 4/19/1943, New York file 100-45717, 2; AAUAA FBI file, letter, E.E. Conroy, SAC, to Director, FBI, 7/30/1943, 2.

<sup>962</sup> Hesham Jaaber, in his *The Final Chapter..... I Buried Malcolm (Haj Malik El-Shabazz)* (Jersey City: Hesham Jaaber, 1992), claims that Ezaldeen was Sheikh Daoud Faisal’s “mentor” (see page 81). While Jaaber does not give a date for Faisal and Ezaldeen’s first contact, they definitely had known each other by 1943 (the year of the first UISA meeting, with which Faisal was associated), and if they did come into contact in the late 1930s, this would explain why it was only after Ezaldeen returned from the Middle East, when he was starting numerous groups, that Faisal decided to establish his own mosque. Also Faisal’s New York and Satti Majid connections, as well as his claims that his father was Moroccan (a claim that was

short-lived New York City group at 108 West 118<sup>th</sup> Street called the Islamic Unity Society, led by one Sheik H. Harfes.<sup>963</sup> With his relatively significant amount of Islamic knowledge and leadership experience in African-American Islamic groups, Ezaldeen quickly became seen as the real leader of this small organization and, a few months later, on September 3, 1938, he incorporated it under a new name: the Addeynu Allahe-Universal Arabic Association (AAUAA).<sup>964</sup> Though, as will be shown, this was not the first group to legally incorporate with the AAUAA name, because the group's founding predates the first official AAUAA, the Islamic Unity Society was essentially the first branch of Ezaldeen's new, YMMA-influenced Sunni movement that was beginning to reterritorialize African-American Islam in the AAIR.

#### The Ohio-Pennsylvania Region

##### **The AAUAA Spreads**

By 1938, Ezaldeen was not living in New York City—he only went there to teach; both his residence and, arguably, his greatest direct impact were in other places. In around 1937, perhaps due to the deportation of the head of the Moslems of America, Ala E. Mohammed, Nasir Ahmad was open to aligning with others who might offer his community better connections to the Islamic world and greater legitimacy. The timing, then, was perfect for Ezaldeen, who would move to Philadelphia some time that year or in early 1938, to become a key influence on Ahmad, one of the most important African-

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common in the MST) are other pieces of circumstantial evidence that further support an early tie between Faisal and Ezaldeen.

<sup>963</sup> AAUAA FBI file, Report, 3/22/1944, Newark file 100-18924, 36; AAUAA FBI file, Report, 4/19/1943, New York file 100-45717, 2; AAUAA FBI file, letter, E.E. Conroy, SAC, to Director, FBI, 7/30/1943, 2.

<sup>964</sup> AAUAA FBI file, Report, 3/22/1944, Newark file 100-18924, 36.

American Muslim leaders in the region. The two men, who shared a MST background and may have been put in touch with each other through their Egyptian connections, soon lived together in a house in Philadelphia where Ezaldeen conducted religious meetings.<sup>965</sup> The pair incorporated a small AAUAA group across the Delaware River in Camden in August of 1938.<sup>966</sup> Then, a few weeks later, Nasir Ahmad appeared at the Moslems of America meeting in Buffalo where he suggested that the group join up with the AAUAA; a vote was held and the majority agreed.<sup>967</sup> The property of the Moslems was then turned over to the AAUAA, which would become a point of contention for the Moslems' new leader, El-Farook, who subsequently sued the AAUAA.<sup>968</sup>

The AAUAA continued to spread through the African-American Muslim network that included former MST members and those aligned with Nasir Ahmad, soon establishing followings in Rochester (1939), Jacksonville, Florida (1939), Newark (1940), Philadelphia (1942), Youngstown (1942, incorporated 1944), Wilmington, Delaware (unknown),<sup>969</sup> Cleveland (Unknown), and Detroit (1944).<sup>970</sup> In addition to these groups in urban centers, the AAUAA also established self-sufficient rural

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<sup>965</sup> AAUAA FBI file, Report, 2/[8?]/1044, Philadelphia file 100-19940, 2.

<sup>966</sup> Camden Addeynu Allaha-Universal Arabic Association incorporation form, on file with the state of New Jersey; AAUAA FBI file, Report, 3/22/1944, Newark file 100-18924, 36; AAUAA FBI file, Report, 2/[8?]/1044, Philadelphia file 100-19940, 2-5.

<sup>967</sup> AAUAA FBI file, Report, 2/[8?]/1044, Philadelphia file 100-19940, 2, 4-5; "Al-Sheikh Dawoud Ghani."

<sup>968</sup> "Moslems in Court Over Dispute on Arabic Properties," *Utica Observer Dispatch*, September 12, 1938, 8.

<sup>969</sup> AAUAA FBI file, Report, 10/9/1943, Philadelphia file 100-19940, 6.

<sup>970</sup> See the following: AAUAA FBI file, 3/22/1944, Newark file 100-18924; AAUAA FBI file, 10/9/1943, Philadelphia file 100-19940; AAUAA FBI file, Cleveland 7/14/1943, 100-10466; Youngstown Addeynu Allaha-Universal Arabic Association incorporation form.

communities, following the MST tradition that both Kirkman Bey and Turner-El's groups had already begun implementing. One was just outside Pitman, New Jersey, and in 1941 the AAUAA purchased 329 acres of land in West Valley, New York (fifty miles from Buffalo) for what would become the longest-lasting African-American Muslim village in the U.S.<sup>971</sup>

### **Other Sunnis in the Region**

Though he was clearly popular, not everyone wanted to follow Ezaldeen, particularly the Muslims affiliated with Omar El-Farook. In early 1941, a young Palestinian immigrant in Pittsburgh who was interested in propagating Sunni Islam, Mohamad S. Jalajel, was able to bring together a number of the local converts to form the First Moslem (or Islam) Mosque.<sup>972</sup> Because many members of this Mosque had been leaders in the Moslems of America, they retained that name until 1945 when the group became officially incorporated as the First Moslem Mosque of Pittsburgh.<sup>973</sup> This mosque was the central meeting place for Sunnis in the Pittsburgh area; even members of both AMWSA factions joined the group for eids and other occasions.

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<sup>971</sup> AAUAA FBI file, Newark file 100-18924; Margaret I. Fess, "Mohammedan Village Byproduct of Depression," *Buffalo Courier*, June 2, 1946; Dannin, *Pilgrimage*, 117-40; AAUAA FBI file, 10/9/1943, Philadelphia file 100-19940, 25.

<sup>972</sup> Kaikobad, "Colored," 22. For most of the early 1940s, this group met at 10½ Townsend Street; see Hill, *RACON*, 234.

<sup>973</sup> Hakim, *History*, 11, 14. That the Moslems of America was the official name of the Pittsburgh African-American Sunni community prior to 1945 is suggested by two things 1) a 1943 letter from the Moslems of America in the AAUAA FBI file uses the same address as both (A) one of the leading members of the First Moslem Mosque and (B) the First Moslem Mosque itself on its 1945 incorporation form; and 2) Only the Moslems of America, and not a First Moslem Mosque, came to the UISA (a Sunni-oriented group which Nasir Ahmad—a man deeply connected to the First Moslem Mosque community—organized) in 1943. See AAUAA FBI file, Newark, No. 100-18924; AAUAA file, Philadelphia file 100-19940; Hakim, *History*, 14.

In Ohio, Sunni Islam began to spread in places that were originally sown by Ahmadis. One of the most active Sunni missionaries during this period was an Albanian Muslim living in Mansfield named Muharrem Nadji, whose efforts had been stimulated in 1933 by contact with both the Lahori Ahmadis and the Qadianis' Sufi Bengalee, who arrived in Mansfield that year.<sup>974</sup> Bengalee, interested in cultivating ties with immigrant Muslims who would help propagate his message, provided Nadji, a steel worker, with numerous English-language Islamic texts that he could use to spread the message of Islam; and the Lahoris' *Islamic Review* magazine was another source from which Nadji drew many of the articles he published. Only a few months after Bengalee had arrived, Nadji converted a local white woman, and over the next twenty-five years, Nadji continued his proselytization work, establishing (probably at his home) what he called the Islamic Center of America, and frequently taking out large advertisements in the local newspaper to print portions of various Islamic texts. It appears that in the texts he had printed, Nadji did not, for the most part, promote anything that contained distinctly Ahmadi views, such as discussions of Ghulam Ahmad, but instead worked with the Ahmadis to spread general Islamic concepts. Though Nadji's activities did not have a significant impact on African Americans, given his relative proximity to the black Ahmadi Ohio-Pennsylvania region, it is understandable that African-American Muslims

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<sup>974</sup> "Offers Doctrines of Islam as Cure for Economic Ills," *Mansfield News*, May 18, 1933, 10; Muharrem Nadji letter, *Islamic Review* 21, no. 8 (1933): 282. Interestingly, over the next twenty years, Nadji continued to show affiliation with both Ahmadi sects, promoting the work of both in the various Islam writings he produced over the years, such as long newspaper advertisements and books. Also see "Bucyrus Man Hurt Fatally," *Mansfield News Journal*, November 7, 1949, 20; "He Wants People to 'Know' Mohammed," *Mansfield News Journal*, June 8, 1954, 1, 11; "Notes of the Quarter," *Muslim World* 48, no. 1 (1958): 80; "Muharrem Nadji," *Islamic Review* 49 (January 1961): 37-38; advertisements using Islamic texts (and listing Nadji's Islamic Center of America for contact information) ran in the *Mansfield News-Journal* throughout the 1940s and 1950s.

did sometimes communicate with him. FBI files show that Muhammad Ezaldeen, Sheikh Nasir Ahmad, and the Moslems of America had all received and used Islamic literature from Nadji.<sup>975</sup>

In Cleveland, meanwhile, Wali Akram, the Ahmadi who had converted under Paul Nathaniel Johnson and who had been in the city since 1927, was taking charge. In 1935, before he would renounce his affiliations with the Ahmadi and start his own mosque at a new address, Akram created what he called the Moslem Ten Year Plan, a program—probably based on the UNIA’s Five Year Plan<sup>976</sup>—for helping African-American Muslims become both economically self-sufficient and less reliant on immigrant Muslims for knowledge of Islam.<sup>977</sup> For over two dozen years, the community that followed Akram, including a branch in Youngstown, used the name of his Plan for its organizations.<sup>978</sup> In around 1937, he separated his group from all Ahmadi, including Lahoris, making the Ten Year Plan community Sunni.<sup>979</sup>

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<sup>975</sup> AAUAA FBI file, Report, 3/22/1944, Newark file 100-18924, 39; AAUAA FBI file, Report, 2/[8?]/1044, Philadelphia file 100-19940, 9; Moslems of America FBI file, Report, 9/5/1944, Pittsburgh file 100-6685, 3.

<sup>976</sup> The UNIA announced its Five Year Plan in 1935, and the UNIA’s Cleveland branch—which was located in the same building as Akram’s mosque, 5311 Woodland Avenue—was noted for being one of the biggest supporters of the Plan. See “Five-Year Plan to Be Executed,” *Black Man* 1, no. 9 (1935): 5-8; “Functioning Divisions,” *Black Man* 1, no. 10 (1935): 12-13; “Contributions to Expenses to Start Five Year Plan Fund,” *Black Man* 1, no. 12 (1936): 14.

<sup>977</sup> Dannin, *Pilgrimage*, 108-09.

<sup>978</sup> However, because it was so small, the Youngstown branch combined with the local AAUAA in 1943. See AAUAA FBI file, Letter, Leland V. Boardman, SAC, Cleveland (100-10466), to Director, FBI, 7/14/1943, 1.

<sup>979</sup> Richard M. Peery, “Al-Hajj Abdul Akram Founded the First,” *Plain Dealer*, August 3, 1994, 9B; Patrice M. Jones, “Nation of Islam Mosques Came to Cleveland in ‘50s,” *Plain Dealer*, August 21, 1994, 10.

In 1942, an immigrant Muslim from Jerusalem, Ahmad Ead Muhamed, moved into Akram's home in Cleveland and established in nearby Akron an African-American-majority group known as the First Akron Mosque. While the Akron group had only a small following, it was significant for the fact it was connected, beginning in early 1943, to Akram's Cleveland group through a Sunni organization established as the Sharia Islamia—Mashru A-Al-Islami.<sup>980</sup> While a member of this group, apparently as a sign of commitment, Akram temporarily stopped referring to his Cleveland community as the Ten Year Plan. But this was short-lived change. By the summer of that same year, the Ten Year Plan had been revived and was preparing to attend the first national African-American Sunni conference.

This reterritorializing conference would signal the beginning of the third phase of Sunni Islam in the AAIR. But to fully understand its significance, it will be necessary to look at the development of Sunni Islam in the region where Ezaldeen first made an impact after his return from Egypt.

New York City

### **Sheikh Daoud Ahmed Faisal and the Islamic Mission of America<sup>981</sup>**

David A. Donald immigrated to New York from the Grenada in 1913 at the age of twenty-one.<sup>982</sup> Skilled as both a tailor and as a violinist, within a decade, Donald had

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<sup>980</sup> AAUAA FBI file, Report, 3/7/1943, Cleveland file 100-10126, *passim*.

<sup>981</sup> This section builds off the article Bowen, "Satti Majid."

<sup>982</sup> Ship manifest for the S.S. Maracas, June 6, 1913, available at Ancestry.com. Later in life he would claim to have been born in Morocco, but this record clearly indicates otherwise.

developed a relatively successful career in the music industry.<sup>983</sup> In addition to playing the violin professionally, Donald worked as a music and elocution teacher, musician manager, and, for a time, a musicians' union leader.<sup>984</sup> At the age of thirty-two, he married Clara Forbes, a black Bermudan, who joined her husband teaching students at his Donald Concert Bureau.<sup>985</sup> In the following year Donald became a naturalized U.S. citizen.<sup>986</sup> Although Donald did not publicly portray himself as a Muslim during this period, he would later claim that his father was a Muslim from a prominent Moroccan family.<sup>987</sup>

It is likely that Donald's claimed Islamic background and his ability to teach and lead people are what influenced Satti Majid to choose him as his Harlem representative. By 1928, Donald, who did not use an Islamic name at this time, was working at 128<sup>th</sup> and Lenox Avenue with local Muslim converts and the Muslim seamen whom Majid had

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<sup>983</sup> *Ibid.* These facts are confirmed by him in a 1965 interview cited below.

<sup>984</sup> "Hughes and Costas in Recital," *New York Age*, October 29, 1921, 5; "Music Notes: A New Journal," *New York Age*, November 5, 1921, 5; "Munkacsy's Violin Recital," *New York Age*, December 17, 1921, 5; "Manhattan and the Bronx," *New York Age*, June 7, 1924, 8. Donald also edited and managed the union's weekly magazine.

<sup>985</sup> Thelma E. Berlack, "Chatter and Chimes," *Pittsburgh Courier*, June 21, 1924, 13; "Manhattan and the Bronx"; 1930 Census, Brooklyn, New York, available at Ancestry.com. Also see Leslie Hanscom, "Naturalized American Converts Boroites to Mohammedanism," *Brooklyn Eagle*, June 4, 1950, 34.

<sup>986</sup> Ship manifest of S.S. Queen of Bermuda, November 19, 1937 and flight manifest for Pan-American Airways, December 30, 1948; both documents are available on Ancestry.com.

<sup>987</sup> Lawrence Farrant, "The Days of Ramadan," *New York World-Telegram*, January 5, 1965, B1. Although he claims in this article that he and (presumably) his father were born in Morocco, this is contradicted by the information he gave in his 1913 ship manifest report and the 1930 census; see the above notes. The ship manifest, in fact, indicates that his father's name was (what appears to be) Adrian—a notably non-Islamic name. Sulayman Nyang tells us that Faisal's father was Moroccan while his mother was Grenedian; see his "The U.S. and Islam: The Stuff that Dreams are Made of," 25. The claim of Moroccan heritage was, as we have seen, very popular among MST members, so it is very possible that Faisal himself had been in the MST or had at least been influenced by MST doctrines (possibly via Ezaldeen).

been helping.<sup>988</sup> During this period, Donald did not make Islamic work his vocation and rarely used references to Islam in his professional life. But this would start slowly changing in the 1930s, when he began taking a greater professional interest in African and Islamic themes, even writing and producing a play in 1933 about the life of Almamy Samory Touré.<sup>989</sup>

In the late 1930s, probably largely due to the influence of Ezaldeen, Donald, as he later recalled, “became fully aware for the first time of the world’s need for prayer.”<sup>990</sup> He and his wife dissolved their concert bureau, took Muslim names (Daoud Ahmed and Khadija Faisal), and committed themselves to their religion. In 1939, they converted their apartment at 143 State Street in Brooklyn into a mosque and mission for indigent Muslims, naming it the Islamic Mission of America (IMA), and it quickly became one of

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<sup>988</sup> Farrant; Rogaia Mustafa Abusharaf, “Structural Adaptations in an Immigrant Muslim Congregation in New York,” in *Gatherings in Diaspora*, eds. R. Stephen Warner and Judith G. Wittner (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), 243-44; “Eyes to the East: Muslims Follow Koran in Boro,” *New York Amsterdam News*, November 29, 1958, 21; “Negroes Most Popular Topic Overseas, Says Muslim Head,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, September 9, 1961, 5. In a number of Donald’s newspaper appearances in the 1920s and 1930s, he is participating in activities taking place close to this intersection, and his Concert Bureau in the early 1930s was located there, at 108 W. 128th St. McCould claims, however, that his religious “efforts” started in 1924, that he claimed that “he received a letter of permission from [the country of] Jordan to ‘legitimately’ spread Islam in 1925,” and in 1929 the IMA was opened (McCloud, 22, 10). Muhammed al-Ahari says that Faisal’s 1928 center was called the Islamic Propagation Center of America, see Shaykh Daoud A. Faisal, *Al-Islam: The True Faith, the Religion of Humanity. The works of Hajj Shaykh Daoud Ahmed Faisal*, ed. Muhammed al-Ahari (Chicago: Magribine Press, 2006), 7.

<sup>989</sup> “‘Kumba’ to Newark,” *New York Amsterdam News*, September 5, 1936, 8; “African Opera Opens Monday,” *New York Amsterdam News*, August 15, 1936, 8; *Catalogue of Copyright Entries*, volume 6, number 6 (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1933), 165. “African Drama is Planned for B’way,” *New York Age*, December 2, 1933, 6. Africans—including some African Muslims—were among the actors involved in these productions. It is interesting to note that Donald would later claim his family had fought with Touré against the French; see Al-Ahari, 7.

<sup>990</sup> Hanscom; Margaret Mara, “‘Muslim’ Prays Five Times a Day,” *Brooklyn Eagle*, May 7, 1952, 19. It is unknown what led to this awareness.

the most popular mosques in New York City.<sup>991</sup> Though influenced by Ezaldeen, the Faisals' message, which Daoud spread in his several books and pamphlets, was closer to Majid's, as it was Pan-Islamic, anti-racist, and concerned with justice for African Americans, while lacking any discussion of African Americans' supposed Hamitic origins.<sup>992</sup> Also reflecting Majid's influence, was the fact that IMA's members were very diverse ethnically, serving both white and black converts as well as immigrants from all across the Muslim world.<sup>993</sup> Daoud's history with Majid meant that many of the old immigrants whom Majid had once helped now came to the IMA where they kept Majid's memory alive for the next fifty years.<sup>994</sup> Sudanese immigrants, in particular, embraced

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<sup>991</sup> Hanscom; Ari L. Goldman, "Sayedah Khadijah Faisal is Dead," *New York Times*, September 10, 1992, D21; Marc Ferris, "'To Achieve the Pleasure of Allah': Immigrant Muslim Communities in New York City 1893–1991" in *Muslim Communities in North America*, eds. Yvonne Y. Haddad and Jane I. Smith (Albany: State University of New York, 1994), 212-13; "1<sup>st</sup> Islamic Mission in City's History is Opened Here," *Brooklyn Eagle*, October 4, 1944, 20; "Moslems Chant Prayers Near Borough Hall," *Brooklyn Eagle*, September 4, 1944, 7; "Boro's Mohammedans Greet Their New Year," *Brooklyn Eagle*, November 27, 1944, 4; "Islam in New York," *Anderson Daily Bulletin* (Indiana), April 23, 1959, [19?]. In 1946, in fact, the wrestler Reginald "Siki" Barry (who took the Islamic name Kemal Abd-ur-Rahman) made the Mission his home; see "Colorful Sepia Wrestler Looms on Local Front," *California Eagle*, June 24, 1946, 14. There may be some question as to whether the IMA was originally in Brooklyn: a New York newspaper noted in 1942 that black Muslims were meeting in Faisal's home in Harlem—though this may be a mistake on the part of the newspaper; see "Moslems: New York City's 5000 Pray for Democracy," *P.M.'s Weekly*, January 18, 1942, 49.

<sup>992</sup> Daoud's writings include *Al-Islam, the Religion of Humanity* (Brooklyn: Islamic Mission of America, 1950), *Islam: The True Faith, the Religion of Humanity* (Brooklyn: Islamic Mission of America, 1965), and *Islam for Peace and Survival* ([Brooklyn]: Islamic Mission of America, n.d.) (a copy of which is in the Cleveland Sellers Papers, Avery Research Center for African American History and Culture, College of Charleston).

<sup>993</sup> See, for example, "Moslems Chant."

<sup>994</sup> Abusharaf, "Structural," 244. On Yemeni seamen at the IMA, see R.M. Mukhtar Curtis, "Urban Muslims: The Formation of the Dar ul-Islam Movement" in *Muslim Communities in North America*, eds. Yvonne Y. Haddad and Jane I. Smith (Albany: State University of New York, 1994), 54.

both the IMA and Daoud, who, it is said, developed a special fondness for them due to the influence of Majid.<sup>995</sup>

Sheikh Daoud Faisal became one of the most active and influential Muslim leaders in the U.S. during the 1940s through 1960s. Besides directing the IMA and publishing his writings, some of his most notable achievements included being a member of the Federation of Islamic Associations, the first successful national Islamic umbrella organization in the U.S.; participating in an early New York City inter-mosque organization; serving as Morocco's representative at the United Nations; participating in an early attempt to form a Pan-Islamic African-American organization known as the Uniting Islamic Society of America (discussed below); and teaching about Islam throughout the country, especially at mosques that were part of the growing African-American Sunni network.<sup>996</sup>

### **The Moorish Science Temple Church and the Moorish National Islamic Center**

The FBI files on MST indicate that several New York City MST temples had affiliations with international Muslims.<sup>997</sup> On one occasion, the FBI interviewed a foreign Muslim sailor who "act[ed] as a teacher" for an unidentified Moorish temple. Another immigrant had first come in contact with the MST by as early as 1935 when he attended Frederick Turner-El's group, but he later joined an organization, which had possibly been established by Ezaldeen, known as the Moorish Science Temple Church (aka the Moorish

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<sup>995</sup> Abusharaf, "Structural," 243.

<sup>996</sup> See Patrick D. Bowen, "The Search for 'Islam': African-American Islamic Groups in NYC, 1904-1954," *Muslim World* 102 (2012): 267-268; "Negroes Most Popular Topic" and "Sheikh Stops in Hayward to Lecture," *Daily Review* (Haywood, CA), February 8, 1956, 29.

<sup>997</sup> See Bowen, "Search for 'Islam'," 270-277.

National Institute, Inc., and Mosque number 34) on Pitkin Avenue (and later on Hancock Street, both in Brooklyn). Interestingly, this immigrant Muslim claimed that the group, though it was recognized by Kirkman Bey's MSTA Inc., "follow[ed] the teaching of Mohammed." At its peak, in 1941, seventy-five to eighty families had joined, but by 1944 the numbers had precipitously dropped to around only a dozen total members.<sup>998</sup>

The New York MST organization that seems to have been most impacted by international Islam during the 1930s and 1940s was MST temple 41, located at 1 East 125<sup>th</sup> Street and led by Grand Sheik Walter Price Bey.<sup>999</sup> Price Bey, who was an inspector for a black-owned insurance company, and his wife Rezkah, a chiropractor, were somewhat well-known figures in New York's black community, occasionally appearing in the *New York Amsterdam News's* society page.<sup>1000</sup> Though their temple was started as a Kirkman Bey organization, beginning at least as early as 1935, a number of immigrant Muslims joined and sometimes taught the group, which had about fifty to sixty regularly-attending members. One Egyptian immigrant laborer told the FBI that when he was a member, from 1935 to 1941, he "taught a class of approximately 50 children the Arabic language and Moslem religion." During this period, the group was being called, first, the

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<sup>998</sup> Bowen, "Search for 'Islam'," 276-277.

<sup>999</sup> Bowen, "Search for 'Islam'," 275-276.

<sup>1000</sup> "Prexy Sees Dawn of New Day for Negro Insurance Company," *New York Age*, May 2, 1936, 2; "Rita Francis Turns Nineteen with Gaiety," *New York Amsterdam News*, December 5, 1936, 10; "Progress is Shown by Insurance Co," *New Journal and Guide*, May 14, 1938, 9; T.E.B., "Chatter and Chimes," *New York Amsterdam News*, December 16, 1939, 16; "Gets Degree," *New York Amsterdam Star-News*, August 30, 1941, 4; "Socially Speaking," *New York Amsterdam News*, April 5, 1947, 9; ""Friends Crowd Chantilly for Adelle D'Jebra," *New York Amsterdam News*, April 5, 1952, 10; Gerri Major, "Gerri-Go-Round," *New York Amsterdam News*, December 20, 1952, 11.

Moorish Islamic Academy, then the Moorish Islamic Center, and, in its last incarnation, the Moorish National Islamic Center (MNIC).

By 1940, the MNIC had several ties to international Islam. First of all, it appears that sometime during that year Walter Price Bey adopted the Arabic name of Abdul Wadood Bey,<sup>1001</sup> probably under the influence of Muhammad Ezaldeen.<sup>1002</sup> In September 1940, the group hosted an address by Hans Stefan Santesson, a white book editor who was a strong supporter of India's independence and worked for the welfare of Indian immigrants in New York.<sup>1003</sup> In November of that same year, the MNIC held an Eid ul-Fitr celebration for both its members, including its Arabic-speaking imam, Si Abdesalaam Sied, and its Muslim visitors, including some from South Asia and perhaps Sheik Daoud Faisal.<sup>1004</sup> 1940 also seems to be the year that Wadood Bey became

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<sup>1001</sup> In a 2012 article (Bowen, "Search for 'Islam'," 275), the relationship between Walter and Abdul Wadood Bey was not fully understood. However, the existing evidence tells us that 1) Wadood Bey was a convert (and the "Bey" in his name suggests he was from the MST); 2) Wadood Bey's wife was known as Rezkah; 3) Walter also had a wife known as Rezkah; 4) beginning in 1940 Walter no longer appears in newspaper or FBI accounts connected to Islam in New York, while Rezkah continued to and Wadood Bey suddenly appears, 5) in December 1939, Walter hosted a dinner with Si Abdesalaam Sied, who would later be associated with Wadood Bey and the MNIC, as a guest at his home (see T.E.B., "Chatter and Chimes"), 6) a caption for a photograph of African-American Muslims in Harlem in 1942 identifies one of the men in the picture as "Abdul Wadood Price Bey" (the other identified man in the picture is Sheikh Daoud Faisal). The above evidence very much supports the theory that Walter was the same person as Wadood Bey, and perhaps changed his name due to the influence of Ezaldeen, with whom Wadood Bey had a verified connection.

<sup>1002</sup> AAUAA FBI file, letter, E.E. Conroy, SAC, to Director, FBI, 7/30/1943.

<sup>1003</sup> "Events Today," *New York Times* September 11, 1940, 33. On Santesson, see T Byro, October 14, 2008 (4:12 p.m.), "Hans Stefan Santesson, Etc.," *Dispatch from New York*, October 8, 2012, <http://dispatchfromnewyork.blogspot.com/2008/10/hand-stefan-santesson-etc.html>. Also see Senate Subcommittee on Immigration and Naturalization; Committee on the Judiciary, "To Permit All People from India Residing in the U.S. To Be Naturalized," HRG-1947-SJS-0023.

<sup>1004</sup> "Moslems of the Moorish Center break 30-Day Fast," *New York Age*, November [16?], 1940, 2. This article mentions that in attendance was one "Daud Fathel." It is noteworthy that in a 1942 newspaper article, Price Bey was reported to have recently attended an Eid celebration at Faisal's mosque; see "Moslems: New York City's 5000."

involved with an interfaith organization known as the World Fellowship of Faiths, which over the next few years would put him in touch with several other Muslims in New York.<sup>1005</sup>

In 1943, because of increases in rent, the MNIC meetings were being held in Wadood Bey's apartment, and membership had diminished to only "a very small following."<sup>1006</sup> By the next year, the MNIC was closed.<sup>1007</sup> However, all was not lost for these MST-influenced Sunni Muslims. As I will demonstrate below, at the time, Wadood Bey was developing his ties with African-American Sunnis in other parts of the country. And it appears that at least some of the former MNIC members, including Wadood Bey himself, joined up with an new immigrant Muslim community—a merger that resulted in the creation of a group known as the International Moslem Society. This union would be an important reterritorialization in the development of the third phase of African-American Sunni Islam in the AAIR.

### **The Academy of Islam**

There is one final important New York Islamic group that emerged in the second phase of Sunni Islam in the AAIR. This was the Academy of Islam (International) (AOI), founded by Atiya Begum Rahamin in the fall of 1939 at 105 West 112<sup>th</sup> Street.<sup>1008</sup> Atiya

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<sup>1005</sup> See "Religious Parliament Holds Session in Boro," *Brooklyn Eagle*, November 4, 1940, 4; "Events Today," *New York Times*, September 23, 1941, 27; "Many Faiths Join in a Prayer for Peace," *New York Times* January 2, 1942, 13; "Meetings and Lectures," *New York Times*, December 8, 1945, 12; "Interdenominational," *New York Times*, April 17, 1948, 16.

<sup>1006</sup> Bowen, "Search for 'Islam'," 275-276.

<sup>1007</sup> Makdisi, 969.

<sup>1008</sup> "Liner Savoia Sails, Only 224 On Board," *New York Times* October 25, 1939, 26; Nabi Bakhshu Khanu Baloch [Baloch], *World of Work: Predicament of a Scholar* (Jamshoro: Institute of Sindhology, University of Sindh, 2007), 92.

Begum was a female Indian Muslim reformer who had supported women's rights and the revival of the arts.<sup>1009</sup> In 1939, from April through October, she visited New York City with her husband, a painter named Dr. S. Rahamin.<sup>1010</sup> It seems that most of her time during this trip was spent promoting, at the World's Fair that was being held in the city, her Three Arts Circle, a cultural organization that she had established in India during the late 1920s to promote intellectual and artistic activities.<sup>1011</sup>

A year before she had arrived in the U.S. for the World's Fair, Atiya Begum had organized the first AOI group in England, with the purpose of encouraging "those English people who are interested in Islam to learn more about the religion."<sup>1012</sup> Because of her reputation, she was able to draw a number of prominent Muslim speakers to her group, and, as a result, England's AOI seems to have been a success. Now motivated to continue this type of work, in February of 1939 Atiya opened an AOI in Bombay.<sup>1013</sup> In her address at the group's inaugural ceremony, Atiya explained that the AOI would form educational and vocational institutions, that it would help Muslim women gain their rightful status in society, that it would promote literature that helped foster communal

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<sup>1009</sup> For more on Atiya Begum, see Bowen, "Search for 'Islam'," 278-279.

<sup>1010</sup> "Liner Savoia Sails, Only 224 On Board," *New York Times* October 25, 1939, 26.

<sup>1011</sup> "Liner Savoia"; Qurratulain Hyder, *River of Fire* (New York: New Directions Books, 1998), 228; Leela Gandhi, "Novelists of the 1930s and 1940s," in *A History of Indian Literature in English*, ed. A.K. Mehrotra (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 191; "The Fair Today" *New York Times* May 30, 1939, 12; "Arts of India are Presented," *New York Times* May 31, 1939, 17.

<sup>1012</sup> "London—Day by Day," *Times of India*, May 19, 1938, 8.

<sup>1013</sup> "Academy of Islam: New Body to Promote Harmony," *Times of India*, February 18, 1939, 15.

harmony, and that it would open branches in Cairo in New York.<sup>1014</sup> She saw that year's World's Fair as her chance to meet her goal in the latter city.

The New York group, which was reportedly supported by all the Muslim groups in the city, was opened on October 1.<sup>1015</sup> Its "aims and objects" were as follows:

- i. to preserve the heritage of Islam.
- ii. to establish, promote and cultivate literary and scientific relationship with the Islamic people. [...] In order to achieve the above-mentioned objects, the scheme of the Academy is to build a mosque where, along with the five-time prayer arrangement for lectures on letters and science will be made. There will be a museum to preserve Islamic Art; a library where books will be an employment bureau, reception centre, foreign department, etc.<sup>1016</sup>

Furthermore, the Academy "rallies on 2 principles: 'Quranic Teachings,' and 'Actions' for the fulfillment. It is working for that which it stands (International)."<sup>1017</sup>

Atiya left New York only three weeks after forming the AOI, so it is likely that the local Muslims who had supported it were left in charge. While there is very little information about the AOI during its first three years, it seems to have very quickly drawn in Muslims of a variety of ethnicities; by 1943 its president, Sheikh Omar Ali, was a man of mixed Arab, French, and Assyrian blood with Catholic roots,<sup>1018</sup> its vice president was an Indian named Mukhtar Ahmad, and its assistant treasurer was a Saudi

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<sup>1014</sup> "New Body to Promote."

<sup>1015</sup> "Academy of Islam in New York Plan to Build Mosque," *Times of India*, February 10, 1940, 15; "Liner Savoia Sails."

<sup>1016</sup> M.A.M., "Cultural Activities," *Islamic Culture* 23, no. 1-2 (1949): 111.

<sup>1017</sup> Baloch, 92.

<sup>1018</sup> AAUAA FBI file, Report, 10/9/43, Philadelphia, No. 100-19940, 15-16.

named Sheik Khalil al-Rawaf.<sup>1019</sup> The AOI also included several African-American converts (some of whom were AOI leaders),<sup>1020</sup> perhaps some who had already been exposed to the various forms of international Islam present in New York City. It was because of these multiple Islamic connections that, during the third phase of Sunni Islam in the AAIR, the AOI would play a heightened role in developing African-American Sunni knowledge and identity.

### **Phase III: 1943-1947, Mergers, Maturation, Early Reterritorializations**

#### The Uniting Islamic Society of America

By 1943, many things were changing in African-American Sunni communities. For instance, the New York City groups were becoming more ethnically diverse and Wali Akram apparently decided that his mosque should no longer be a member of the Sharia Islamia—Mashru A-Al-Islami. In the summer of that year, the Ten Year Plan had been revived and was preparing to attend what was called the First All Moslem and Arab Convention, to be held in Philadelphia that August “for the purpose of all uniting together as one great organization working in accord with teachings of Al Quran.”<sup>1021</sup> Besides Akram’s group, six others participated in the Convention: the AAUAA, the Moslems of America, the Academy of Islam, the Temple of Islam,<sup>1022</sup> the Islamic Association of

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<sup>1019</sup> AAUAA FBI file, Report, 2/[8?]/44, Philadelphia, No. 100-19940, 6.

<sup>1020</sup> The incorporation records for one of its auxiliary groups, the Young Women’s Moslem Association, shows that all the incorporators had non-Muslim names, which is strong evidence not only that these were converts, but that the AOI did indeed have several converts and that they were taking leadership positions in the group.

<sup>1021</sup> AAUAA FBI file, Letter, S.K. McKee, SAC, Newark (100-18924), to Director, FBI, 7/15/1943, 2.

<sup>1022</sup> It is not clear if this was the name of another known group, or an as yet undocumented organization. In the FBI report on the Convention, it is mentioned that an Islam Temple of New York City attended, but it is not known if these were the same organizations. See AAUAA FBI file, Philadelphia, No. 100-19940.

Muslims,<sup>1023</sup> and the Universal Muslim League of the Ahmadia Muslim Missionary.<sup>1024</sup>

Evidence indicates that Abdul Wadood Bey, the leader of the MNIC, was also in attendance<sup>1025</sup> along with a representative from Sheikh Daoud Faisal's IMA.<sup>1026</sup>

This Convention would be a major turning point in the history of Sunni Islam in the AAIR. Not only did it bring together African-American Sunnis from around the country with international Muslims of many ethnicities, the ties between the 2,000 or so Muslims that were said to be affiliated with the Convention were formalized when it was decided to create a national organization similar to Majid's UMS. The name of this organization was chosen to be the Uniting Islamic Society of America (UISA), and it was proposed (though apparently never implemented) that each of the member groups would keep their "'local' name" and simply add to it the phrase "of the UISA."<sup>1027</sup> In addition,

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Abdul Wadood Bey, who was a leader in the Sunni-leaning Moorish (National) Islamic Center in New York, is known to have attended the Convention, so it is possible that Islam Temple or Temple of Islam were names his group had come to use, see AAUAA FBI file, Philadelphia, No. 100-19940. It is also possible that this group was the Allah Temple of Islam, the original name of the Nation of Islam. However, we have no other direct evidence to verify this; the best that we have is the information, as pointed out in chapter 5, that the NOI-influenced DOO led by Emanuel Pharr had a relationship with an Ezaldeen-led Uniting Islamic Societies of America group in Detroit. Furthermore, even if this group was a true NOI faction, it is highly unlikely that this was the faction led by Elijah Muhammad, as his group, at the time, had neither a New York nor a Philadelphia branch; plus, most of its leaders were incarcerated in 1943.

<sup>1023</sup> Which group this was exactly is also unknown. Faisal's IMA's address appeared associated with this group on a flyer that was circulating at the convention, but it is unclear whether that flyer was for multiple groups. In a speech at the Convention, Nasir Ahmad said that the Convention was "a meeting of the Koranic faith and that the Koran was the Bible of the Islamic Association of Muslims"—which suggests that he himself was directly affiliated with this group, and it is notable that his Philadelphia group, typically called the Islamic Center of Philadelphia, sometimes went by the name of the Islamic Association of Philadelphia (see AAUAA FBI file, 10/9/1943, Philadelphia file 100-19940).

<sup>1024</sup> AAUAA FBI file, 10/9/1943, Philadelphia file 100-19940, 17. Again, the "Universal Muslim League" is a previously unknown organization. It may have been the same organization as the Moslem League of Philadelphia, established by Abdul Rahman.

<sup>1025</sup> AAUAA FBI file, Report, 2/[8?]/44, Philadelphia file 100-19940, 7.

<sup>1026</sup> AAUAA FBI file, Report, 10/9/43, Philadelphia file 100-19940, 21.

<sup>1027</sup> AAUAA FBI file, Report, 10/9/43, Philadelphia file 100-19940, 13-14.

plans were made to start a national Islamic journal, and the Academy of Islam, desiring to spread knowledge of Islam, distributed a pamphlet, written by its assistant treasurer, Sheikh Khalil al-Rawaf, that taught basics of the Arabic language.<sup>1028</sup> As a result of the unity created at the 1943 Convention, Ezaldeen established a UISA meeting place in Detroit<sup>1029</sup> and three more annual UISA conventions were held (1944-1946),<sup>1030</sup> during which time the ties between the various African-American Sunni communities were strengthened. Over the next few years, in fact, the UISA would be attended by African-American Muslims hailing from as far away as St. Louis and Miami.<sup>1031</sup> And, in addition, as will be shown shortly, during this period more books were published by UISA members for circulation in the UISA network, and cooperation between groups increased.

The UISA, however, was not to last. Although Nasir Ahmad had been responsible for coming up with the idea of the Convention and had been its chairman,<sup>1032</sup> Wali Akram was elected president and, for reasons unknown, he recommended that the UISA use a pledge of loyalty known as the bayat—a feature that had been used by the Ahmadis.<sup>1033</sup> This suggested to many that Akram was still loyal to the Ahmadis, and even

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<sup>1028</sup> AAUAA FBI file, Report, 2/[8?]/44, Philadelphia file 100-19940, 6; AAUAA FBI file, Report, 10/9/43, Philadelphia file 100-19940, 20.

<sup>1029</sup> DOO FBI file, Report, 8/1/1944, Detroit file, 100-5209, 2. This likely was the same organization that had previously identified as an AAUAA.

<sup>1030</sup> Dannin claims that the group did not hold a meeting in 1945, but this is inaccurate; see “Honoring Mohammed,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, March 3, 1945, 10.

<sup>1031</sup> MOA FBI file, Report, 9/5/1944, Pittsburgh file 100-6685, 6. It is notable that when the Pittsburgh group incorporated as the First Moslem Mosque in 1946, some of the incorporators were from St. Louis and Florida (though not Miami—Jacksonville, where an AAUAA was), indicating that these Muslims had become official members of the MOA; see Hakim, 16.

<sup>1032</sup> Dannin, *Pilgrimage*, 51; AAUAA FBI file, Report, 10/9/1943, Philadelphia file 100-19940, 2.

<sup>1033</sup> Dannin, *Pilgrimage*, 49.

though the UISA (as their guest list indicates) was including Ahmadis, Ezaldeen strongly rejected the proposal.<sup>1034</sup> Afterwards, tensions remained due to this and various other disagreements about the kind of Islam that the UISA would endorse. The AOI stopped attending after 1944, and others followed. Soon, dissension began to spread within the already-established Sunni communities, with several groups breaking off from the AAUAA and other local mosques.<sup>1035</sup> Still, despite the return of schisms and deterritorialization to the AAIR, the existence of the UISA was an important event that led to the maturation of Sunni Islam in the AAIR.

Developments in New York City: International Moslem Society, Sheikh Khalil al-Rawaf,  
and Maulana Subhani Rabbani

In 1944, just a year after the creation of the UISA, a group known as the International Moslem Society (IMS) was established in Harlem. Writing in the 1950s, a Muslim researcher explained that the IMS was founded by Wadood Bey, the same former Moorish American who had once led the MNIC and had attended the 1943 UISA Convention.<sup>1036</sup> However, while Wadood Bey had probably been involved in the 1944 creation of the IMS, the core of that group had actually been in existence since at least 1941. It is likely that in 1944 Wadood Bey, who had become well-connected to New York's immigrant Sunni community and had been inspired by the unification efforts of the UISA, decided to try to merge the dwindling MNIC with another organization primarily composed of black Muslims.

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<sup>1034</sup> Dannin, *Pilgrimage*, 49-50.

<sup>1035</sup> Dannin, *Pilgrimage*, 54.

<sup>1036</sup> Al-Maqdissi, 29.

The organization that Wadood Bey united with in 1944 was originally known as Nadil Islam, and had been set up by Somali immigrants at 303 West 125<sup>th</sup> Street on November 6, 1941.<sup>1037</sup> Given the history of African Muslim immigrants interacting with African Americans in New York City, it is not surprising that Wadood Bey and other former Moors had established a relationship with the group.<sup>1038</sup> After the 1944 merger, Ibrahim Guled, a Somali who was very active in supporting Somalia's independence in the late 1940s, was made the head of the group.<sup>1039</sup> Because New York City's Somali population would remain relatively small during the AAIR—probably totaling a few hundred at most<sup>1040</sup>—the IMS, which was led by Guled at least until 1957,<sup>1041</sup> developed ties with Muslims of several different ethnicities, including at least some white Muslims and those like Wadood Bey who were more deeply connected with the growing African-American Sunni community.

One of the most important connections the IMS developed was to the Academy of Islam, a connection that may have been established by Wadood Bey at the UISA convention. The AOI, because it had such a wide variety of Muslims as members, had

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<sup>1037</sup> H.A.B. Jones-Quartey, ed., *Africa, Today and Tomorrow*. April 1945. Dedicated to Felix Eboué [and] Wendell Willkie (New York: African Academy of Arts and Research, 1945), 49.

<sup>1038</sup> The picture of the IMS in Jones-Quartey shows individuals wearing the clothing of Moorish-American “adepts” (those who had become full members of the MST)—fezzes and white, Masonic-style robes. This picture can also be seen with the article “Meet to Honor Willkie and Air Africa's Pleas,” *New York Amsterdam News*, October 28, 1944, 7.

<sup>1039</sup> “Meet to Honor Willkie”; “Somalis Meet the Press,” *New York Amsterdam News*, April 30, 1949, 2; “Plan Rally to Appeal to UN on Somaliland,” *New York Amsterdam News*, April 30, 1949, 1, 2; Ebrahim Guled, “Asks Aid for Somaliland,” *Afro-American*, May 7, 1949, 4; “Somali League to Hold Rally,” *New York Age*, May 7, 1949, 6.

<sup>1040</sup> Nadim al-Maqqdissi, “The Muslims of America,” *The Islamic Review* 43, no. 6 (June 1955): 30.

<sup>1041</sup> “Three Faiths Join to Hail Jefferson,” *New York Times*, April 14, 1957, 86.

access to a relatively good deal of valuable Islamic resources. For instance, the beginning Arabic pamphlet they distributed at the UISA convention had been printed by one of the few Arabic presses in the U.S.<sup>1042</sup> The author of this pamphlet, Sheikh Khalil al-Rawaf, was in fact one of the most important resources of the AOI—and may have even been one of the most important Muslims in the U.S. during the 1940s. Al-Rawaf, who was wealthy son of a governor in southern Saudi Arabia,<sup>1043</sup> came to the U.S. in 1935, purportedly at the invitation of Eleanor Roosevelt, who had an interest in his expertise in Arabian horses. During his stay in the U.S., which lasted roughly fifteen years, the urbane al-Rawaf traveled across the country many times, meeting politicians and businessmen. At various points, he served as a technical director for a Universal Studios film, appeared on a radio program, rode Arabian horses in front of large audiences, served in the U.S. army, and made headlines in the late 1940s for his failed marriage to an American woman.

In addition to all of these activities with non-Muslims, al-Rawaf contributed in many ways to the development of Islam in the country. He, first of all, visited several

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<sup>1042</sup> AAUAA FBI file, Report, 10/9/43, Philadelphia, No. 100-19940, 21. The name of the printer is simply listed as “Samir (or Sumayr) in Brooklyn, New York, 1943.”

<sup>1043</sup> Al-Rawaf’s time in the U.S. has yet to be fully documented. The following are sources that I have collected on his stay: Philip Harsham, “Islam in Iowa,” *Aramco World Magazine* 27, no. 6 (1976): 30-36; Yahya Aossej Jr., “Fifty Years of Islam in Iowa,” *Muslim World League Journal* (August 1982): 50-54; “He’s a Sheik,” *Nevada State Journal*, April 6, 1937, 8; *Joplin News Herald* (MO), February 26, 1940, 10; Carol Bird, “Debunking Sheik Lore,” *Springfield Sunday Union and Republican* (Mass.), March 8, 1940, 3D [this story ran in several papers throughout the country]; “Arabian Sheik Visits Valley,” *Charleston Daily Mail* (WV), October 22, 1941, 15; “Sheik Visits City,” *Charleston Daily Mail*, October 23, 1941, 14; “Sheik’s a Private,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, June 20, 1943, 4; “Genuine Arabian Sheik Serves as Army Private at Camp Lee,” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, June 3, 1943, 6; Norton Webb, “Professor ‘UN the Wide Horizon’,” *Christian Science Monitor*, December 27, 1946; “Emir Saud to Fly on Truman Plane,” *New York Times*, February 17, 1947, 2; “Public Notices,” *New York Times*, September 22, 1947, 3; Constance Wellman, “I Married a Sheik,” *San Antonio Light*, August 15, 1948, 9 [this story ran in several papers]; “Wife Shuns Sheik’s Name,” *New York Times*, July 3, 1951, 31.

U.S. Muslim communities, including those in Detroit and California.<sup>1044</sup> In 1936-1937, he was the imam for the Cedar Rapids mosque, one of the oldest mosques still in use in the U.S.<sup>1045</sup> Then, in 1943-1944, besides serving as the AOI's assistant treasurer, he taught Arabic to its members as well as at Sheikh Daoud Faisal's IMA.<sup>1046</sup> Al-Rawaf was so respected among both African-American and immigrant Muslims that in 1944 he was appointed by Wali Akram to be the UISA's "liaison officer to maintain relations with foreign-born Muslims."<sup>1047</sup> In 1946 and 1947, al-Rawaf also was the imam of a Manhattan mosque and Islamic organization that, it seems, he funded: the Young Men's Muslim Association.<sup>1048</sup> It is not known if this group was affiliated with the Egyptian Young Men's Muslim Association that had trained Ezaldeen and was known to have already existed in New York, or even if Ezaldeen (who knew al-Rawaf from the UISA) did in fact associate with the group, but the similar name raises the possibility of the existence of an incipient national "Salafi" community in the U.S. during the AAIR. If that was indeed the case, it needs to be reemphasized that Salafi thought at the time was very different from how it is generally understood today; it was fairly open to diverse views about Islam, being grounded in the principal aim of rejecting the ideas of official religious authorities.

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<sup>1044</sup> "Emir Saud to Fly."

<sup>1045</sup> See Harsham and Aossej.

<sup>1046</sup> AAUAA FBI file, Report, 10/9/43, Philadelphia, No. 100-19940, 21; "Moslems Chant Prayers."

<sup>1047</sup> Dannin, *Pilgrimage*, 52. Dannin incorrectly identifies al-Rawaf as an "Indian immigrant who operated a trading concern in midtown Manhattan."

<sup>1048</sup> This is listed on the advertisements for his edition of the Qur'an; see below.

Perhaps al-Rawaf's biggest contribution to the Muslim community in the U.S., however, was his writing and publishing a number of important Islamic books. In addition to the beginning Arabic pamphlet that he wrote in 1943, in 1944 al-Rawaf authored *A Brief Resumé of the Principles of Al-Islam and Pillars of Faith*, a twenty-nine page booklet discussing the five pillars, some other basic Islamic beliefs, and how to perform prayers.<sup>1049</sup> This booklet almost certainly circulated in the UISA community and beyond. In 1947, al-Rawaf published an edition of Ahmad Ahmad Galwas's popular *The Religion of Islam*, another introductory text, but one that went into much greater depth than *A Brief Resumé*, being over 200 pages and was fairly influential for African-American Sunnis at the time.<sup>1050</sup> Al-Rawaf's most significant publishing contribution, however, was the 1946 publication of Yusuf Ali's English translation of the Qur'an.<sup>1051</sup> This was the first twentieth-century U.S. printing of a non-Ahmadi English translation of the Qur'an and it became relatively popular among American readers. In 1953, when the *New York Times* incorrectly claimed that the recent reprinting of Pickthall's explanatory translation of the Qur'an was "the only approximation of [Islamic] Scriptures in English

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<sup>1049</sup> Sheikh Khalil Al Rawaf, *A Brief Resumé of the Principles of Al-Islam and Pillars of Faith* (New York: Tobia Press, 1944).

<sup>1050</sup> Ahmad Ahmad Galwas, *The Religion of Islam* ([New York]: [Sheikh Khalil al-Rawaf], 1947). PhD candidate Donna Auston has informed me that during the late AAIR this book was the most important study-text for the African-American Muslims in Philadelphia, where it was referred to as "The Ghalwash." Email message to the author, March 28, 2013.

<sup>1051</sup> Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Quran* (New York: Hafner, 1946). On al-Rawaf's involvement, see *Stechert-Hafner Book News* 1, no. 2 (1946): 1 and the "The Holy Al-Quran in Arabic and English" and "The Holy Al-Quran" advertisements that ran in the *New York Times* between the fall of 1946 and the spring of 1947. In 1950, the Saudi government donated an additional 4,385 copies of this version of the Qur'an, along with numerous copies of Galwas' book, to the Mosque Foundation, which had been established for building a mosque in Washington, D.C., for both Muslims at the mosque and so that the books could be sold to help raise money for constructing the mosque. See Muhammad Abdul-Rauf, *History of the Islamic Center: From Dream to Reality* (Washington, D.C.: Islamic Center, 1978), 25.

approved anywhere by Muslims,”<sup>1052</sup> letters—probably written by converts—came in from as far away as Milwaukee, Wisconsin and Salem, Oregon to correct the mistake by pointing to al-Rawaf’s edition.<sup>1053</sup> It is interesting that the timing of the printing of these texts, 1943 to 1947, parallels almost perfectly with the life of the UISA—this suggests that al-Rawaf was motivated to publish these texts largely due to the creation of the UISA, which represented the growing American interest in Islam and the increasing unification of U.S. Muslim communities.

During this period, another important international Muslim who had connections with African Americans delved into more technical and potentially divisive topics than al-Rawaf had in his introductory texts. In November 1946, Maulana Azad Subhani Rabbani, a South Asian Muslim mystic, poet, philosopher, and Indian nationalist, arrived in the country as a guest of the IMS. At its mosque, he lectured on “Islamic Culture and Unity.”<sup>1054</sup> In attendance at the lecture was Mukhtar Ahmed, the AOI’s vice president who lived at one of the AOI’s mosque locations. A few days after the lecture, Mukhtar invited Subhani to stay with him at the AOI.

Subhani’s main reason for coming to the U.S. was “to collect further data for the development” of a philosophy he had invented called *Rabbaniyyat*.<sup>1055</sup> Over the next

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<sup>1052</sup> Anne Fremantle, “The Heritage of Millions who Have ‘Surrendered,’” *New York Times*, October 4, 1953, BR7, 16.

<sup>1053</sup> See two letters on the subject in “Letters to the Editor,” *New York Times*, November 22, 1953, BR49.

<sup>1054</sup> “Muslim Society to Hear Moulana Azad Subhani,” *New York Amsterdam News*, November 9, 1946, 25; Baloch, 92.

<sup>1055</sup> Abdullah Uthman Al-Sindi [Nabi Bakhshu Khanu Baloch], introduction to *The Teachings of Islam in Light of the Philosophy of Rabbaniyyat, for Beginners*, by Subhani Rabbani (New York: Academy of Islam International, Inc., 1947), 2.

three or four months, Subhani, who reportedly had never studied English before coming to the U.S., wrote in English the booklet *Teachings of Islam in Light of the Philosophy of Rabbaniyyat*, published by the AOI in 1947.<sup>1056</sup> This thirty-two page book argues that “*Rububiyat*” (translated as “preservation”) is God’s,<sup>1057</sup> and thus the universe’s, “central quality”; and preserving is God’s “principal work” after creation and manifestation.<sup>1058</sup> “Preservation” is the act of ensuring that the universe functions in a proper and just way; it entails creation, supervision, annihilation (the parts of the universe that no longer perform “properly and regularly” are to be annihilated), and regeneration.<sup>1059</sup> A universe without preservation will not be filled with God’s goodness and love. Humans, meanwhile, because they are the beings closest to Allah, have been given the unique duty of serving as Allah’s deputies over the universe, and, therefore, their job is to serve as Allah’s tools for maintaining preservation. For Subhani, this means that humans should create, supervise, annihilate, and regenerate human-made institutions when necessary, so that preservation is ensured. In order to perform this work in the best possible way, they must develop their closeness to Divine Will through religion and, especially, Sufism (as long as their Sufi practices do not deny the value of ordinary life).<sup>1060</sup> The greatest

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<sup>1056</sup> Subhani Rabbani, *The Teachings of Islam in Light of the Philosophy of Rabbaniyyat, for Beginners* (New York: Academy of Islam International, Inc., 1947).

<sup>1057</sup> Rabbani does not use the term “God,” but rather “ALLAH.” I use “God,” however, as it helps in the comparison of his ideas to others looked at in the study, which generally use “God,” though Drew Ali’s *Holy Koran* is a notable exception. It would be beneficial for future researchers to examine why many Muslims in the contemporary West use the term “Allah” as opposed to “God.”

<sup>1058</sup> *Ibid.*, 11, 15.

<sup>1059</sup> *Ibid.*, 17-18.

<sup>1060</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

achievement a human can have is becoming a “man,” which means developing the correct balance between focus on the material world (the “universe”) and focus on Allah.<sup>1061</sup> Interestingly, up to this point, Subhani’s philosophy shares many similarities with Gurdjieff’s ideas of becoming “normal,” seeking balance between one’s focus on the world and on one’s cosmic duties, and human responsibility in ensuring the perpetuation of the universe. However, Subhani’s philosophy differs from Gurdjieff’s because it contains a much more political bent. First of all, all humans, according to Subhani, have the ability to achieve this balance; the only thing that can slow them in this process is “calamities which beset the way.”<sup>1062</sup> Because of this, capable humans should ensure that human institutions are set up so that people have few “calamities”; and for Subhani, this means that people need to strive to achieve economic justice for all.<sup>1063</sup>

Having the dual promises of internal spiritual improvement through Islamic mysticism and community improvement through worldly action was very different than what the mainstream Gurdjieff program offered and, in fact, it struck a deep chord with those who had been attracted to the AAIR in its first two decades. The Ahmadis, MST, NOI, Fahamme Temples, and even perhaps the Harlem Gurdjieffians all urged the aligning of “mystical” Islam with community improvement. What most distinguished Subhani’s particular expression of this popular notion was that a reputable Sunni Islamic scholar was now teaching this message and leaving at least one text to study. Subhani

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<sup>1061</sup> *Ibid.*, 30-31.

<sup>1062</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>1063</sup> Syed Abu Ahmad Akif, *A Conversation Unfinished*, unpublished manuscript, Microsoft Word File, 2010.

Rabbani was therefore a relatively popular and significant figure in the AAIR. And in late February, he was even invited to speak on the topic of “Freedom of the Common Man” at Liberty Hall, the former UNIA headquarters, under the auspices of the a UNIA break-off group called the Universal African Nationalist Movement.<sup>1064</sup>

By 1949, Mukhtar was noting the significant influence that Subhani Rabbani and his reformist-Sufi message had had on the AOI.<sup>1065</sup> It appears to have been largely due to Subhani Rabbani’s impact that the AOI became dedicated to the Hanafi legal school (madhab) and gave special prominence to the *Se'adet'i'Ebediyye* (Endless Bliss), published by Huseyn Hilmi Isik, which was comprised of the letters of Hadrat Imam'i Rabbani. In fact, one of Huysen Hilmi Isik's students, Sheikh Beya-din-Gechi, served for a time as the AOI’s teacher.<sup>1066</sup> Starting in this third phase and continuing into the fourth, the Rabbani-inclined AOI, armed with the AAIR’s greatest amount of international Sunni Muslim instructions on religious issues, became one of the most influential sources of Islamic thought in New York City and in the African-American Sunni network.

#### **Phase IV: 1948-1954, Dispersement and Attempts to Reterritorialize**

During the rest of the AAIR, no other major national African-American Sunni organization was formed, though there were still efforts made to try to unify African-American Sunnis. In the 1950s, for example, some of the most influential African-American Sunni leaders and groups joined a national Islamic organization, but this was

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<sup>1064</sup> “African Group Airs ‘Freedom of the Common Man’,” *New York Amsterdam News*, February 22, 1947, 4.

<sup>1065</sup> M.A.M.

<sup>1066</sup> [http://www.cmac.fcwcenter.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=62&Itemid=71](http://www.cmac.fcwcenter.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=62&Itemid=71), Accessed on July 17, 2012.

primarily led by immigrant Muslims. The Federation of Islamic Associations in the United States and Canada (FIA), the first successful national immigrant-led Islamic umbrella organization, was established in 1952,<sup>1067</sup> largely by Muslims in the Midwest. Of the AAIR groups, the AOI, the AAUAA, Sheikh Daoud Faisal's IMA, and Nasir Ahmad's Philadelphia group (which was affiliated with the AAUAA, but also used other teachings) all were in attendance at the FIA's 1953 convention.<sup>1068</sup> In 1954, most returned to that year's convention during which the FIA created its constitution, which stated that group's aims should be to "learn, exercise and spread the ideas of Islam...[and that North American Muslims] should organize themselves into local associations to translate the above objectives with their communities."<sup>1069</sup> Apparently motivated by this message, when the New York City attendees returned home, they, along with the IMS and other New York Islamic organizations, created a Muslim Council to coordinate the public relations, social work, and missionary efforts of the city's various Islamic organizations. The Council also began a campaign to build an Islamic Center in Manhattan.<sup>1070</sup>

In addition to the fact that New York City had a relatively large concentration of Islamic groups, one of the reasons for the success of New York City Islamic unity was that its AAIR groups retained the ties that they had developed in the 1940s. In 1950, the

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<sup>1067</sup> It was originally called the International Muslim Society, not to be confused with the Somali-led IMS in New York.

<sup>1068</sup> "Moslem Unity Advanced," *New York Times*, July 5, 1953, 36; "Islam Crisis Discussed," *New York Times*, July 6, 1953, 3.

<sup>1069</sup> Al-Maqdissi, 31.

<sup>1070</sup> *Ibid.*

IMS, AOI, IMA, and al-Rawaf's YMMA, along with a few other groups, were members of New York's Inter-Muslim Societies Committee, an organization that brought to speak at the IMS that year the Indian scholar Muhammad Abdul Aleem Siddiqui, who encouraged U.S. Muslims "to unite and establish a powerful movement of enlightenment on Islam."<sup>1071</sup> Also, throughout the decade, Sheikh Daoud Faisal regularly appeared at the city's various African-American mosques, and it is even said that he studied at the AOI into the late 1950s.<sup>1072</sup>

In fact, Sheikh Daoud seems to have been one of the most active Sunni AAIR leaders during this last phase, and he almost certainly was the one to receive the most press. Faisal began the decade with the 1950 publication of "*Al-Islam, the Religion of Humanity*,"<sup>1073</sup> a nearly 200-page collection of a few dozen short essays on basic Islamic topics, such as early Islamic history, the Islamic view of Jesus, and information on the proper practice of prayer. Being one of the first significant-sized Islamic books to be written by a U.S. Muslim leader—and a black one at that—*Al-Islam* helped establish Sheik Daoud's reputation among immigrants and converts alike. His Islamic work, however, was not limited to writing. Faisal's mosque housed indigent Muslims, held daily prayers and festivals, proselytized to African Americans in prison,<sup>1074</sup> and ensured

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<sup>1071</sup> "His Eminence, Siddiqui To Be Honored Sunday," *New York Amsterdam News*, August 12, 1950, 16; "Moslem Leader Honored at Dinner, Urges Unity," *New York Amsterdam News*, August 19, 1950, 13. Interestingly, in 1951 it was reported that the AAUAA had been aware of, and probably influenced by Siddiqui; see Special Correspondent, "Muslim Activities in Philadelphia."

<sup>1072</sup> "Moslems Observe Day of Sacrifice," *New York Times* September 1, 1952, 28; Dannin, 62.

<sup>1073</sup> Daoud Ahmed Faisal, "*Al-Islam, the Religion of Humanity* (Brooklyn: Islamic Mission of America, 1950).

<sup>1074</sup> Curtis, "Urban Muslims," 54.

that Muslim seamen had insurance and burial plots. Well-known for being a strong advocate of the anti-racist Islamic message promoted by Satti Majid, Faisal was very popular among African-American Sunnis throughout the country and, especially after Ezaldeen died in 1954,<sup>1075</sup> he traveled to Sunni mosques throughout the U.S., keeping the African-American Sunni network alive.<sup>1076</sup> In addition, he spoke in front of the United Nations in 1949<sup>1077</sup> and served as part of the Moroccan UN delegation in 1953.<sup>1078</sup>

After the failure of the UISA, some African-American Sunnis were brought together by groups that used the name “Muslim Brotherhood” in their titles. The term “brotherhood” has special significance in Islam because the Qur’an and traditions of Muhammad stress the brotherhood of all Muslims.<sup>1079</sup> Over the centuries, then, a number of Islamic groups (including the earliest incarnation of the Nation of Islam)<sup>1080</sup> have used the term “brotherhood” to define their organizations, just as Hasan al-Banna would when he created the famous Egyptian group in 1928. Because it took a few years for Al-

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<sup>1075</sup> Dannin 286 n. 4. I have seen other dates for Ezaldeen’s death, but I have not been able to confirm any of these; so, I will rely on Dannin’s date until more reliable evidence is presented.

<sup>1076</sup> McCloud says that the IMA was an umbrella organization “for many smaller Muslim communities that dotted the northeastern coastline. It has been estimated that over sixty thousand conversions took place in Shaykh Daoud’s community in his lifetime,” and that he had personally claimed to have converted 30,000 (McCloud, 22). However, in more than one newspaper article in the *late* 1950s (when Daoud’s influence was probably nearing its peak), it was reported that only 300 people were members of the IMA (see Meyer Berger, “About New York,” *New York Times*, January 9, 1956, 19; “Eyes to the East”). Nevertheless, in addition to numerous oral histories that claim that Faisal traveled to and was a major influence on mosques—including African-American-majority Sunni mosques—throughout the country, there is some documentation from the time that confirms his wide influence; see “Negroes Most Popular Topic” and “Sheikh Stops in Hayward to Lecture.”

<sup>1077</sup> A copy of his speech is contained at the end of *Al-Islam*, 173 ff.

<sup>1078</sup> “Islam Crisis Discussed.”

<sup>1079</sup> See, for example, Qur’an 49:10.

<sup>1080</sup> See “‘Asiatic’ Trend of Negroes is Cited,” *Detroit Evening Times*, November 22, 1932, 3.

Banna's Muslim Brotherhood to organize its propaganda activities, it would not be until the late 1930s that his group would start to spread outside of Egypt, and it only did this on a significant scale after World War II.<sup>1081</sup> It is likely, therefore, that the 1930s New York City "Moslem Brotherhood" organization, which A) had several Indian members; B) allowed as a member the Qadiani Ahmadi leader, Sufi Bengalee; and C) opened its meetings to the non-Muslim public, including Hindus and Jews—actions that would not have been accepted in al-Banna's group—, was not affiliated with the Egyptian organization.<sup>1082</sup> By 1941, the New York organization changed its name to Moslem Brotherhood of the U.S.A., probably to distinguish itself from al-Banna's group, which had begun gaining international press in the late 1930s.<sup>1083</sup> On occasion, this Moslem Brotherhood of the U.S.A.—or at least some of its leading members—had contact with African-American Muslims. In its early years, this Moslem Brotherhood was known for being a missionary organization, and the vast majority of its converts—and members—were West Indian immigrants.<sup>1084</sup> Later, when the group was more known for its work supporting India's independence, it had contact with some of the more prominent African-American Muslims and their groups: Abdul Wadood Bey (the MNIC leader)

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<sup>1081</sup> Mitchell, 13; Brigitte Maréchal, *Muslim Brothers In Europe: Roots And Discourse* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2008), 22-26.

<sup>1082</sup> See "What is Going on this Week," *New York Times*, April 19, 1931, 52; "Moslem Brotherhood" [advertisement], *New York Times*, October 31, 1931, 20; "East Indians Plan Fete," *New York Times*, January 26, 1933, 3; "Islam in America," *Moslem World* 24 (1934): 190; "Synagogues Mark Maimonides Day," *New York Times*, April 1, 1935, 22.

<sup>1083</sup> "Watch Services New Year's Eve," *New York Post*, December 27, 1941, 14; "Events Today," *New York Times*, September 30, 1943, 19. The evidence that this Moslem Brotherhood of U.S.A. was the same as the 1930s group is that some of the speakers listed for the 1943 event were individuals known to be members of the 1930s group, such as Mohammed Kazim and Dr. George I. Kheirallah.

<sup>1084</sup> "Islam in America," *Muslim Revival* 2, no. 2 (1933): 170; V.V., "Le associazioni islamiche degli Stati Uniti d'America," *Oriente Moderno* 12, no. 11 (1932): 524.

spoke at a 1943 Eid celebration hosted by the Moslem Brotherhood of the U.S.A.; in 1949, Dr. George I. Kheirallah, onetime president of the group (as well as a leader for a U.S. branch of the Arab National League and the son of the U.S. Baha'i founder), spoke at a MDNMNA meeting as a representative of Saudi Arabia; and Ibrahim Choudry, a former secretary of the group, represented his organization at a gathering of New York City Muslims, which included the IMS, IMA, AOI, and YMMA, in 1950.<sup>1085</sup>

In 1949, meanwhile, Nasir Ahmad, along with his protégé Talib Dawud, led a small number of AAUAA members in creating an organization called the International Muslim Brotherhood (IMB) to teach Islam in Philadelphia, and, perhaps, Harlem.<sup>1086</sup> The fact that Nasir Ahmad maintained ties with the Ahmadis during the several years he ran the IMB suggests that at this time the group was also not affiliated with al-Banna's—or at least it was significantly influenced by the blended “Sunni” tradition in African-American Islam.<sup>1087</sup>

However, there were still examples of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood in the U.S. during the AAIR. In 1952, on a visit to the U.N., Turner-El told a reporter that he was organizing an American branch of the Muslim Brotherhood to help with the liberation of North Africa. His wing, he said, would work closely with, on the international side, chapters in Morocco and Egypt, and, on the U.S. side, the MUOF. He clarified that while “All of us are Americans before anything else, ... we believe the United States must help

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<sup>1085</sup> “Events Today”; “Moroccan Tulip”; “His Eminence, Siddiqui to be Honored Sunday,” *New York Amsterdam News*, August 12, 1950, 16, 18.

<sup>1086</sup> “History,” *Quba Institute*, <http://www.qubainstitute.com/about/history/>, accessed August 31, 2012; Dannin, 61; Essien-Udom, 313.

<sup>1087</sup> “Three Hundred Attend Meeting of Islamites,” *Cleveland Call and Post*, September 8, 1951, 3A.

North Africa become free.”<sup>1088</sup> There is, however, no evidence that Turner-El ever got this branch off the ground. Meanwhile, Talib Dawud, the IMB’s co-founder, also came into contact with al-Banna’s organization when he met an Egyptian émigré named Mahmoud Alwan who had been a member, and together by 1957 they started in Philadelphia the Islamic and African Institute.<sup>1089</sup> It appears that Dawud by this time had either become the head of the IMB and changed its name, or split off from it to form his own group, which was called the Muslim Brotherhood, U.S.A.<sup>1090</sup>

Today, Dawud is perhaps best known for his vigorous attacks against the Islamic legitimacy of the NOI in 1959-1960.<sup>1091</sup> In fact during the late 1950s, because of the NOI’s growing presence and popularity (see chapter 7), the desire to avoid being thought of as practicing the same religion as the NOI led to African-American and immigrant Sunnis making a somewhat concerted effort to publicly criticize the NOI for being non-Islamic. Both immigrants and black American Muslims sent out letters to the editor to various African-American newspapers denying the legitimacy of the NOI’s Islam and taking a strong stance against Elijah Muhammad’s message concerning the races.<sup>1092</sup> In Philadelphia, Muslims from various organizations, including Sheik Nasir Ahmad’s IMB,

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<sup>1088</sup> “American ‘Grand Sheik’ Pushes Moslem League,” *Corpus Christi Times*, August 11, 1952, 23.

<sup>1089</sup> Dannin, 61; GhaneaBassiri, 248-249.

<sup>1090</sup> Dannin, 61-62; GhaneaBassiri, 248-249. It appears that the IMB continued as a separate organization, and would later be called Quba, Inc.; see “Say Muhammad is Subversive; Teachings False,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, August 27, 1960, 3; “History,” *Quba Institute*.

<sup>1091</sup> Essien-Udom, 313-317.

<sup>1092</sup> For example, see the letters to the editor in the *Pittsburgh Courier* on August 18, 1956 and November 30, 1957.

a local MST, and Ahmadis, come together to publicly denounce Elijah.<sup>1093</sup> Sheikh Daoud Faisal even joined in, exchanging critical words with Elijah in the pages of the *New York Amsterdam News* in early 1958.<sup>1094</sup>

Another important example of the development of multi-ethnic Sunni ties during this period was the Detroit Sunni community centered around the African-American Muslim Ishmael Sammsan.<sup>1095</sup> Information about Sammsan's life before arriving in Detroit is still lacking. The available evidence shows that he was born in Arkansas in 1894; he was living in Detroit by the late 1930s where he, like many early MST leaders, claimed to be born a Muslim,<sup>1096</sup> and where he appears to have had some affiliation with the NOI or a related group, such as the Sunni-leaning DOO;<sup>1097</sup> and by 1948 he was in Egypt and had a well-developed understanding of Sunni Islam.<sup>1098</sup> Sammsan returned to the U.S. in September of that year, accompanying one of Iowa's prominent immigrant Muslim families, the Aosseys.<sup>1099</sup> He then went to Detroit where he published a pamphlet expressing his ideas and organized a group called the Universal Muslim Brotherhood of Al-Islam. The group's main members were African-American Sunnis, many of whom

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<sup>1093</sup> "Say Muhammad is Subversive."

<sup>1094</sup> Rev. Sheikh Daoud Ahmed Faisal, "Calls Both Wrong," *New York Amsterdam News*, January 18, 1958, 6; Elijah Muhammad, "Islamic World," *New York Amsterdam News*, February 1, 1958, 15.

<sup>1095</sup> On Sammsan, see Howell, 238 ff. I am also grateful to Akil Fahd who provided me with additional data about Sammsan.

<sup>1096</sup> See his Social Security Death Index and his entry in the 1940 census, both available on Ancestry.com, as well as Ismail Sammsan, "No Harm Intended," *Pittsburgh Courier*, May 22, 1937, 14.

<sup>1097</sup> Howell, 239; Sammsan, "No Harm."

<sup>1098</sup> Dennis Walker, email correspondence with the author, 10 September 2011.

<sup>1099</sup> Passenger list for the Khedive Ismail, 28 September 1948, available at Ancestry.com.

had been in the NOI, but by the 1950s a wide variety of immigrant Muslims began attending his mosque.<sup>1100</sup>

In general, throughout the U.S. there was a growing sense of unity between African-American and immigrant Sunni Muslims in the 1950s. Several AAIR groups were represented at the 1957 official opening and dedication of the Islamic Center in Washington, D.C., which had been established by Muslim diplomats.<sup>1101</sup> In Chicago, a number of Ahmadis joined the Sunni mosque started by Jamil Diab, the NOI's former Arabic teacher.<sup>1102</sup> In Massachusetts, Ella Collins, Malcolm X's half sister, became a Sunni at the immigrant-majority mosque in Quincy<sup>1103</sup> and, in 1958, Haj Abu Nuri, an African-American who had converted to Islam in 1940 while serving in the army, organized the Harvard Islamic Society with Syed Nadwi, a Pakistani, and Ahmed Osman, a Sudanese Muslim leader who in 1965 would speak at Malcolm X's funeral.<sup>1104</sup> Meanwhile, Dr. Mahmoud Youssef Shawarbi, an Egyptian scholar teaching in the U.S., U.N. advisor, member of the Muslim Council in New York, and eventual one-time leader

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<sup>1100</sup> In 1959, the FBI learned there were reportedly "hundreds of old [African-American] Muslims in Detroit but they do not recognize Elijah as the leader and, therefore, refuse to follow him"; these were probably mostly followers of Sammsan. See Fard FBI file, Report, SA [name withheld] to SAC, Detroit, 11/6/1959, 3.

<sup>1101</sup> These included the IMA, the Moslem League of Philadelphia, Pittsburgh's First Moslem Mosque, the IMS, and the Academy of Islam. Also in attendance were the YMMA and the New York-based Moslem Brotherhood. Muhammad Abdul-Rauf, *History of the Islamic Center: From Dream to Reality* (Washington, D.C.: The Center, 1978), 72.

<sup>1102</sup> Essien-Udom, 318-319.

<sup>1103</sup> Rodnell P. Collins with A. Peter Bailey, *Seventh Child: A Family Memoir of Malcolm X* (Secaucus, NJ: Carol Publishing Group, 1998), 153-154.

<sup>1104</sup> Mary Lahaj, "Building an Islamic Community in America: History of the Islamic Center of New England, 1931-1991," Microsoft Word file, 2009, 20; Dick Schaap, "'Malcolm was Black, Shiny Prince, Our Manhood'," *Boston Globe*, February 28, 1965, 20.

of the FIA, made several connections to African-American Muslims. Shawarbi was, in fact, one of the most prominent immigrant Muslims to criticize Elijah Muhammad (and Talib Dawud, for his Ahmadi connections),<sup>1105</sup> and he would play an important role in the conversions to Sunni Islam of both the Ahmadi jazz musician Ahmad Jamal and, later, Malcolm X.<sup>1106</sup>

Dr. Shawarbi also nurtured ties with Turner-El, who, as was noted in chapter 4, had by the late 1940s been increasing his connections with international Islam.<sup>1107</sup>

Concerning Dr. Shawarbi's recollection of his visit to the MDNMNA's Brooklyn headquarters sometime during the 1950s, Walker notes that:

In comparison to his rejection of non-Islamic heresies of Elijah [Muhammad] and his followers [the Nation of Islam], [Shawarbi] tended to take Turner on face as a teacher of true Islam, although he did sense that "correct Islamic guidance" was needed for "a small number of individuals [in his sect] who are not adherents of Islam or who know nothing about it or who know of it only some things that have been corrupted/deformed." [Shawarbi] provided this receptive Moorish sectlet with English-language Islamic propagation pamphlets from the Arab World... He urged the Arab-world Islamic institutions to send teachers of Islam and Arabic who would rotate around those Moorish associations affiliated to Turner to carry out the formation in each of a vanguard of young Moors equipped to later guide and teach all the ordinary members in each town. [Shawarbi] expected that the "large and organized force" of the Moors of the U.S. North East could be equipped and motivated to propagate Arab-style Sunni Islam among African-

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<sup>1105</sup> "Moslems Denounce US 'Muslims'," *New York Amsterdam News*, October 22, 1960, 1.

<sup>1106</sup> I am assuming his affiliation with the Muslim Council based on his involvement with the Mosque Foundation that emerged from this Council. See Ferris, 219; Malcolm X and Alex Haley, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1965), 324; Jay Walz, "Pianist-Investor is a Hit in Cairo," *New York Times* November 20, 1959, 14; "Federation of Islamic Associations in the U.S.A. and Canada," *Muslim World* 54 (1964): 218-219. In 1963, Shawarbi would speak to an audience at the IMS; see "Muslims List Lectures by Shawarbi," *New York Amsterdam News*, November 16, 1963, 9.

<sup>1107</sup> Even in 1944, Turner-El claimed that he received books for his Moorish National Home from the "High Counselor from Egypt" and that he had sent several of his students to study in Egypt; see the MSTA FBI file, transcript from Turner-El's Selective Service hearing, 4/22/1944.

Americans in general. He urged his government to invite Turner-El to visit the United Arab Republic “to renew his knowledge” (—replace his particularistic tenets) and to motivate him to step up his propagatory activities among African-Americans.<sup>1108</sup>

By the mid-1950s, Turner-El was promoting in his group the speaking of Arabic and “Education relative to the Koranic Islamic Law and Islamic sciences pertaining to ancient Adept philosophy will be taught at the Moroccan Educational School.”<sup>1109</sup> For our purposes, however, the most interesting connection between Turner-El and Sunni Islam appeared in 1951. That year, he traveled to Washington, D.C. where he presented to a Senator and Vice President Eisenhower a copy of Sheikh Daoud’s “*Al-Islam, the Religion of Humanity*.”<sup>1110</sup> This event demonstrates just how interconnected—how reterritorialized—the African-American “Sunnis” were becoming in the eastern U.S.

### **Sunnis in California: Sacramento, Los Angeles, and San Quentin Prison**

Although there were a few cases of prominent African-American Sunnis from the eastern U.S. coming out to California in the 1950s,<sup>1111</sup> for the most part the Sunni community in the western U.S., though it was much smaller than its eastern counterpart, had both its own network of African Americans connected to Sunni Islam as well as its

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<sup>1108</sup> Walker, 247.

<sup>1109</sup> Ralph Matthews, “One Way to Solve the Race Problem,” *Afro-American*, March 16, 1957, 11.

<sup>1110</sup> “Norfolk Leader of Muslim Group Urges Equal Rights,” *Hartford Courant*, June 12, 1951, 24.

<sup>1111</sup> One was Saeed Akmal, a former influential Lahori-Sunni leader in the Pittsburgh area, who moved out to Los Angeles in late 1950 and would eventually become a leading figure in the group that went on to form the Islamic Center of Southern California. Also, in 1956, Sheikh Daoud Faisal lectured in the Bay Area; see “Sheikh Stops in Hayward to Lecture.”

own unique dynamics; and it may have even produced one of the most influential figures in the AAIR. The western U.S.'s Islam-African-American ties date back to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when a few thousand men emigrated from South Asia to make a living by working on California's farms. Almost no women came with them, and so if those who remained in the country wanted to start a family, they had to find American wives.<sup>1112</sup> Because of racism and anti-miscegenation practices at the time, these South Asians were frequently prohibited from marrying people of too different of skin tone. This resulted in, consistent with a trend that was taking place throughout the country in the early twentieth century, many of Indians marrying Mexican-American and, to a far lesser extent, African-American women.<sup>1113</sup> Ultimately, African-American spouses accounted for only fifteen marriages out of the 378 known South Asian-immigrant marriages in California between 1913 and 1949; only seven of these were verifiably to a Muslim husband, and there is no confirmation that these women converted to Islam.<sup>1114</sup>

It is notable, however, that all seven of these Indian Muslim-African American marriages occurred in an urban location—specifically, Sacramento—as opposed to taking place in rural settings.<sup>1115</sup> City life offered greater freedom and opportunities for making new social ties, which increased the possibilities for both Indian-black interactions as

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<sup>1112</sup> The authoritative study on this topic is Karen Isaksen Leonard, *Making Ethnic Choices: California's Punjabi-Mexican Americans* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992).

<sup>1113</sup> For a discussion of this phenomenon in other parts of the country, but particularly in New York and Louisiana, see Vivek Bald, "Hands Across the Water: Indian Sailors, Peddlers, and Radicals in the U.S. 1890-1965" (PhD diss., New York University, 2009).

<sup>1114</sup> Leonard, 67, 69.

<sup>1115</sup> Leonard, 69.

well as the building of connections between immigrant Muslims who, though they lived in different parts of the state, would encounter each other when they traveled to the city. These connections led to the forming of a small Muslim community, and in 1920 Sacramento became home to the first South Asian-majority mosque in California, known as the Muslim Association of America.<sup>1116</sup> It seems that the members of this organization had become familiar enough with African Americans that by late 1922 the group was directing its proselytization work towards them, stressing, as the Ahmadis, Satti Majid, and Dusé Mohamed Ali had done, that Islam was free of racism.<sup>1117</sup>

During the AAIR, black Californians were being exposed to a deterritorializing Islam, as they were also coming into contact with Arab Muslims. Of these, perhaps the most intriguing is man who, like the leader of the Caananites Temple on the East coast, was a Garvey supporter, sold curative roots and herbs, and claimed to be an Egyptian by the name of Dr. Suleiman—or rather, Soliman. Passenger records confirm Abd Ellatif Soliman’s story that he was Egyptian and had come to the U.S. in the 1920s after living for some time in Germany. Soliman also claimed that he had “spent several years studying in the various European institutions, graduating with honors from the vest German colleges of medicine,” though I have not come across evidence to support

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<sup>1116</sup> Leonard, 83; Salim Khan, “Pakistanis in the Western United States,” *Journal Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs* 5, no. 1 (1984): 44; incorporation form for the Muslim Association of America, March 17, 1920, on file with the State of California.

<sup>1117</sup> Rahmat Ali Khan, “Letter from Rahmat Ali Khan to His Disciple, Aldabaran P. Byer,” *California Eagle*, December 9, 1922, 2 (the *California Eagle* was an African-American newspaper). By 1922, the Sacramento group may have had as many as 2,000 members; see “To Send Mohammedan’s Body Home for Burial,” *Nevada State Journal*, June 22, 1922, 3.

this.<sup>1118</sup> Whatever his true background was, after arriving in New York City in the fall of 1923, Soliman seems to have made a living by presenting himself as a homeopathic doctor, selling to African Americans medicines supposedly made from roots and herbs from Africa. By the summer of 1924, he was doing this in Los Angeles, advertising his services in the same local African-American newspaper that California's Indian Muslims had used to reach L.A.'s black citizens, the *California Eagle*.<sup>1119</sup> At this time, although the thirty-year-old Soliman did not emphasize his Islamic background, he did present himself as a supporter of both Egyptian and black nationalism.

In the early 1920s, the UNIA was becoming increasingly popular in California<sup>1120</sup> and in 1925 the state's influential UNIA division in Oakland showed an especially strong interest in the Muslim Moors<sup>1121</sup>—a man like Soliman would therefore be a welcomed

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<sup>1118</sup> See “Just Arrived from Egypt,” an advertisement that ran in several issues of the *California Eagle* in the summer of 1924 (see the next footnote for specific citations). Also see Ancestry.com for the passenger list of the *Thuringia*, which arrived in New York on September 4, 1923. Soliman's claimed background should, at the very least, not be accepted without question. Besides his somewhat dubious education claims, Soliman said he was an Egyptian and that he had done most of his European education in Germany (from where he arrived in 1923), but he has, at least in his 1926 book, an excellent command of English and his references are to English-language books only. In a letter from early 1926, he even claimed to have done all the “work” for his book (probably reading, research, and writing) that was released in February that year while in the U.S.—a rather impressive accomplishment for a non-native English speaker. Still, one would think that, if he really was Egyptian and had studied in Germany, he might have at least referred to *some* Egyptian and German sources. As for his race/ethnicity and religious background, in his book he is careful to never overtly identify with any specific ethnic or religious group, though he does identify as an Egyptian and implies that he is at least a non-Christian Arab (see Abd Ellatif Soliman, *The Past, Present and Future of the Negro* (Los Angeles: California Eagle Press, 1926), 64-65). He also displays some knowledge of both Christianity and Islam; it is therefore possible—and it would be consistent with his treatment of the potential future of Islam (see below)—that he was a secular Muslim.

<sup>1119</sup> “Just Arrived From Egypt,” *California Eagle*, June 20, 1924, 8; “Just Arrived From Egypt,” *California Eagle*, July 18, 1924, 7; “Just Arrived From Egypt,” *California Eagle*, August 1, 1924, 2.

<sup>1120</sup> See, for example, Hill, *Garvey Papers*, 4: 233-237, 311-312, 339, 477; also see Emory J. Tolbert, *The UNIA and Black Los Angeles: Ideology and Community in the American Garvey Movement* (Los Angeles: Center for Afro-American Studies University of California, 1980).

<sup>1121</sup> See the Oakland division's references to the Rif War in its division reports in the *Negro World* on the following dates in 1925: July 18, September 5, September 26, and October 17. The Oakland division

figure in the community at the time. It is not surprising, then, that in April 1925, Soliman gave “a short and interesting talk” to the L.A. UNIA division.<sup>1122</sup> Among the UNIA’s members during this period were the editors of the *California Eagle*, Charlotta Bass and her husband, a Shriner, Joseph, who may have known Soliman through his placing advertisements in their newspaper.<sup>1123</sup> By late 1925, the Bass’s had decided to publish and promote a book Soliman had recently written concerning African Americans.<sup>1124</sup>

Despite the UNIA’s popularity and Soliman and the *Eagle*’s numerous promotional efforts,<sup>1125</sup> however, Soliman’s *The Past, Present and Future of the Negro* was largely ignored after its release in February 1926<sup>1126</sup> and it seems to have been

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claimed to be the “‘banner’ division of the Pacific Coast” (see the division report on May 2, 1925) and often had visitors from the San Francisco and L.A. divisions. The Oakland group also hosted in 1924 a purported Abyssinian with a Muslim name, Abdullah Gali; see the division report on July 5, 1924.

<sup>1122</sup> Thomas Hall, “Los Angeles, California,” *Negro World*, April 11, 1925. Though this news brief indicates that the person who spoke was known as “Dr. Solomon” and not “Soliman,” spelling errors for names were not uncommon in the *Negro World* (or other newspapers, for that matter) at the time, particularly when the subject had a rather uncommon spelling for a well-known name. Given both the fact that this “Dr. Solomon” was noted as being an Egyptian, as well as the timing of both this appearance and the publication of Soliman’s book by the pro-UNIA editors of the *California Eagle*, there should be little doubt that “Dr. Solomon” was indeed Soliman.

<sup>1123</sup> On the connections between the *California Eagle* and the UNIA, see Tolbert, 49-86. My claim that Bass was a Shriner is based on a picture of him wearing a Shriner fez that is found in the second-to-last (unnumbered) page of the picture section at the end of Charlotta Bass’s *Forty Years: Memoirs from the Pages of a Newspaper* (Los Angeles: Charlotta A. Bass, 1960).

<sup>1124</sup> “Newest Literary Contribution,” *California Eagle*, March 12, 1926, 6.

<sup>1125</sup> The *Eagle* ran advertisements both for the book itself and for “agents,” individuals who might sell copies of the book for a profit. Soliman, meanwhile, wrote letters to John Powell, a well-known white racist eugenicist, who was supportive of (and supported by) black nationalists, including Marcus Garvey, who encouraged the colonization of Africa by black Americans. Both Powell and his wife were interested in Soliman’s work. See the letters—dated 3/19/1926, 3/30/1926, and 12/27/1927—in the Papers of John Powell in the Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library at the University of Virginia. On the aligning of white racists with black nationalists in the 1920s-1940s, see Hedlin, “Earnest Cox and Colonization.”

<sup>1126</sup> I have found only one book review of it (appearing in the *American Journal of Sociology* in 1929) and a few other minor references in scholarly works. I have not found any references to it in public newspapers or in the UNIA’s *Negro World*.

relatively inconsequential in the history of African-American culture. Still, *The Past, Present and Future of the Negro* presents a number of ideas that were consistent with some of the major themes in the AAIR, particularly in the 1920s, so it perhaps sheds light on ideas that other African Americans and immigrant Muslims had at that time, and it may have in fact had a greater impact than can currently be documented.

Soliman's book is composed of three main parts. First is a section giving histories of Africa, Africans, and modern slavery; here he highlights African achievements throughout history. The second part provides a history and assessment of the current conditions of African Americans. He argues that African Americans will not be successfully integrated in U.S. society because racial antagonism—from both whites and blacks—is too strong to be expected to be overcome. In the last chapter of this section, the work of Garvey and the UNIA is explicitly supported because only this group, Soliman says, is working to create a strong enough community—a nation—to support and protect African Americans.<sup>1127</sup> In the final section, after examining various solutions that have been proposed to deal with the “Negro problem,” Soliman concludes that the only viable one is emigration to Africa, an idea that he thinks the U.S. government should support because it would permit the U.S. to become exclusively white, which is, he says, the desire of most white Americans.<sup>1128</sup> His book, then, is very consistent with the ideas promoted by both Edward Wilmot Blyden in the nineteenth century and Garvey in the twentieth.

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<sup>1127</sup> Soliman, 276-281.

<sup>1128</sup> Soliman, 303-315.

And, like Blyden and Garvey, because Soliman's solution is almost exclusively about emigration, he does not argue that African Americans need to convert to Islam. He does, however, in his introduction, argue that if the U.S. does not resolve the "Negro problem," there is good possibility that, because, in his view, Islam lacked racism, all oppressed people—but particularly black people—will begin converting to Islam *en masse*, creating an immense religious cultural shift.<sup>1129</sup>

If the Mohammedans were to spread their religious campaigns amongst the blacks of the world, no black would fail to embrace it.

In time, a programme of revenge with all the white world as its object will be effected. Those blacks and Orientals, Christian and pagan, have suffered the arrogance of white superiority which has created a deeprooted and irremovable hatred in their hearts. When the flag of equality and brotherhood of nations is held up before them, they will rally to the cause: from every corner of the vast world; from every sea of the earth; from desert and oasis—they will come in one strong band pledging allegiance to the new Salah-el-Din. This movement, however, will not be purely Islamic, with the fanaticism of the early Crusaders, but its object will be to raise high the banner of Fraternity, Equality, and Liberty and to enforce its sentiments among whites, blacks, yellows, and brown.<sup>1130</sup>

One thing needs to be clear here: Soliman was not endorsing this major wave of conversion to Islam; he was instead telling his readers (whom he hoped would be both white and African-American) that this was a real possibility if significant changes in race relations did not occur. Unfortunately, what Soliman thought about the rise of African-American Islamic groups is not known; by late 1927 he was apparently living in

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<sup>1129</sup> Soliman, 26-27.

<sup>1130</sup> Soliman, 27.

Germany and was planning on staying in Europe for the next year,<sup>1131</sup> and he possibly was dead by 1930.<sup>1132</sup>

As was explained in chapter 3, Soliman was not the only Egyptian nationalist, pro-Garvey Muslim immigrant in 1920s California. Lucius Lehman, the self-proclaimed Egyptian mullah and imam who wrote one of the first documents explicitly connecting the UNIA to Islam, was living in Los Angeles for much of his time in the U.S. and from 1910 to 1924 was residing in San Quentin Prison. Perhaps not coincidentally, as noted in chapter 3, during the early 1920s, the UNIA was particularly successful in San Quentin Prison where, it was claimed, by 1924/1925 the black inmate population was “100 per cent Garvey-ized in spirit.”<sup>1133</sup>

It is likely that Lucius, whose Sudanese-Egyptian Islamic identity and claim of Islamic authority (imam and mullah) would have been attractive to the UNIA-influenced prisoners, had made several Garveyite associates and perhaps a few converts to Islam. He had, after all, some experience as a minor religious authority during the Azusa Street Revival.<sup>1134</sup> It is also possible that some of the imprisoned Garveyites were learning

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<sup>1131</sup> Letter, A.E. Soliman to John Powell, 12/27/1927.

<sup>1132</sup> A search on Ancestry.com for Abd Ellatif Soliman reveals that in 1926 he married a woman named Vella F. Wilmett. The latter's name appears in a 1930 census from California in which it is indicated that she, a white woman, was currently widowed and living with her daughter from a previous marriage.

<sup>1133</sup> James Allen Davis, “Color Line Drawn in San Quentin Prison,” *Negro World*, January 24, 1925, 9. Garvey was also said to have converted 1,000 in the Atlanta prison in which he was jailed; see “Great Outpouring of People Pack Liberty Hall to Capacity,” *Negro World*, September 5, 1925, 3. The latter article indicates that black prisoners were particularly attracted to Garvey's promise of emancipation for African Americans and in the 1920s the *Negro World* reported about Garveyite converts in several prisons scattered across the country; see Wm. Tucker, “A Prison a Good Place in Which to Learn to Think,” *Negro World*, August 16, 1924, 11; “Nine Prisoners Contribute to UNIA Fund,” *Negro World*, July 3, 1926, 2.

<sup>1134</sup> See Patrick D. Bowen, “‘The Colored Genius’: Lucius Lehman and the Californian Roots of Modern African-American Islam,” *Culture: The Graduate Journal of Harvard Divinity School* 8, no. 2 (spring, 2013).

about Islam through other Islam-influenced African Americans during the early AAIR. It is noteworthy that the Islam-influenced Garveyite poet Ethel Trew Dunlap was at that time living in southern California. Also, some of these prisoners, like Dunlap, may have been corresponding with the Ahmadis, who were becoming increasingly popular with UNIA members at the time, particularly the influential African-American Ahmadi leader Paul Nathaniel Johnson. At the very least, it is probable that, given the UNIA's Islamophilia in the 1920s, there was *some* Islamophilia circulating in San Quentin's black population in the 1920s.

In February 1926, the same month Soliman's book was released, an immigrant from an Afghan or Pashtun Sunni background, Wallace Dodd Ford (also sometimes spelled as "Fard"),<sup>1135</sup> was arrested by prohibition agents in Los Angeles.<sup>1136</sup> Ford, who was well-known in the city as both an opiate dealer and as a "street politician," would soon be sent to San Quentin prison where he would spend the next three years of his life. While imprisoned, it is likely that he continued his street politician ways and used his Islamic background as an entrée into the prison's UNIA-influenced black community, just as, perhaps, Soliman and Lucius had done. Upon his release, Ford would take the knowledge and experience he had gained in Los Angeles and San Quentin to Detroit, where he would be responsible for initiating one of the most important organizations in the history of Islam in the U.S., the Nation of Islam.

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<sup>1135</sup> Wallie Dodd Fard (Ford) Draft Registration Card, 1917, available on Ancestry.com. While this Fard was not documented to have overtly claimed to be Sunni Muslim at this time, the fact that as a person of Pashtun heritage (his birthplace is noted on the draft card as being in Shinkay, Afghanistan), he would have been raised as a Sunni Muslim, at least culturally.

<sup>1136</sup> "Fueron Confiscados \$5,000.00 Valor de Drogas Heroicas," *Heraldo de Mexico*, February 17, 1926, 8.

### **The Limits of Deterritorialization and the Desire for Islamic Unity**

Deterritorialization had been largely responsible for the entrance of Islam into African-American culture and its subsequent expansion and diversification. Immigration, travel, the transmission of various texts, and the tendency to mix and match religious ideas all were major elements supporting the growth of Sunni Islam in the AAIR. However, deterritorialized Islam came at the cost of constant fragmentation and sectarianism that hindered the progress of black uplift, which had been the basic attraction to Islam for African Americans. The turn to Sunni Islam, though it was itself still heavily shaped by deterritorializing forces, was a primary means of combatting the detrimental effects of deterritorialization. By aligning with international Muslims, African-American Muslims could gain more religious authority and support to resist and suppress exploiters and schisms, thereby strengthening the African-American Muslim community. But because the sources of Sunni Islam were diverse, knowledge of Sunni Islam was still fairly minimal and fragmented and ways of incorporating uplift and black nationalist ideas varied. And because personalities and private interests still were inhibiting unification, African-American Muslims ultimately failed to make Sunni Islam the dominant form of Islam in the AAIR. It was not until the late 1970s that the majority of African-American Muslims would become Sunni, and this only happened because in the mid-to-late 1950s one non-Sunni AAIR group was able to achieve what the Sunnis had not been able to: unrivaled dominance in African-American Islamic culture. This group was the Nation of Islam. Its transition to Sunni Islam in the late 1970s will not be discussed in this dissertation, but its rise to dominance, which would give it the ability to

lead tens of thousands of African Americans into Sunni Islam, can best be understood by looking at it within the context of the AAIR.

## **Chapter Seven: The Rise, Fall, Rebirth, and Dominance of the Nation of Islam**

Before 1929 was over, the Great Schism had already left a profound impact on Detroit's African-American Muslim community. By summer, James Lomax, the former MST Grand Governor of Michigan, had been driven out of the city and Detroit's Moorish-American community—which had been the most popular and profitable group outside of Chicago—was shattered. As the Great Depression set in, the future of Detroit's Moors—probably numbering over a thousand—was very much an uncertain one.

During this period, Hastings Street, the main commercial avenue in Detroit's black section, was known for being a magnet for immigrants of every ethnicity.<sup>1137</sup> Among the many drawn there was one Wallace D. Fard (pronounced Far-ad'), who was claiming to be an Arab from either Mecca or North Africa, but was probably the same person of Afghan/Pashtun heritage who had been released from San Quentin Prison in 1929. In the summer of 1930, while the MST community was still in disarray, Fard, like so many Muslim immigrants before him, began peddling raincoats, silks, and other small items door-to-door in the area around Hastings Street. He soon was ingratiating himself with his customers, who began inviting him into their homes. Once inside, Fard, intrigued

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<sup>1137</sup> J. Edward McCall, "Hastings Street," *Detroit Tribune*, September 30, 1933, 8.

his hosts with the claim that the people in their “home country” were Muslim, and that practicing Islam would improve the Detroit residents’ lives.<sup>1138</sup>

Though he did say, like the MST, that African Americans were in fact “Asiatics” and that they were descendants of the original inhabitants of Mecca, he did not preach that they were Moors from the El and Bey tribes, nor that they should look to Ghulam Ahmad as a prophet. Instead, he told Detroit’s black community about a new “knowledge of self”: African Americans, Fard claimed, were from the tribe of Shabazz and were part of the “Nation of Islam.” By late 1931 Detroit’s black section was abuzz with Fard’s message. By the next year, he had perhaps as many as 8,000 followers in the city, many of whom were former MST members. Fard’s Detroit-based movement had capitalized on the Great Schism and had rapidly risen to become, possibly, the largest African-American Islamic organization up to that point.

But the fact that is sometimes forgotten is that the Nation of Islam soon experienced a decline that was just as rapid as its rise, due to both internal problems as well as to the increasing stability and strength of the MST and other Muslim-influenced African-American groups. By the end of the Great Schism, the Nation of Islam was a movement made up of numerous small factions—none of which were larger than the major MST factions, the U.S. Ahmadi movement, or even the Sunni community that would soon emerge. For most of the AAIR, then, the NOI was just another small set of diverse beliefs and practices, adding to the overall renaissance, deterritorialized character of the period. It was only in the late AAIR, after World War II, when the NOI began its

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<sup>1138</sup> Beynon, 895-896.

rebuilding process. Its ability to resist extinction was the result of multiple factors, both internal to the group and external, which were in fact creating the conditions that would allow for the NOI to grow significantly. Before the 1950s were over, the NOI had achieved a level of popularity far surpassing that ever gained by any other AAIR group. It had successfully reterritorialized the mainstream of African-American Islam.

### **Wallace Fard and the NOI Doctrines**

#### **Who Was Wallace Fard?**

According to Nation of Islam tradition, Wallace Fard was born in Mecca, Arabia to a black father and white mother on February 26, 1877. After studying in London and at the University of Southern California, Fard arrived in Detroit on July 4, 1930 to introduce to the city's African Americans his teachings about their true origins and Islam.

This topic of Wallace Fard's identity has remained a matter of significant contention between, on the one hand, Nation members and sympathizers, and, on the other, non-sympathizer outsiders, particularly those who are not African-American. The major cause of the debate is the fact that it was the FBI that was responsible for popularizing the counter-narrative of Fard's past. The FBI's motive for promoting this was to discredit the man and therefore take away from the credibility of the NOI as a whole, which the FBI hoped would ultimately lead to the group's demise, as it had become a leading organization in wave of unrest spreading in the black community in the 1950s. Because J. Edgar Hoover's FBI's had a well-known reputation for counter-intelligence or disinformation activities, the possibility that the FBI's exposé was built on lies has seemed very real.

The FBI's main claim was that Wallace Fard, contrary to what NOI tradition said, was not in fact a half black, half white man from Mecca, but a white man from, possibly, New Zealand, named Wallace (or Wallie) Dodd Ford. Fard was portrayed by the FBI as a charlatan and criminal who had served time in San Quentin Prison in the 1920s for a drug conviction. The most significant and direct pieces of evidence presented to support this claim were photographs and fingerprints of Wallace Dodd Ford purportedly from San Quentin prison that matched those of the Fard who was arrested in Detroit in the 1930s. One of the major criticisms that has been brought up by the NOI, however, is that no one outside the government has seen proof that these two pieces of evidence—particularly the fingerprint records—were genuine, and not planted by the FBI as part of its counter-intelligence program.

Recently, however, a 1917 draft registration card from Los Angeles for a Wallace Dodd Fard (on the card, “Ford” is put in parentheses next to “Fard,” indicating that the former was an alternative spelling) has been uncovered.<sup>1139</sup> The card indicates that this Fard was born in 1893 on February 26—the same day the NOI claimed for its founder. Fard, described as being of medium height and build with brown eyes and black hair, is listed as an unmarried restaurant owner. Finally, his place of birth is noted as being Shinka, Afghanistan, which is possibly what is known today as the Shinkay region in the southeast part of Afghanistan or a town in nearby northwest Pakistan—both places inhabited by the Pashtun people. The majority of these traits are consistent with much of the evidence concerning Fard discovered by the FBI in its investigation and as well as the

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<sup>1139</sup> Ancestry.com, Registration Location: Los Angeles County, California; Roll: 1530899; Draft Board: 17.

additional evidence and analysis presented by Karl Evanzz, in his biography of Elijah Muhammad, and Fatimah Abdul-Tawwab Fanusie, in her 2008 dissertation.<sup>1140</sup> In particular, the connection between this Fard and Afghanistan and the Pashtun people is incredibly suggestive, as Evanzz and Fanusie have traced a number of rather rare terms and ideas in the NOI to likely having a Pashtun—or at least Pakistani—provenance.<sup>1141</sup> Fard may have actually been born in that region or he may have given authorities his father’s birthplace instead of his own. As Evanzz suggests as a possibility, Fard’s father could have taught his son traditions from his homeland, and Wallace might have borrowed from these when creating the NOI’s doctrines.<sup>1142</sup> In addition to the draft card, a 1924 marriage record from Southern California for a Wallie Dodd Ford has been found; Ford’s parents’ names are listed here, and are the same as what Fard told the NOI and FBI.<sup>1143</sup> While I do not wish to say the draft card and marriage record are indisputable proof that this Fard in Los Angeles was the same person identified by the FBI as well as the same person who later appeared in Detroit, they certainly increase the likelihood.

Other new evidence adds an important piece of information to the identity and life of Fard before he arrived in Detroit. A Spanish-language newspaper article, published in

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<sup>1140</sup> Fatimah Abdul-Tawwab Fanusie, “Fard Muhammad in Historical Context: An Islamic Thread in the American Religious and Cultural Quilt” (PhD diss., Howard University, 2008), chapter 5, 244-296. Fanusie argues that some of the evidence we have about Fard and his teachings suggests he was influenced by and used elements of Ahmadiyya Islam. While this does not necessarily mean that he was Central or South Asian, it strengthens that likelihood.

<sup>1141</sup> Evanzz, 409-412; Fanusie, 244-296.

<sup>1142</sup> Evanzz, 411-412.

<sup>1143</sup> Marriage record for Wallie Dodd Ford and Carmen Frevino, 5 June 1924. From Familysearch.org, accessed 16 April 2013. Here, his father’s name is listed as Zaradodd, which is very close to the name of Fard’s father that the FBI learned about, and his mother’s name is listed as Babbjie, which is very close to the “Baby Gee” name Fard told the NOI. I would like to thank Karl Evanzz for informing me about this record.

Los Angeles at the time of Ford's 1926 arrest for selling drugs, confirms the known details of the event.<sup>1144</sup> It adds, however, one fascinating piece of information: this article tells us that Ford was a well-known "street politician." This recalls Evanzz's suggestion that Ford may also have gone by the name of George Farr, a person who was an influential UNIA leader in San Francisco in the early 1920s, and was known as a local agitator.<sup>1145</sup> However, there are three reasons that I would dispute the claim that the two men are the same person: 1) The Office of Naval Intelligence had started writing about Farr as early as December 1921, by which time Farr was reportedly an established race agitator and drug dealer—but Hazel Osborne, Ford's common-law wife until as late as 1920, never remembered hearing him speak against the government or whites.<sup>1146</sup> If Ford was Farr, this would mean that within about one year, Ford's lifestyle and interests underwent a complete and radical change and he was able to establish himself and become a known man with a completely different identity. 2) Farr was described as "rather small but stout," while Fard is never—in any account—described in such a way. In fact, he is typically described as "medium" and often as slender or thin—descriptions that are supported by every known photograph of the man. 3) Evanzz says that Fard's name was "often" pronounced as "Farr" in Detroit,<sup>1147</sup> but in his FBI file, despite there being numerous accounts of various pronunciations of his names, "Farr" is only mentioned in one report, and even within that report "Farr" is only one of over two dozen

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<sup>1144</sup> "Fueron Confiscados \$5,000.00 Valor de Drogas Heroicas," *Heraldo de Mexico*, February 17, 1926, 8.

<sup>1145</sup> Evanzz, 402-405; on George Farr, see Hill, *Garvey Papers*, 4: 233-237, 311-312, 339, 477.

<sup>1146</sup> Wallace D. Fard FBI file, Letter, SAC, Los Angeles (105-4805), to Director, FBI, 10/18/57, 5.

<sup>1147</sup> Evanzz, 403.

known versions of his name.<sup>1148</sup> With these criticisms in mind, then, the Spanish-language newspaper article is the only strong evidence that Ford/Fard held radical views before coming to Detroit. It is likely that, as explained at the end of the previous chapter, Fard's radical character, combined with his somewhat Asiatic cast and his Islamic background, led him to, while he was incarcerated in San Quentin Prison, drift into or seek out the UNIA-influenced (and probably somewhat Islamophilic) population. It would have been here, in prison, where Fard likely invented the core NOI doctrines.<sup>1149</sup>

Fard was released on May 27, 1929, only two weeks after the shootout out at the Detroit MST meeting and Claude Greene's murder. After stopping by Los Angeles, he went on to Chicago where he became a traveling salesman. Some have claimed that during this stay in Chicago Fard joined up with the MST and possibly the Ahmadis, and that after Drew Ali's death (July 20) he was one of the individuals claiming to be the reincarnation of Drew Ali.<sup>1150</sup> However, I know of no evidence, other than oral tradition, that confirms that a man going as Wallace Fard or Ford was even a member of the MST or the Ahmadis at this time, let alone claiming to be a reincarnation of Drew Ali while in Chicago. In fact, in all of the numerous newspaper articles about the MST from 1929 to 1930, as far as I am aware there is not a single mention of a Fard or Ford, while

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<sup>1148</sup> Wallace D. Fard FBI file, Correlation Summary, 1/15/58, 4, 46.

<sup>1149</sup> In his MA thesis, Peter Matthews Wright theorizes that Fard's creation of the NOI doctrines while in San Quentin prison was primarily due to the interplay of "penal trauma" and Fard coming to terms with his ambiguous racial position in the U.S. In my opinion, it is possible that these did play a deep psychological role, but I believe the likely UNIA-influenced Islamophilia in the prison probably played a more direct role in Fard developing his doctrines. See Peter Matthews Wright, "A Box of Self-Threading Needles: Epic Vision and Penal Trauma in the Fugitive Origins of the Nation of Islam" (MA thesis, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2004).

<sup>1150</sup> Evanzz, 407.

numerous other MST members are identified. One rather popular but completely unsupported related tradition is that Fard had taken the name of Ford-El and became an influential figure in the MST in Detroit. This claim, like the others, has not been confirmed by any verifiably authentic independent sources and is even rejected by contemporary MST historians.

Whatever his exact activities were for the next year, by the summer of 1930, Fard was in Detroit preaching a message that was in many ways similar to that of the MST. Like many other leaders of new Islamic groups during the Great Schism, he capitalized on the association of Islam with “mystical” religion and black nationalism.

#### Fard’s Texts and Doctrines

The complete extent of what was taught by Fard to the early Nation of Islam community is not fully known. One of the most intriguing items that the police purportedly found in Fard’s possession when they arrested him in 1932 was a bk called the *Bible of Islamism*. The police report stated that

On page 354 of the ‘Bible’ is the following quotation, which was underlined, and which [Fard] claimed he used as part of his teachings—“God is a liar. Ignore Him and do away with those who advocate His cause.” [Fard] stated that this was a favorite passage of his and that he used it often in his teachings.<sup>1151</sup>

No scholar, to my knowledge, has claimed to have seen a copy of this book, and there is no other known mention of it in any press report, government document, or even in any publicly available NOI materials. Similarly, the FBI learned that Fard claimed to have published, under the name W.D. Feraud, a book entitled *5 Guiding Principals* [sic],

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<sup>1151</sup> “New Human Sacrifice with a Boy as Victim is Averted by Inquiry,” *Detroit Free Press*, November 26, 1932, 1, 2.

a copy of which, Fard said, was in the possession of the Library of Congress.<sup>1152</sup> The FBI was unable to locate a copy and, like the *Bible of Islamism*, I know of neither any scholar nor any NOI member to have claimed to have actually seen this book (though it may have been the same book used by a connected group, the Development of Our Own, as will be shown below).<sup>1153</sup> In 1932, Fard claimed he was working on a commission basis for a printing company, so, if these books were real, they would have likely been printed by his employer and therefore Fard would have had the control to keep the number of copies very small.<sup>1154</sup>

The main texts used by Fard were the *Teaching for the Lost Found Nation of Islam in a Mathematical Way*, which consisted of thirty-four questions, or “problems”; the *Secret Ritual of the Nation of Islam*, which was split up into one part that had fourteen questions and another that had forty; and an Arabic Qur’an, which he orally translated for his followers.<sup>1155</sup> Today, the *Teaching* text is known as the “Problem Book” and the *Secret Ritual* (which no scholar since Beynon has reported seeing) is very close to what has been called since at least the 1950s the “Lost Found Muslim Lessons,” which is today included in the book named *The Supreme Wisdom Lessons* (not to be confused with

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<sup>1152</sup> Wallace D. Fard FBI file, Memorandum, to SAC, Detroit (100-26356), 12/11/1957; Wallace D. Fard FBI file, Letter, SAC, Chicago (100-35035), to SAC, Washington Field (100-32829), 1/20/1960. This information was obtained by the FBI from a Fifth Army Report on the “Moslem Holy Temple of Islam” dated 11/28/1950.

<sup>1153</sup> Wallace D. Fard FBI file, Letter, SAC, Washington Field Office (100-32829), to SAC, Chicago (100-35035), 2/10/1960. However, in a 1942 interview, Elijah Muhammad referred what we today generally call the five “pillars” of Islam as five “principles”—a clue that Fard’s book was his influence. See Wallace D. Fard FBI file, Report, Chicago 25-206607, 2/21/1957, 5.

<sup>1154</sup> “Negro Leaders Open Fight to Break Voodooism’s Grip,” *Detroit Free Press*, November 24, 1932, 1, 2.

<sup>1155</sup> Beynon, 901 n. 17, 900.

Elijah's 1957 book *The Supreme Wisdom: Solution to the So-Called Negroes' Problem*).<sup>1156</sup> There may be a few reasons why the *Secret Ritual* varies somewhat from the Lost Found Lessons.<sup>1157</sup> First is that it was originally transmitted orally, and only a few manuscripts had survived to even 1937, which increases the likelihood that different versions would have been used over the years.<sup>1158</sup> Second, at the end of the version known as the "Lessons," it is stated that the second part was given by Fard to Elijah Muhammad on February 20, 1934, and so the version that Beynon saw in the 1930s may have pre-dated the 1934 version. Finally, in 1950 Elijah Muhammad had taken out of circulation all old copies of the Lessons in order to "interpret ... and put the emphasis where he wanted the emphasis to be," so the differences between the versions may reflect Elijah's own changes.<sup>1159</sup> As for the remaining texts, Elijah Muhammad claimed that right before Fard left the NOI for the final time, he gave Elijah two versions of the Qur'an—both were in Arabic, but one had the English translation alongside the Arabic—and told Elijah to learn Arabic so he could understand the holy book.<sup>1160</sup> On that same occasion, Fard also claimed to have had made another book himself (perhaps the *Bible of*

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<sup>1156</sup> Fard Muhammad, *The Supreme Wisdom Lessons by Master Fard Muhammad: To His Servant, The Honorable Elijah Muhammad for the Lost-Found Nation of Islam in North America* ([United States]: The Department of Supreme Wisdom, 2009).

<sup>1157</sup> Beynon gives two excerpts from and one paraphrased section for the *Secret Ritual*—an excerpt and a paraphrase from part I and one excerpt from part II. Only the excerpt from part II is different from its corresponding number in the Lost Found Lessons. I should also point out two things: A) the excerpt from part I (from section/number 6) that Beynon gives (see Beynon 898) corresponds with the 1950s version of the Lost Found Lessons, but it is number 7 in the current version; B) an excerpt from part I section/number 10 (which Beynon had only paraphrased) was published in a Detroit newspaper in 1932 and the wording is somewhat different than how it appears in the Lessons (see "Raid Reveals Cult Practices," *Detroit Free Press*, November 23, 1932, 3).

<sup>1158</sup> Beynon, 901 n. 17.

<sup>1159</sup> Quoted in Clegg, 105.

<sup>1160</sup> Sahib, 71.

*Islamism or the 5 Guiding Principals*), but he neither gave this book to Elijah nor indicated what the name of the book was.<sup>1161</sup>

Though Fard also directed his followers to read a few other books dealing with esoteric ideas and millennialism,<sup>1162</sup> the core of his teachings relied on the above texts and has been succinctly summarized by Beynon:

The black men in North America are not Negroes, but members of the lost tribe of [Shabazz], stolen by traders from the Holy City of Mecca 379 years ago. The prophet [Fard] came to America to find and to bring back to life his long lost brethren, from whom the Caucasians had taken away their language, their nation and their religion. Here in America they were living other than themselves. They must learn that they are the original people, noblest of the nations of the earth. The Caucasians are the colored people, since they have lost their original color. The original people must regain their religion, which is Islam, their language, which is Arabic, and their culture, which is astronomy and higher mathematics, especially calculus. They must live according to the law of Allah, avoiding all meat of “poison animals,” hogs, ducks, geese, ‘possums and catfish. They must clean themselves up—both their bodies and their houses. If in this way they obeyed Allah, he would take them back to the Paradise from which they had been stolen—the Holy City of Mecca.<sup>1163</sup>

Fard’s teachings, then, were similar in spirit to Drew Ali’s, but its Islamic identity was connected primarily with Arabs and Mecca, not Moors and North Africa (though the MST doctrines about Mecca do suggest some connections<sup>1164</sup> and Fard almost certainly

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<sup>1161</sup> Sahib, 71.

<sup>1162</sup> Beynon, 900.

<sup>1163</sup> Beynon, 900-901.

<sup>1164</sup> Although the MST emphasizes the Moabite heritage of African Americans far more than it does their supposed Canaanite heritage, in the group’s catechism, the land of Canaan has special significance: it is the location not only of the Garden of Eden, but also of Mecca, ideas that may have been borrowed from Suleiman. In other words, Mecca was African Americans’ original birthplace—an idea consistent with Fard’s. Also, Fard’s teaching that Mecca is “the Best Part of the Planet Earth” (Lost Found Muslim Lesson No. 1, question 1) is consistent with the idea that Mecca is Eden.

told some in the NOI that he was from Morocco).<sup>1165</sup> The promotion of knowing Arabic is also distinct, and is reflective of a similar emphasis given by the Ahmadis (especially Paul Nathaniel Johnson) and later Sunni groups like the YMMA and AAUAA. In addition, there is a greater stress on learning scientific or “mathematical” knowledge about the universe. While the “science” in the MST’s name suggested there might have been more discussion of technical data like astronomy, it primarily reflected its occult/“mystical” influences, and may have been chosen because of its resonance with Garvey’s “scientific understanding of religion.” In Fard’s group, however, members were required to do actual mathematic word problems and learn things like the circumference of Earth and its distance from the sun. Interestingly, this stress on scientific details, the use of the term “mathematics,” and the phrase in the Lessons that the members need to learn “the science of everything in life,” are all somewhat reminiscent of Gurdjieff’s thought.<sup>1166</sup> Nevertheless, and although the fact that both of these men likely had Central Asian Islamic influences suggests some sort of connection, there is not nearly enough evidence to think that this similarity is due to anything other than both men independently drawing from the “mystical” tradition, which, as was explained in chapter 2, has traditionally sometimes taken an interest in “scientific” things like astronomy and chemistry.

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<sup>1165</sup> Elijah would later swear that Fard came to Detroit “directly from the holy city of Mecca,” but there are at least two accounts that show that Fard told at least some in the NOI that his true homeland was North Africa—a Moorish American from Detroit told an FBI agent that he believed Fard was Algerian, and in 1932 a reporter interviewed an NOI member who explicitly said that Fard was “from Morocco.” See MSTA FBI file, Report, 3/16/1943, Detroit file 100-6603, 4; “Killer Shows Detectives How He Slew,” *Detroit Evening Times*, November 22, 1932, 2.

<sup>1166</sup> Lost Found Lessons No. 2, question 18.

The NOI's narrative on the origins of the races is another aspect that is closer to the thought of Gurdjieff (which was rather absurd and science fiction-like) and of other less Islamic "mystical" thinkers than it is to the MST's. Fard held that black people are direct descendents of the creative dark "atom" of the universe—they are divine, "Original Man," and their true religion is Islam. It was said that ancient black scientists discovered that all blacks had two "germs" in their genetic makeup: a black one and a brown one, with the black having much more divinity than the brown. 6,000 years ago, a rebellious black scientist, unsatisfied with his position on earth, decided to genetically engineer the removal of the black germ—and thus divinity—from a group of people through a process of killing the darker babies. Eventually he was successful: he had created the white race. Whites, then, lacking divinity and therefore humanity, were "devils," and they were made to rule, enslave, and oppress "Original Man" for 6,000 years. In 1914, however, the white era of rule had come to an end and the darker races would soon rise to take their rightful position on earth.

This story, while certainly containing a Gurdjieff-like absurd/science-fiction element, is more similar to a racial theory proposed in Godfrey Higgins' 1833 book *Anacalypsis*. Higgins was one of the few Europeans at that time to argue that the first human race was black.<sup>1167</sup> He believed that this black race had emanated from God and thus contained within it a great deal of divinity; subsequent types of people were produced by the first race, and so contained lesser amounts of divinity. When cosmic cycles ended and new ones began, there would be great conflict and warring among

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<sup>1167</sup> For a summary of Higgins' thoughts on the subject, see Godwin, 82-83.

people, and new rulers, who were sometimes from the less divine races, would rise. Again, that Fard had developed this story through the influence of Higgins or other “mystical” writers cannot be proved; it is probable that Fard was simply drawing from a vague “mystical” tradition that had numerous sources. The story of a scientist splitting “germs” to create an inferior and evil human is in fact reminiscent of the ancient and medieval “mystical” stories of scientists creating artificial men<sup>1168</sup> (even if Fard’s story was in reality more influenced by modern eugenics, which was at the time being supported by numerous religious leaders).<sup>1169</sup>

Despite the clear divergences from the mainline MST doctrine concerning the races, however, the NOI doctrine did share a few notable similarities with some specific MST sects. As I demonstrated in chapter 4, the MSTIAM had NOI influences in its views on whites, but the most interesting connection is probably with Givens-El’s faction. Notably, by the early 1940s, the Givens-El faction was claiming that the formation of the NOI was the result of a “split in the organization”—presumably “organization” here refers to the original MST, but it might have been referring to Givens-El’s group specifically.<sup>1170</sup> Indeed, Givens-El’s faction held two doctrines—almost unique in the MST community<sup>1171</sup>—that were similar to ones in the NOI. These were A) identifying

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<sup>1168</sup> See William R. Newman, *Promethean Ambitions: Alchemy and the Quest to Perfect Nature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), esp. 164-237. Newman includes in his discussion medieval Islamic interests in artificial man.

<sup>1169</sup> See Christine Rosen, *Preaching Eugenics: Religious Leaders and The American Eugenics Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

<sup>1170</sup> MST FBI file, Report, 9/21/1943, Chicago file 14-39, 29.

<sup>1171</sup> The MSTIAM also used the first of these doctrines, but it is not clear whether its use came from the influence of the NOI or the MST.

whites as “devils” (in the plural form) and B) the belief that members should cut off the heads of “devils.”<sup>1172</sup>

As was explained in chapter 4, in the MST whites could be associated with the Devil precisely because they called themselves “white” and African Americans “black”/“negro,” which was equivalent to falsely claiming that whites were godly and African Americans were not. However, Drew Ali said that the Devil was also the “lower self,” and that the lower self was within all people, regardless of race/“nationality.” In fact, contrary to what some might presume, Fard taught a similar doctrine—African Americans, he said, could be devils too because “all wicked people are devils.”<sup>1173</sup> What is notable about Drew Ali’s MST, however, is that it never, in any of the known writings from the 1920s, referred to individuals as “devils”—with a plural “s”—it only referred to a “Devil.” Givens-El’s group, on the other hand, did use the plural “devils,” and used this exclusively for whites (African Americans not in Givens-El’s group were called “coolies,” the derogatory term from the period for unskilled laborers from Asia).

As for the infamous doctrine of decapitation, it needs to be made clear, first of all, that there have been no known cases before the 1970s of either an MST or NOI member actually decapitating any person. Second, it should be noted that this specific call was not in the official NOI literature; Fard’s *Secret Ritual* told followers to “gain a victory from [four] devil[s]”—and when reprinted as the “Lessons,” it said to “murder” four “devils”—for the rewards of a button to wear on the lapel of one’s coat as well as a free

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<sup>1172</sup> Report, 9/21/1943, Chicago file 14-39, 29.

<sup>1173</sup> “Girl Recounts Lore of Islam,” *Detroit Free Press*, April 26, 1934, 1.

trip to Mecca.<sup>1174</sup> Nevertheless, Elijah claimed that Fard did not actually believe that any actual murder should actually take place; his only intention in using this command was to “take fear of the white man out of the hearts of the followers.”<sup>1175</sup> But in addition to this very non-specific command, it was also at least sometimes orally transmitted that members should “cut off the heads” of devils.<sup>1176</sup> Still, it appears that while some understood this phrase in the literal sense, it was primarily understood metaphorically: “cutting off the head” meant bringing a non-NOI African American into the NOI, for, in the NOI understanding, the Devil/devils cannot live unless African Americans “stay asleep” to their true nature as Muslims—so by converting African Americans to the NOI, they are effectively decapitating the Devil/devils.<sup>1177</sup>

In the MST—at least in Givens-El’s group—there was similar a discrepancy between the official doctrines and member beliefs concerning the decapitation of whites. In Drew Ali’s catechism, question 84 states that the “head of Satan”—i.e., the Devil—was “taken off [in] 1453 (Byzantine),” a reference to the Ottoman conquest of the Christian Constantinople. Satan/the Devil, as was shown, could be read as a reference to whites/“Europeans,” and because Christianity was understood as the religion of “Europeans,” the most logical reading of this question would be that it indicated that the “head” of white *civilization* (or “the Devil,” in the singular) was cut off—its main source of power was removed—upon the Muslim conquest. But in Givens-El’s faction, members

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<sup>1174</sup> “Raid Reveals.”

<sup>1175</sup> Sahib, 76 n. 1.

<sup>1176</sup> “Girl Recounts Lore.” Also see Evanzz, 289 and 578 n. 76.

<sup>1177</sup> See FBI file on Joseph Gravitt, Report, 11/19/1954, Philadelphia file 100-40130, 5.

frequently talked about cutting off the heads of “devils” (*individuals*) in the present day.<sup>1178</sup> While the FBI was informed that some Moors believed, like some NOI members, that the phrase “cutting off heads” was to be taken literally (with devils understood as referring to whites), there is no evidence that such an action was ever carried out, so it is certainly possible that the phrase was primarily understood the same way that most NOI members understood it—as calling for the conversion of African Americans to Islam.<sup>1179</sup> It seems probable, then, that these well-known expressions and ideas were originally in Givens-El’s MST faction—creatively derived from the MST catechism—and that they were passed on to the NOI from former MST members, or even Fard himself. While this may not bring us closer to knowing whether Fard had indeed been in the MST it definitely strengthens my claim that the NOI’s doctrines, including some of its most notorious ones, were not completely unique in the AAIR.

### **The Rise and Peak Years, 1930-1933**

Fard was not an immediate success among Detroit’s African Americans. For the rest of the year after his appearance in July 1930, Fard only gained a small following for his “Allah Temple of Islam” group and he did not have a regular meeting place.<sup>1180</sup> A number of accounts tell us that Fard, perhaps in an attempt to boost interest in his group, started portraying his movement as in line with Drew Ali’s MST. For instance, as was

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<sup>1178</sup> Report, 9/21/1943, Chicago file 14-39, 17, 38.

<sup>1179</sup> However, I cannot say this with certainty because while the FBI file does not say explicitly, it implies that the term “devils” was used exclusively for whites, and non-MST African Americans were only called “coolies.” I believe, based on the evidence above, that this was probably a misunderstanding on the FBI’s part. See MSTA FBI file, Report, 9/21/1943, Chicago file 14-39, 17, 38.

<sup>1180</sup> Wallace D. Fard FBI file, Report, Chicago 100-9129, 9/30/1942, 11.

pointed out above, like other MST leaders, Fard claimed a North African connection, and told at least some that he was from Morocco.<sup>1181</sup> Male members in the NOI under Fard wore, like in the MST, red fezzes, though these were somewhat different from the Moors' because they had on the front a star and crescent moon—while this symbol was important for the MST, the MST's version had a right-facing crescent moon, while the NOI's faced left, plus the MST did not put the symbol on its fezzes.<sup>1182</sup> Another important clue is that while NOI members were often given as “original names” either traditional Islamic names or an “X” (designating that they no longer used the surname given to them by whites), many NOI members had the MST surname of Bey.<sup>1183</sup> Also, in 1935, some NOI members in Chicago identified explicitly themselves as “Moors.”<sup>1184</sup> Finally, it is relatively well-documented that many of Fard's early followers, including the first people

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<sup>1181</sup> MSTA FBI file, Report, 3/16/1943, Detroit file 100-6603, 4; “Killer Shows Detectives How He Slew,” *Detroit Evening Times*, November 22, 1932, 2.

<sup>1182</sup> See *Final Call to Islam* 1, no. 2 (August 18, 1934): 1; “500 Join March to Ask Voodoo Kings' Freedom,” *Detroit Free Press*, November 25, 1932, 1, 2; “Voodoo Slayer Doffs Hat to ‘King’ Boyne,” *Detroit Evening Times*, November 25, 1932, 1; “Cult Members Run Amuck During Court Trial,” *Atlanta Daily World*, March 7, 1935, 1, 2.

<sup>1183</sup> “500 Join March”; “Cultists Riot in Court; One Death, 41 Hurt,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 5, 1935, 1. There are a few interesting additional issues concerning this topic. First, in the latter of the two articles just cited (“Cultists Riot”) the NOI members were identified in the newspaper as “Moors,” and, unlike the person interviewed in 1932, they did not say Fard had come from Morocco but from “the holy city of Mecca in 1877”—the standard NOI teaching about Fard's birth. Also, there may have been so many “Beys” in the NOI that the NOI was likely sometimes referred to, informally, as “the Beys”; see “‘Asiatic’ Trend of Negroes is Cited,” *Detroit Evening Times*, November 22, 1932, 3. In addition, the FBI discovered that in 1937 in the Milwaukee temple all members' last names were either “X” or “Bey”; see Wallace D. Fard FBI file, Report, Milwaukee 14-4, 6/1/1942, 4. Finally, as mentioned in chapter 5, in 1950 the Detroit NOI temple's leaders both had the surname Bey.

<sup>1184</sup> See “Cultists Riot.”

Fard appointed as his ministers, Abdul Mohammed and Othman Ali,<sup>1185</sup> were former Moors.<sup>1186</sup>

Elijah Muhammad, born Elijah Poole, may have heard of Fard as early as 1930,<sup>1187</sup> but his interest increased in the spring of the following year when his father had met and told Elijah about the minister Abdul Mohammed. Elijah, who later claimed to have been a Prince Hall Mason and had possibly also been a Moor,<sup>1188</sup> visited Abdul to ask questions about the NOI's teachings. He subsequently decided to attend Fard's meetings.<sup>1189</sup> After introducing himself to Fard one night,<sup>1190</sup> Elijah became convinced of the truth of Fard's message and, having always wanted to be a minister, started preaching Fard's teachings in the streets of his city. Despite gaining Elijah and a few other

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<sup>1185</sup> Sahib, 91, 96. It is unknown if "Othman Ali" was the same person as Ugan Ali, the leading NOI member (general secretary and teacher at the NOI's headquarters in late 1932) who was arrested in connection to the Robert Harris killing.

<sup>1186</sup> MSTA FBI file, Report, Detroit 100-6603, 4; "Nation of Islam Deserted," 41.

<sup>1187</sup> Wallace D. Fard FBI file, Report, Chicago 100-9129, 9/30/1942, 11.

<sup>1188</sup> On his Masonic background, see Sahib, 90 and Elijah Muhammad, *The Secrets of Freemasonry* (Atlanta: Secretarius MEMPS, 1994), 15. Elijah's being a former Moor is a matter of some debate, and the NOI rejects the assertion. Some Moorish Americans claim to have what is purported to be a monthly report of the Detroit MST from 1928 that lists as members a "Bro. Robert Pool Bey" and "Sis. C. Pool Bey"—Elijah sometimes went as Robert, which was his middle name, he sometimes spelled "Poole" as "Pool," and his wife's name was Clara; for a copy of this document, see Way-El, 153. However, the main group of MST historians, ALI'S MEN, rejects the authenticity of this document because of it not reflecting the membership size that the Detroit group was thought to have at the time and because, inconsistent with most MST documents from the period, it was not written on official MST stationery. Nevertheless, in a statement given to a graduate student researcher in the 1970s, Benjamin X Mitchell, an early NOI leader and close friend of Elijah Muhammad, claimed that Elijah had visited both the Moors and Drew Ali. I recognize that Mitchell may have been referring to Elijah's travels to various MST groups in the late 1930s, but the specific mention of meeting Drew Ali should at least leave open the possibility that Elijah had actually met the MST prophet and had been a Moor himself. See Clifton E. Marsh, "The World Community of Islam in the West: From Black Muslims to Muslims (1931-1977)" (PhD diss., Syracuse University, 1971), 92-93.

<sup>1189</sup> Sahib, 91.

<sup>1190</sup> Evanzz claims that Clara, Elijah's wife, was the first in his family to meet Fard, and Elijah met him when she invited Fard over to dinner; see Evanzz, 71.

followers, however, Fard was still unable to quickly turn his Allah Temple of Islam into a strong movement. But in August 1931, Fard finally found a large and attentive audience when he preached outside of a local UNIA meeting that Elijah was reportedly attending.<sup>1191</sup> Just as with the examples of the Ahmadis, the MST, Sufi Abdul Hamid, and the Takahashi/Manansala groups, the NOI was able to achieve success when it connected itself to those who had already been committed to Garvey's ideology. It also helped that, upon converting, members, because of the group's Puritan-like philosophy, began to be more financially prosperous, which attracted more members.<sup>1192</sup> Fard soon established a stable headquarters on Hastings Street and several branches in the nearby area,<sup>1193</sup> and, with the help of Elijah who was now a "Supreme Minister,"<sup>1194</sup> began spreading the message beyond Detroit into the black ghettos of Chicago and Milwaukee, where temples would be established by 1932.<sup>1195</sup>

1932 was in fact a year of tremendous growth for the Allah Temple of Islam, now also alternatively called the Order of Islam and the American Moslem Brotherhood.<sup>1196</sup>

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<sup>1191</sup> Adeyemi Ademola, "Nation of Islam Deserted," *African Mirror* (Aug-Sep 1979): 37. Elijah has at some points denied being a member of the UNIA, but, just as there is with assertions about his supposed membership in the MST, anecdotal evidence that says otherwise.

<sup>1192</sup> Beynon, 905-906.

<sup>1193</sup> The address was 3408 Hastings Street; see "Voodoo Killer Tries to Flee from Police," *Detroit Evening Times*, November 23, 1932, 2; Sahib, 91; Wallace D. Fard FBI file, Report, Chicago 100-9129, 9/30/1942, 11.

<sup>1194</sup> Clegg, 23.

<sup>1195</sup> Sahib, 78-79; Clegg, 78; Ernest McGee, "Devoutness Key to Islam Success," *Daily Defender* (Chicago), April 5, 1956, 8.

<sup>1196</sup> On the American Moslem Brotherhood name, see the picture of its membership card accompanying the "'Asiatic' Trend" article. This card was associated with the temple at 2840 St. Antoine Street; and the group using this name was still active at that address as late as April 1934; see "Many Thanks" [advertisement], *Afro-American*, April 21, 1934, 4.

Fard had begun teaching that Japan would in 1934 attack the U.S. with a “mothership,” a giant bombing airplane, and “the Armageddon war [would] take place to determine whether the Asiatics or the Caucasians will have to get off this planet.”<sup>1197</sup> This added a sense of imminence, which helped increase excitement in the group. Fard also established the University of Islam school for children of members and the Moslem Girls’ Training and General Civilization Class to teach young females about cooking and housework. By the end of the year, the NOI had 4-8,000 registered members.<sup>1198</sup> It was so well organized that Fard, as Sahib explains, “gradually sank into the background of the movement and took the role of the administrator. He did not come to the temple any more but he practiced his plan by contacting his minister whenever he had an order, decision, or instruction.”<sup>1199</sup>

Things seem to have been progressing smoothly until late November 1932, when Fard and the NOI experienced their first major confrontation with the government. On

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<sup>1197</sup> Wallace D. Fard FBI file, Report, Washington, D.C. file 14-12, 6/19/1942, 9; “Voodoo Killer Tries”; “Member Lists Are Checked by Police,” *Detroit Evening Times*, November 24, 1932, 2.

<sup>1198</sup> “Suburbs also in Voodoo Net,” *Detroit Free Press*, November 29, 1932, 9. Eight thousand was said to be the number of people listed in the group’s membership register found by police, and it was the number repeated frequently in the press during the winter of 1932. However, this number was in fact first used in the press a few days before “Suburbs” was published, when it was reported that a leader in the NOI, Ugan Ali, claimed that 8,000 was the group’s total membership (see “Leader of Cult Admits Slaying at Home ‘Altar,’” *Detroit Free Press*, November 21, 1932, 1, 3). The reporter for the November 29 article could have simply assumed Ali’s number was correct and used it when reporting the police department’s finding about the NOI membership register. This possibility is supported by the fact that in the following May, and then again in 1937, the same Detroit newspaper claimed that there were only 4,000 members in the late 1932/early 1933 period (see “Banished Leader of Cult Arrested,” *Detroit Free Press*, May 26, 1933, 10 and “Voodoo Probe in City Widens,” *Detroit Free Press*, January 20, 1937, 4). Also supporting this theory is the fact that Beynon noted that, in the 1930s, it was the NOI officials who were estimating 8,000, while the Detroit Police estimated 5,000 (see Beynon, 897, n10).

<sup>1199</sup> Sahib, 70. Also see Beynon, 902.

November 20<sup>th</sup>, Robert Harris, who despite his claim of being a “king of Islam,” was probably just an ordinary member of the Hastings Street temple,<sup>1200</sup> killed his roomer, John J. Smith, apparently as part of a human sacrifice ordered by the “Gods of Islam” to make Harris “the Saviour of the world.”<sup>1201</sup> Harris did not attempt to decapitate Smith, as might be expected, but instead drove a knife into Smith’s heart. Apparently, Harris was mentally unstable and was inspired to perform this ritual after reading in a “cheap magazine ... a story of mysticism of the desert ... [which said that] ‘the believer must be stabbed through the heart’.”<sup>1202</sup> Although they knew about Smith’s mental state and the fact that Smith’s murder had largely been influenced by a non-NOI text, when the Detroit police found out that three years earlier a different black Muslim, who was also “plainly psychopathic,” had attempted to kill Detroit residents for similarly peculiar reasons, they decided to look deeper into the group, which was now being called by the press a “voodoo cult.”<sup>1203</sup> The police entered the Hastings Street temple, where they learned about the doctrines instructing followers to “kill ‘devils’” and, because the leader at that meeting affirmed that he considered himself a god (following the NOI understanding of black divinity), the police apparently assumed this was evidence that he was a “God of Islam” who told Smith to kill, and they arrested him.<sup>1204</sup> When the police learned that Harris had previously attacked and planned to attack others, and that members of the NOI

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<sup>1200</sup> See “Voodoo Killer Tries.” Beynon (p. 903), however, says he was a “prominent member” of the NOI, but he may have based this claim on newspaper articles or outsiders’ memories of the event.

<sup>1201</sup> Beynon, 903.

<sup>1202</sup> “Leader of Cult,” 2.

<sup>1203</sup> See the headlines of the articles covering the event in Detroit’s newspapers at the time.

<sup>1204</sup> “Raided Temple Bares Grip of Voodoo in City,” *Detroit Free Press*, November 23, 1932, 1, 3.

had threatened welfare agents to persuade them to continue to give NOI members government assistance, they decided that something had to be done about the movement.<sup>1205</sup> Before they could make a major move, however, 500 NOI followers, their militancy being stronger and more organized than that of other AAIR groups, marched to the local police station and courthouse in support of Harris and the other members who had been arrested.<sup>1206</sup> This significantly increased the concerns of local authorities about the possible threat the group posed. On December 6<sup>th</sup>, Fard was “persuaded” by police to disband the NOI and leave the city; and he promised them that he would not return.<sup>1207</sup>

But Fard was back in Detroit by January.<sup>1208</sup> Now he was using the name Wallace Fard Muhammad, perhaps emphasizing his divinity, and stressing to his followers that an Armageddon was definitely on the horizon.<sup>1209</sup> During this period, because Fard had to maintain a low profile, and because the other head ministers had by this time begun separating themselves from Fard (see below), Elijah was acting as the main leader of the NOI. Over the next few months, he began writing several letters promoting NOI doctrines that were published in the *Afro-American*, a national black newspaper.<sup>1210</sup> In

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<sup>1205</sup> “Intended Voodoo Victims’ Number Still Mounting,” *Detroit Free Press*, November 27, 1932, 1, 4; “‘Asiatic’ Trend.”

<sup>1206</sup> “500 Join March to Ask Voodoo Kings’ Freedom,” *Detroit Free Press*, November 25, 1934, 1, 2; “Voodoo Slayer Doffs.”

<sup>1207</sup> “Voodoo’s Reign Here is Broken,” *Detroit Free Press*, December 7, 1932, 7; “Voodoo Ranks Disbanding,” *Detroit Evening Times*, December 7, 1932, 2.

<sup>1208</sup> Evanzz, 94.

<sup>1209</sup> Evanzz, 94-95; Clegg, 33.

<sup>1210</sup> Elijah Karriem [Muhammad], “Detroit’s Moslems Gave Dr. DuBois a Cheer, This Reader Says,” *Afro-American*, January 28, 1933, 6; Elijah Karriem, “Preachers Don’t Know the Bible and Must Hear the Prophet in Detroit,” *Afro-American*, April 1, 1933, 6; Elijah Karriem, “‘Prophet’ of Detroit Says Black

May 1933, Fard was picked up again by the police and was told once more to leave the city.<sup>1211</sup>

### **Schisms in the NOI, 1933-1942**

Fard's presence in Detroit was, undeniably, what had held the group together. Without him leading the NOI, the same thing that happened in Chicago after Drew Ali passed away began happening in Detroit. Within a few months of Fard's second departure, internal tensions rose to the surface and several small factions began to spring up around Hastings Street.<sup>1212</sup> A major source of contention during this period was the degree to which MST doctrines would be incorporated into the movement. From the beginning, Fard had been irritated with his first ministers, Abdul Mohammed and Othman Ali, because their message was primarily a MST one.<sup>1213</sup>

In fact, even while still serving as a NOI minister, Abdul had started speaking against Fard and was attempting to gain control of the NOI.<sup>1214</sup> Soon, Abdul reportedly began openly preaching MST doctrines as well as pro-U.S. ideas,<sup>1215</sup> and it seems that around late 1932/early 1933, around the time Fard was kicked out of Detroit for the first time, Abdul organized—or at least came up with the idea for—a new, non-Islamic

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Man is Cream of World, Not Footmat," *Afro-American*, April 15, 1933, 6; Elijah Karriem, "Whose Christianity?," *Afro-American*, April 22, 1933, 6; Elijah Karriem, "Moslems are Misrepresented by Caucasians," *Afro-American*, May 6, 1933, 6.

<sup>1211</sup> "Banished Leader."

<sup>1212</sup> Clegg, 35; Beynon, 904; Sahib, 77. We do not know the names of most of these factions; one of the few names we know is "Rebels against the Will of Allah," but we still do not know the member composition or ideology of this group.

<sup>1213</sup> Sahib, 96.

<sup>1214</sup> Sahib, 74.

<sup>1215</sup> Clegg, 35.

African-American uplift group called the Development of Our Own (DOO).<sup>1216</sup> As discussed in chapter 5, in the spring or early summer of 1933, the Japanese nationalist, Naka/Takahashi, tried to work with Abdul to run this group, but appears to have either taken over Abdul's group or to have led a more popular copycat organization, which quickly gained a following of several hundred, including a few Indian Muslim immigrants. The fact that Takahashi's group was popular during the time that Fard was either exiled or keeping a low profile raises the likelihood that the DOO was drawing recruits away from the NOI.<sup>1217</sup> Takahashi even claimed to have both written a book and based his group on what he called the "Five Guiding Principles"—which was the title of a book Fard had claimed to have written.<sup>1218</sup> Takahashi's group was so successful that after his arrest in December 1933 and then deportation the following April, his DOO stayed popular. In 1934, it was getting more press than ever before, as the *Tribune-Independent*, the local black newspaper, ran essays by DOO members on an almost weekly basis from March through October.

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<sup>1216</sup> See the discussion and notes concerning Abdul Mohammed in chapter 5.

<sup>1217</sup> While Evanzz makes extensive claims about the relationship between Takahashi, Elijah, and Fard, most of these are not backed up by the FBI files I have seen, which show minimal contact. Still, Evanzz has informed me that he is confident this data is contained in the files he acquired; an attempt should be made to look through Evanzz's papers, which are currently in the possession of the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center. Fard FBI file, Report, 6/19/1942, Washington, D.C. file 14-12, 10; Fard FBI file, Memorandum, [name withheld] to SAC, Detroit, 12/11/1957, 2.

<sup>1218</sup> See the previous note. There was also a rumor that Fard had desired to take over the DOO, but Takahashi would not even let him join. Also, in connection to the five "principles," it is interesting that A) Drew Ali's MST had "five principles" (Love, Truth, Peace, Freedom, and Justice) and B) Elijah referred to what we today call the five "pillars" of Islam as the five "principles"; see NOI FBI file (in Fard FBI file), Report, 2/21/57, Chicago file 25-20607, 5.

Meanwhile, Elijah's NOI faction, called the "Temple People," was dedicated exclusively to Fard's teachings.<sup>1219</sup> Fard's divinity status, a topic on which Fard himself had been somewhat ambiguous,<sup>1220</sup> was emphasized more and Elijah's rank was raised to "messenger" or "apostle," and he sometimes referred to himself as Fard's "prophet."<sup>1221</sup> But those who desired to remain exclusively loyal to Fard's doctrines and Elijah's leadership were few, and the NOI membership numbers began rapidly declining. So many people had left the movement out of loss of interest, fear of government persecution, and frustration with infighting that within the year the Detroit faction following Elijah had been reduced to only 180.<sup>1222</sup>

Fard was not yet completely out of the picture, but it was becoming clear that his time leading the Nation was soon to be over. After spending the summer of 1933 traveling across the U.S.,<sup>1223</sup> in September he appeared in Chicago and was quickly arrested.<sup>1224</sup> He then returned to Detroit more millennialistic than ever, encouraging the Muslims to pull their children out of public school so they could be enrolled in the

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<sup>1219</sup> Sahib, 76-77.

<sup>1220</sup> Though some might point out that Fard told police that he was the "supreme being on earth" ("Negro Leaders Open," 2) and "the Supreme Ruler of the Universe" (Beynon, 897), some of Fard's followers who later insisted on his divinity admitted that Fard "told those police more about himself than he would ever tell us" (Beynon, 897).

<sup>1221</sup> Sahib, 76-77.

<sup>1222</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1223</sup> Sahib, 71. Fard may have had followers in places other than the three cities in which the NOI verifiably existed before 1939 (Detroit, Chicago, and Milwaukee). In 1932, police found in his hotel room "1,000 letters from all sections of the country" and his FBI file contains the unsubstantiated claim that the NOI had a following in Cleveland by the early 1940s, though this group was not given a temple number. See "Voodoo Killer Tied up after Starting Fire," *Detroit Evening Times*, November 27, 1932, part I, 3; Fard FBI file, Report, 10/18/1943, Chicago file 100-12899, 6.

<sup>1224</sup> Evanzz, 95.

University of Islam, and telling leaders to change the signs on the Universities to make them appear as if they had been replaced in order to avoid police scrutiny.<sup>1225</sup> His return apparently led to a modest revival of the NOI, and for the next few months he traveled back and forth between Chicago and Detroit to avoid detection by police.

At this time, Elijah was feeling a great deal of pressure. He had started receiving death threats from competing NOI faction leaders.<sup>1226</sup> And, due to the Muslim children not attending the city's schools, in January the police began looking for the missing children in Detroit's black neighborhood. By March 1934, the investigation—and the fact that the NOI still existed in the city—became widespread public knowledge.<sup>1227</sup> In April, the University of Islam on Hastings Street was raided and fourteen of its instructors were arrested for contributing to the delinquency of the children.<sup>1228</sup> Fed up with the police persecution, nearly fifty NOI members marched to the police station where they rioted, injuring several policemen.<sup>1229</sup> Most of the rioters' charges were dropped, however, and the court simply required that Elijah send the children back to public school.<sup>1230</sup> While the NOI's second display of militancy was now inspiring some sympathizers—including

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<sup>1225</sup> Evanzz, 95-96.

<sup>1226</sup> Clegg, 35.

<sup>1227</sup> "'Islam' Faces Double Probe," *Detroit Free Press*, March 28, 1934, A07.

<sup>1228</sup> "'Islam' Cult Faces Court," *Detroit News*, April 17, 1934, 15; "Voodoo University Raided by Police; 13 Cultists Seized," *Detroit Free Press*, April 17, 1934, 1, 2; "They Haul Down the 'Flag of Islam'," *Detroit Free Press*, April 17, 1934, 1.

<sup>1229</sup> "13 Policemen Hurt Battling Voodoo Band," *Detroit Free Press*, April 19, 1934, 1, 3.

<sup>1230</sup> "Girl Recounts Lore of Islam," *Detroit Free Press*, April 26, 1934, 1, 2.

a local black lawyer who wrote for the *Tribune-Independent* a three-part piece promoting Islam<sup>1231</sup>—it was not enough to keep the movement strong.

At some point during the first half of 1934, Fard left Detroit for the last time, leaving the unstable community again without its main leader.<sup>1232</sup> Elijah was now more than ever stressing Fard's divinity, a claim that Elijah's brother, Kallat, a Temple People leader, rejected, and this would eventually lead to him parting ways and joining Abdul Mohammed's group.<sup>1233</sup> Osman Sharrieff, the minister of Chicago's temple who had been personally trained by Fard, also rejected Elijah's assertion, saying Fard never claimed he was Allah and that he had never heard Fard say Elijah was a prophet.<sup>1234</sup> Osman broke with the Temple People, taking several hundred of Elijah's followers with him to form what he called the Moslem Brotherhood. Chicago, however, was still a less hostile location for Elijah than Detroit, where he continued to receive death threats. In September, Elijah left for Chicago, though he was unable to revive his faction there.<sup>1235</sup>

The NOI continued to decline numerically, organizationally, and in morale. In March and April 1935, the Muslims rioted twice in Chicago courts, resulting in dozens

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<sup>1231</sup> See J.B. Morris' "Islam as the Black Man's Religion," which ran in the *Tribune-Independent* for three weeks in July that year. Interestingly, the *Tribune-Independent*, Detroit's main black newspaper at the time, came to the defense of the NOI, at least as far as urging readers not to rush to judgment about the group and arguing that the NOI was being persecuted because it was composed of two things white America did not like: blacks and Muslims; see "The Islam Issue in Detroit," *Tribune-Independent*, April 28, 1934, 8.

<sup>1232</sup> Sahib, 71; Beynon, 896.

<sup>1233</sup> Evanzz, 104-105.

<sup>1234</sup> Evanzz, 104.

<sup>1235</sup> Clegg, 37-38.

injured and, indirectly, one death.<sup>1236</sup> At the same time, internal dissent was increasing there, with Kallat leading a faction in Chicago that was extremely critical of Elijah. By December 1935, the number of Chicago Temple People had dropped from 400 to just thirteen,<sup>1237</sup> and the total number of Temple People in the U.S. was probably no more than 250. Now receiving death threats in Chicago, Elijah parted for Milwaukee, the location of his only other temple. But resentment against Elijah was strong, and he knew that Milwaukee could only be safe for so long; within a few weeks he left for Madison and then quickly moved to Washington, D.C., which he made his home for the next few years.<sup>1238</sup> During this period, the schisms continued; in 1938 by Detroit's Temple People minister, Theodore Rozier, created his own break-off faction, and it was during this time that the OMA and DOAM were established, drawing more NOI believers away from the Temple People.<sup>1239</sup> Outside organizations, meanwhile, attempted to exploit the factionalism by trying to take control of the group, though these all failed as frequently as the NOI factions' attempts to regain control.<sup>1240</sup> In 1937, the movement received more bad press and police scrutiny when a follower of one faction (according to one account, it

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<sup>1236</sup> Clegg, 39; "Cultists Riot in Court; One Death, 41 Hurt," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 6, 1935, 1; "Cult Members Run Amuck During Court Trial," *Atlanta Daily World*, March 7, 1935, 1, 2; "Forty Cultists Put in Jail for Courtroom Riot," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 7, 1935, 13; "Moors Battle in Court; 40 Hurt," *Chicago Defender* (Ntl ed.), March 9, 1935, 1, 2.

<sup>1237</sup> Clegg, 40.

<sup>1238</sup> Sahib, 80; Clegg, 79-81.

<sup>1239</sup> Sahib, 74. Another break-off was made by Azzim Shah in 1936; see Sahib, 74. Clegg (p. 82) mentions other factions.

<sup>1240</sup> Sahib 78; Beynon, 904-905; Clegg, 37. One of the figures, Beynon tells us, was Prince Wyyzezwxward S.J. Challoughiezilezise, supposedly of the Royal House of Ethiopia. I have found only one newspaper account discussing this figure: "Bishop of Ethiopia Lectures in Detroit," *Tribune-Independent*, April 14, 1934, 1.

was that of Abdul Mohammed) attempted to ritualistically boil and eat his wife and daughter in order to atone for his sins.<sup>1241</sup> With these schisms and controversies piling up, by 1938, Elijah's Temple People had probably dropped off to less than 200 members—which would be the group's nadir.

Settling in Washington, hundreds of miles from the turmoil in the Midwest, Elijah soon set to work rebuilding his following. He converted the family from whom he rented his room, the Mitchells, and by 1939 had established in the city the fourth NOI temple.<sup>1242</sup> Elijah spent a great deal of time studying, frequently reading about religion, black history, and Freemasonry at the Library of Congress. He also traveled to meet Moorish Americans in various eastern cities (even meeting and speaking with Turner-El's MDNMNA in Hartford)<sup>1243</sup> and he decided to ban the use of fezzes in order to make the NOI more distinct from the MST.<sup>1244</sup> Meanwhile, though the Milwaukee group had plateaued with only two dozen members,<sup>1245</sup> the small contingent in Chicago began to

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<sup>1241</sup> "Police Study Story of Cult," *Detroit News*, January 19, 1937, 15; "Death Rituals Revived in City by Voodoo Cult," *Detroit Free Press*, January 19, 1937, 1; "Voodoo Probe in City Widens," *Detroit Free Press*, January 20, 1937, 4; "Fear of Being Sacrificed Leads to Voodoo Cult Today," *Evening News* (North Tonawanda, NY), January 20, 1937, 1, 9.

<sup>1242</sup> Clegg, 79-80.

<sup>1243</sup> Muhammad, *Secrets of Freemasonry*, 24; Clegg, 80; Marsh, "World Community," 92-93; Fard FBI file, Report, 9/30/1942, Chicago file 100-9129, 12.

<sup>1244</sup> Clegg, 81.

<sup>1245</sup> Wallace D. Fard FBI file, Report, Milwaukee 14-4, 6/1/1942, 4.

slowly grow.<sup>1246</sup> By 1942, the Temple People, one of the few NOI factions still in existence, had somewhere between 350 and 500 members.<sup>1247</sup>

### **Imprisonment and Rebirth, 1942-1954**

In 1942 and 1943—the period of the beginning of the Sunni maturation phase and the zenith of the MST’s post-Drew Ali growth—the NOI received another hard blow. Following the U.S.’s recent decision to enter the Second World War, the FBI began to direct its resources towards prosecuting draft evasion and anti-American sentiment. While African-American Muslims of several sects and factions were investigated and arrested as a result, the NOI, which taught members that they should not register for the draft because they were already registered for the Selective Service in Mecca, had more followers imprisoned and felt the impact of this crackdown to a far greater degree than the other AAIR groups.<sup>1248</sup> Between 1942 and 1943, dozens of male Temple People

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<sup>1246</sup> Sahib, 81.

<sup>1247</sup> The Chicago group had 150-300 members (Clegg, 81); Detroit probably had around fifty (FBI file on Elijah Muhammad, Report, 8/6/1942, file 100-5549, [31?]); and Milwaukee still had around twenty-two.

<sup>1248</sup> Here is a partial list of newspaper articles on the topic: “‘Moslems’ Indicted in Draft Evasion,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, April 11, 1942, 10; “Judge and Draft Dodger Debate War,” *Afro-American*, May 16, 1942, 10; “FBI Nab Red Caps as Draft Evaders,” *Plaindealer* (Kansas City, Kansas), July 3, 1942, 1, 8; “Tells Court His Allegiance Pledged to ‘Islam’; Not U.S.,” *Chicago Defender* (Ntl ed.), August 8, 1942, 12; “Sedition and Draft Charges Jail ‘Moslems’,” *New Journal and Guide*, September 26, 1942, B1; “38 ‘Negro Moslems’ Indicted in Chicago,” *New Journal and Guide*, October 3, 1942, B1; “38 Members of Mystic Cults Indicted by U.S.,” *Atlanta Daily World*, October 5, 1942, 1; “Technicality Fails to Halt Draft Rule,” *Sunday Times-Advertiser* (Trenton, NJ), October 18, 1942, 8; “Balks at Blood Test Held in \$1,000 Bond,” *Trenton Evening Times*, October 21, 1942, 5; “14,791 Draft Evasion Cases Uncovered in 3 Months,” *New Journal and Guide*, October 31, 1942, A20; “Draft Dodger Guilty in Capital,” *New Journal and Guide*, October 31, 1942, B11; “Indict Trentonian for Draft Charge,” *Trenton Evening Times*, November 12, 1942, 28; “‘Moslems’ Arrested as Draft Dodgers,” *Atlanta Daily World*, December 5, 1942, 6; “Negroes Represent Less than 2 Per Cent of Draft Dodgers Jailed,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, September 11, 1943, 3; “150 Objectors in Federal Prisons,” *Afro-American*, October 16, 1943, 1, 14.

members, including Elijah and most of the other leaders in the group, were sent to prison for evading the Selective Service, resulting in the near collapse of the movement.<sup>1249</sup>

By the early 1940s, the NOI had been subject to more government investigation and prosecution than any other African-American Islamic group in the AAIR. Though the MST had several small factions challenging the government, while under Drew Ali there were only a few months—in the spring of 1929, after the Greene killing—when the main body of the group felt a sense of persecution. For most of the Drew Ali period, Drew Ali had, ostensibly, been in support of the U.S. government. During and after the Great Schism, though some factions and individuals dealt with government pressure, overall the persecutory and anti-government feeling was diffuse and did not become a key element in the movement's identity. Meanwhile, the other African-American Islamic groups (including the Takahashi/Manansala groups, which had lost much of their political character) were generally even less hostile to the government and, accordingly, received less persecution. In contrast, the NOI, which was already more militant than the other groups, had felt that the government had persistently and consistently singled it out for persecution because it was both African-American and Islamic. When a large number of men in Elijah's faction became imprisoned, this only further confirmed their feelings, and

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<sup>1249</sup> Sahib, 81. While some place the number in the thirties, according to one count, fifty-four NOI members were imprisoned for draft evasion; see "Negroes Represent Less." Decline in temple numbers at this time are also noted in Clegg, 97; FBI file on Elijah Muhammad, Report, 10/23/1943, file 100-5549, 3; FBI file on Elijah Muhammad, Report, 8/15/1942, file 100-9129, 17; FBI file on Elijah Muhammad, Report, 6/1/1942, file 14-4, 1.

it, as government persecution frequently does to millennialistic religious sects,<sup>1250</sup> increased their belief in the truth of their doctrines and in an imminent Armageddon.

It was in this context of the NOI members gaining a far greater level of belief in their teachings that the NOI was reborn. Many of those who were not sent to prison started reorganizing and bringing in converts, and when the prisoners began getting released and coming back to the temples, the group saw this as more evidence that its mission was divinely sanctioned, and it was expected that Fard would return to wipe out the world's white population.<sup>1251</sup> Meanwhile, Elijah, who was not released until 1946, realized that the prisons, which were becoming storehouses of blacks resentful towards whites, were fertile grounds for spreading the NOI teachings and militant spirit.<sup>1252</sup> He determined that the key to growth would be to reach imprisoned and young African Americans, the most disenfranchised populations in the U.S. The youth, who had generally been ignored by African-American Islam promoters, were especially important because, as Elijah later would tell Malcolm X, "once you get them, the older ones will follow through shame."<sup>1253</sup>

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<sup>1250</sup> See, for example, John R. Hall, "The Apocalypse at Jonestown," in *Cults and New Religious Movements: A Reader*, ed. Lorne L. Dawson (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 186-207; Jean-Francois Mayer, "'Our Terrestrial Journey is Coming to an End': The Last Voyage of the Solar Temple," in *Cults and New Religious Movements: A Reader*, ed. Lorne L. Dawson (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 208-226.

<sup>1251</sup> Sahib, 81.

<sup>1252</sup> Clegg, 107.

<sup>1253</sup> Clegg, 108.

Although the overall membership numbers did not significantly increase over the next few years,<sup>1254</sup> spirits were high and three new temples were opened by 1946: Cincinnati (No. 5), Baltimore (No. 6), and Harlem (No. 7).<sup>1255</sup> Meanwhile, the more mature and experienced Elijah began implementing a number of business activities, which were likely inspired by the MST efforts that he had learned about during his travels in the late 1930s. In 1945, the group bought a farm and a restaurant,<sup>1256</sup> and in 1947 the Chicago temple, now the NOI headquarters, launched a grocery, restaurant, and bakery at 3117 South Wentworth Avenue that employed a combined forty-five Muslims.<sup>1257</sup> In addition, the group strengthened its education program, expanding the Chicago temple's schoolroom and paying a Palestinian immigrant, Jamil Diab, to teach Arabic.

At the beginning of the next decade, Elijah introduced a number of changes. The first was establishing an annual gathering of Muslims around the time of Fard's birthday in February, what was called Savior's Day. To attend, members had to give a minimum of \$50. In addition, around this time, as I have mentioned, Fard's "Lessons" were removed from circulation so that Elijah could, as one scholar has explained, "interpret

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<sup>1254</sup> Evanzz, 159.

<sup>1255</sup> The Harlem temple was established in 1946 (see Marc Ferris, "'Achieve the Pleasure of Allah': Immigrant Muslim Communities in New York City 1893–1991" in *Muslim Communities in North America*, eds. Yvonne Y. Haddad and Jane I. Smith (Albany: State University of New York, 1994), 215). Because NOI temples were numbered in the order in which they were established, and we know the Harlem temple (No. 7) was established in 1946, we can assume that temples number 5 and 6 (Cincinnati and Baltimore, respectively) were established prior to this and after 1943 when the FBI investigated the NOI and found only the temples in Detroit, Chicago, Milwaukee, and Washington, plus, perhaps, a short-lived one in Cleveland (see Fard FBI file, Report, 10/18/1943, Chicago file 100-12899, 6).

<sup>1256</sup> Sahib, 83-84; Clegg, 99.

<sup>1257</sup> Clegg, 99-100.

[them] ... and put the emphasis where he wanted the emphasis to be.”<sup>1258</sup> Elijah also increased the amount of money members had to regularly contribute.<sup>1259</sup> By 1952, Elijah was worth an estimated \$75,000, not including his home and other real estate owned by temple; his income was approximately \$25,000, largely coming from donations and profits from the group’s businesses.<sup>1260</sup> And though the overall membership almost certainly still did not yet exceed 600,<sup>1261</sup> the group was definitely growing, having established temples in San Diego (No. 8), Youngstown (No. 9), and Atlantic City (No. 10). The NOI was now spread further across the country and was far wealthier than it ever had been before. Because of these developments, Elijah, who was now the uncontested leader of the only known remaining strong NOI faction,<sup>1262</sup> had perhaps more power at that time than he had in the early 1930s.

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<sup>1258</sup> Clegg, 104, 105.

<sup>1259</sup> Fard FBI file, Correlation Summary, 1/13/1958, 43.

<sup>1260</sup> Clegg, 100.

<sup>1261</sup> I am making this claim based on three main pieces of evidence. First is that in as late as 1951, the Chicago temple, by far the largest temple in the NOI, reportedly had 286 members (see Sahib, 57). Most other temples at that time, with the exception of maybe Detroit’s, probably had fewer than 100 members, if we are to judge by reports about the Harlem temple’s size at the time (see e.g., Bruce Perry, *Malcolm: The Life of a Man who Changed Black America* (Barrytown, NY: Station Hill Press, 1991), 161). Second, in August 1952 Malcolm X noted that the combined membership of the Detroit and Chicago temples—the two largest temples—was only around 200 (DeCaro, 100). The discrepancy between this number and the number from 1951 may be due to Malcolm not counting inactive members or having outdated information or both. Either way, however, it reflects the fact that the combined total membership numbers at these two temples in the early 1950s probably did not exceed 400. Third, the fact that only around 200 people came to the 1952 annual meeting (Clegg, 107-108), while meetings later in that decade would have over 1,000 people, even when total membership was probably no more than 10,000.

<sup>1262</sup> As mentioned above, in 1959, the FBI discovered “hundreds of old [African-American] Muslims in Detroit but they do not recognize Elijah as the leader and, therefore, refuse to follow him.” Most of these were probably followers of Sammsan, but some could have been in other groups connected to some of the early NOI factions. See Fard FBI file, Report, SA [name withheld] to SAC, Detroit, 11/6/1959, 3.

On August 7, 1952, a twenty-seven-year-old Malcolm X, who had by then served five years in prison, was paroled. Since 1949, after his siblings in Detroit had told him about their joining the NOI in the late 1940s, he had been corresponding with Elijah. Malcolm's father, who died when Malcolm was only six years old, had been a strong advocate and organizer for the UNIA. His death—so the family thought and the evidence suggests—was probably a murder committed by whites who were attempting to suppress black resistance in Lansing, where the family was living. The death of Malcolm's father had a tremendous impact on the family, and when Malcolm was twelve, his mother was institutionalized and the children were put into foster care. Malcolm grew resentful towards whites and turned to a life of indulgence and small-time criminal activity before finally being imprisoned. While incarcerated, he may have been introduced to Islam by an Ahmadi proselytizer,<sup>1263</sup> but, for all intents and purposes, the NOI was his first significant exposure to the religion. With his background, and the fact that his siblings joined the movement, Malcolm was a prime candidate for conversion to the NOI.

Malcolm X, in fact, epitomized the NOI's post-1942 identity. His experiences vis-à-vis the white world, his exposure to UNIA and Islamic ideas and symbols, his imprisonment, his sharp mind and tongue, his unrelenting passion and dedication, and his youth all were major elements emphasized in the movement. Almost immediately after Malcolm's release and joining of the Detroit temple, as Clegg describes it, "largely through [Malcolm's] proselytizing efforts, temple services drew larger and younger

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<sup>1263</sup> DeCaro, 130-137.

crowds, and the cavalcades to Temple No. [1] increased in length.”<sup>1264</sup> By the summer of 1953, Malcolm was made an assistant minister at the Detroit temple, and by the end of that year, Elijah, tremendously impressed with Malcolm’s efforts, sent Malcolm first to Boston and then to Philadelphia, where he started two new temples (No. 11 and No. 12, respectively) by spring.<sup>1265</sup> Within two years, Malcolm X had become one of the most effective proselytizers that the NOI had ever had. With the growing momentum that the NOI and Malcolm were gaining, Elijah felt that the time was right to try to reach the heart of African-American culture. In June 1954, he appointed Malcolm to be the head of Temple No. 7 in Harlem.

Though Malcolm’s transfer to Harlem was not the only reason for the NOI’s subsequent national success—its new-found sense of mission, its new promotional and business activities, and Elijah’s consolidation of power were all key components—it was a very symbolic event. No single Islamic organization had been able to unquestionably dominate African-American Islam in New York City. The MST groups, including Turner-El’s, were fairly small and not always concentrated in Harlem. Besides, their fragmentation had made them relatively weak. The Ahmadis and Abdul Hamid Suleiman’s Caananites Temple were not able to gain a critical mass of converts in the 1920s, and probably had even less Islamic influence on black New Yorkers than the Islamophilic UNIA, which itself did not form a genuine Islamic organization. The Sunni groups, meanwhile, because of their less militant and more democratic style, were not

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<sup>1264</sup> Clegg, 108.

<sup>1265</sup> Clegg, 108.

able to concentrate power into a single organization—each African-American majority mosque in New York City had only, at most, a few hundred members. Malcolm’s coming to Harlem, then, would signify a major turning point in the history of African-American Islam. As was pointed out in chapter 3, the many dynamics that flowed through the AAIR—the “mystical” Islam, the Garvey-inspired black nationalism, the immigrant influence—were all very prevalent in New York. With the new, more powerful NOI now there, the freely flowing dynamics would be reined in and then focused into a single form. Ultimately, Malcolm’s arrival in the birthplace of the era of great Islamic diversity and experimentation signified that the AAIR was about to come to an end, and the era of NOI dominance was about to begin.

#### **The Decline of the Renaissance and the New Dominance of the NOI, 1954-1959**

In 1954, though the NOI was beginning to grow at a faster pace than it had in the previous twenty years, it was still not the largest African-American Islamic movement. When the year opened there were probably just as many African-American Sunnis as there were NOI members. The title of largest movement, meanwhile, still was going to the MST, which—despite being split into several factions—probably had at that time at least 3,000 followers and several more unregistered believers scattered throughout the country. The MST, moreover, was also still the African-American Islamic group that was receiving the most press coverage up to this point. Clegg’s claim that “by the early 1950s, Elijah Muhammad had become the most salient icon in all the strands of Islam among American blacks” is in fact an overstatement.<sup>1266</sup> But it was only off by a few years.

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<sup>1266</sup> Clegg, 104.

In fact, by the summer of 1959, the NOI would be unquestionably the most dominant and well-known African-American Islamic movement in the U.S. Its fame—or notoriety, depending on the audience—had far surpassed that ever had by any other African-American Islamic movement. The Nation of Islam name was known in almost every U.S. home and in every Muslim-majority country. Elijah Muhammad was in regular communication with scholars, journalists, politicians, and international diplomats. Malcolm X’s face was being broadcast into televisions everywhere. By that year, when most U.S. Americans heard the term “Black Muslim,” they no longer thought of the fezzes of the MST or the beards, kufis, turbans, and robes of the Sunnis. “Black Muslim” had become almost completely associated with the images of Elijah, Malcolm, and disciplined crowds of well-kempt black men in dark suits and bow ties. While from 1920 to the mid-1950s African-American Islamic culture was characterized by significant diversity, by 1959, it was dominated by a single organization.

Many of the factors that led to this transmutation of the character of African-American Islamic culture were described in the earlier sections of this chapter: the disproportionate government persecution of the NOI; its early tradition of having relatively better-organized militancy; its leader (Elijah Muhammad) channeling the group’s energy into more productive and attractive activities, such as building highly-profitable businesses and recruiting the imprisoned and the young; and the gaining of Malcolm X—the sharp-minded and charismatic minister whose background made him a perfect recruiter for the NOI. But even with these elements in place, by 1954 the NOI still had not surpassed all other AAIR groups. It would take other factors—many of which

only emerged between 1954 and 1959—to help the NOI achieve its meteoric rise. These additional factors can be understood as being of three levels: the NOI’s own development and promotional activities, the changes among non-NOI AAIR groups, and societal transformations. This final section presents and analyzes how these three levels of factors contributed to the NOI’s growth in the mid-to-late 1950s.

#### Internal Factors: The NOI’s self-promotion and expansion

Once Malcolm X arrived in Harlem, he immediately set to work. Because the neighborhood was saturated with African-American-centered organizations, all competing for members, Malcolm had to find a way to make the NOI stand out. He went into the streets looking for followers of other black nationalist groups as well as churchgoers, particularly lower-class, southern evangelicals. While the other temple members handed out leaflets, Malcolm preached on sidewalks just outside of the churches as they were letting out from Sunday services. Like many of the earlier AAIR leaders, including Elijah, Malcolm referred to passages in the Bible concerning redemption and prophecy to legitimate the NOI.<sup>1267</sup> After a year and a half of slow but steady growth, Temple No. 7’s following was strong enough that Malcolm had it open a small restaurant.<sup>1268</sup> By mid-1956, Harlem reportedly had 300-400 NOI converts.<sup>1269</sup> In addition to these activities in Harlem, Malcolm was also responsible for establishing in 1955 the NOI’s next three temples—in Springfield, Massachusetts (No. 13), Hartford (No. 14), and Atlanta (No.

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<sup>1267</sup> X and Haley, 220-221; DeCaro, 104.

<sup>1268</sup> DeCaro, 109.

<sup>1269</sup> James Dancy, “What’s New in New York City? The Rapidly Growing Temple of Islam,” *Moslem World & the U.S.A.* (August-September 1956): 19.

15)—and he continued to convert prisoners, which Malcolm had been doing since first becoming a follower of Elijah.<sup>1270</sup> Through Malcolm’s efforts, then, the NOI name was steadily gaining recognition and respect in the northeast.

In Chicago, meanwhile, the NOI’s national headquarters was working on a new proselytization strategy. From late July through October 1955 it ran a weekly advertisement in the national edition of the *Chicago Defender*, promising that those who joined the NOI would be “forever blessed and Successful.”<sup>1271</sup> Running this advertisement, which also claimed that Islam was “The Religion of Our Forefathers” and listed the addresses of the first twelve temples, was one of the NOI’s first systematized attempts at intentionally using *public* mass media (as opposed to producing its own periodicals and flyers) for self-promotion. And it appears to have helped the movement grow: by February of the next year, reportedly over 3,000 people—many of whom were not even registered NOI members—showed up to the Savior’s Day meeting.<sup>1272</sup>

With the NOI becoming increasingly well known in Chicago, Ted Watson, who had just recently been made the editor and manager of the Chicago edition of the *Pittsburgh Courier*, the most widely circulated African-American newspaper at the time,<sup>1273</sup> thought this rather novel organization would make a good subject for a series of articles. In April 1956, the *Courier* ran three rather favorable feature stories on the NOI,

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<sup>1270</sup> DeCaro, 91-92, 110; “Local Criminals, in Prison, Claim Moslem Faith Now,” *Springfield Union*, April 21, 1950, 1, 7; “Four Convicts Turn Moslems, Get Cells Looking to Mecca,” *Boston Herald*, April 20, 1950, 3.

<sup>1271</sup> “Muhammad’s Temple #2, Illinois,” *Chicago Defender* (Ntl ed.), July 30, 1955, 4.

<sup>1272</sup> Abdul Basit Naeem, “The Rise of Elijah Muhammad,” *Moslem World & the U.S.A.* (June-July 1956): 22.

<sup>1273</sup> “Ted Watson of Defender,” *Chicago Tribune*, December 15, 1987.

complete with several large photographs of the community.<sup>1274</sup> The *Courier*'s interest in the NOI perfectly aligned with the group's desire to utilize mass media, and it appears that it was as a result of the two organizations connecting that Watson and the *Courier* agreed to let Elijah to write a weekly column promoting the NOI doctrines. "Mr. Muhammad Speaks," which was essentially a condensed sermon, began appearing in the weekly magazine section of the *Courier* in June<sup>1275</sup> and by July it was one of the paper's most popular and controversial columns.<sup>1276</sup> Letters poured in praising Elijah's "fearless" straightforwardness about the racial situation in the U.S. and thanking him for "uplifiting" and "open[ing] the eyes" of the *Courier*'s readers.<sup>1277</sup> It was language reminiscent of the Garvey era, echoing the pride UNIA members had both in Garvey and when they heard about the Moors' victories in the Rif War. The NOI in fact strengthened this connection to the UNIA when Elijah praised Garvey in his own speeches and when Malcolm stressed the Islamic influence on Garvey via Dusé Mohamed Ali.<sup>1278</sup> For many, Elijah Muhammad was becoming a sort of contemporary Garvey and the NOI Muslims were, in a way, being seen as America's true equivalent of the North African Moors in

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<sup>1274</sup> See Watson's "The Rise of Muhammad Temple of Islam," *Pittsburgh Courier*, April 7, 1956, SM3; "The Rise of the Moslems in Chicago," *Pittsburgh Courier*, April 14, 1956, SM6; "The Rise of the Moslems," *Pittsburgh Courier*, April 21, 1956, B2.

<sup>1275</sup> June 9, 1956, B3.

<sup>1276</sup> Earl Hill, "Thanks for 'Muhammad Speaks'," *Pittsburgh Courier*, July 7, 1956, 12; "'Mr. Muhammad Speaks' Irks These Readers," *Pittsburgh Courier*, July 14, 1956, 12; "Atlanta Readers Go for Mr. Muhammad," *Pittsburgh Courier*, July 21, 1956, 12; "Muhammad is Front Page News," *Pittsburgh Courier*, July 21, 1956, 12; John W. Simmons Jr., "Fearless Leader," *Pittsburgh Courier*, July 28, 1956, A8; Mr. Gibbson, "Just What We Need," *Pittsburgh Courier*, July 28, 1956, A8; "Nationwide Interest in Mr. Muhammad," *Pittsburgh Courier*, July 28, 1956, A8.

<sup>1277</sup> Reader letters about Elijah's column appeared almost weekly for the next year.

<sup>1278</sup> "University, Temple Center of Moslems in Chicagoland," *Chicago Defender* (Ntl ed.), February 22, 1958, 9; "Moslem Speaker Electrifies Garvey Crowd," *New York Amsterdam News*, August 10, 1957, 4.

the early 1920s. Some readers, however, were far less pleased with Elijah's rhetoric, and found his racial separatism message and biblical interpretation somewhat questionable and even potentially dangerous. But the positive feedback significantly outweighed the negative, and so the *Courier* reasoned that it would be in its interest to continue the column, which it did for the next four years.<sup>1279</sup>

This was an incredibly important moment in the history of African-American Islam. Prior to this time, though several African-American Muslims (including Elijah himself) had letters promoting their doctrines appear in various newspapers, and a number of black papers—such as the *Chicago Defender* in the 1920s—had made efforts to regularly feature positively-slanted articles about African-American Islamic groups, no newspaper had run a regular column by an African-American Islamic leader. Not only had Elijah accomplished this impressive feat, but he did it in the most widely read black newspaper and as one of the most experienced and rhetorically skilled leaders in the AAIR. Although Malcolm X's proselytizing efforts were surely important for recruiting core members, his ability to spread the name and message of the NOI paled in comparison to Elijah's column.

But the NOI's use of mass media did not end with "Mr. Muhammad Speaks." In the same month that Watson's articles on Muhammad appeared, the NOI began its relationship with the *Moslem World & the U.S.A.*, a bi-monthly magazine for Muslims published by Abdul Basit Naeem, a Pakistani Muslim missionary and entrepreneur who had been working with U.S. Muslims—including African-American Sunnis—since the

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<sup>1279</sup> The *Courier* cancelled the column in 1959 when the paper's controlling interest was changed; Lincoln, 122.

early 1950s.<sup>1280</sup> Naeem, seeing a growing Muslim community that could be used as an example of Islam's success in America, for the next two years regularly featured in his magazine the NOI and Elijah, including a number of Elijah's writings, next to articles about American and international Sunnis. Some issues were, in fact, devoted primarily to NOI topics; and Naeem defended the NOI against criticisms from Sunni Muslims with its wide circulation. The *Moslem World & the U.S.A.* played an important role in making the NOI known to not just Muslim immigrants in the U.S., but also to Muslim political and religious leaders outside of the country. The latter group took an interest in the NOI because it was seen as an organization—just as Turner-El's MDNMNA was—that could help promote their own interests in the U.S. However, the Muslim immigrant community, which was at the time striving to be accepted in U.S. society, grew angry over the NOI's claim about being Islamic, which was thought to give immigrant Muslims a bad name. This resulted in immigrant Muslims speaking out publicly against the legitimacy of the NOI's Islam—a controversy (discussed in chapter 6) that gave the NOI even more press.

In December of 1956, Elijah used his popularity and influence with the *Courier* to have it run, apparently in lieu of “Mr. Muhammad Speaks,” two lengthy commentaries by Malcolm X.<sup>1281</sup> With these essays, Malcolm proved that he too was an effective writer for the NOI and in April he was given his own column in the *New York Amsterdam News*

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<sup>1280</sup> The NOI first appeared in the April-May 1956 issue. For more on the NOI's relationship with this magazine, see DeCaro, 137-139, 150-151. The earliest documented connection we have between Naeem and African-American Muslims is in “Muslim Activities in Philadelphia.”

<sup>1281</sup> “We Are Rising From the Dead Since We Heard Messenger Muhammad Speak,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, December 15, 1956, B6; “We Have Risen from the Dead,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, December 22, 1956, B6.

entitled “God’s Angry Men.”<sup>1282</sup> Like Elijah’s “Mr. Muhammad Speaks,” Malcolm’s column inspired many and angered others. But most importantly, it exposed the wider African-American public in New York to the NOI message. And, having finally gotten Harlem’s ear, in July, Elijah took over the NOI column-writing in the *Amsterdam News*.<sup>1283</sup> The head of the NOI now had a direct influence on the heart of African-American culture.

The popularity of Elijah and Malcolm’s columns led to newspapers—particularly black newspapers—throughout the country showing a greater willingness to run news and feature stories about the NOI. Now, not only were notable stories being picked up more often, but minor stories, which would have been easily overlooked in the past, such as the numbers and types of people at NOI conventions, were given a few inches of print space and a headline. In only two years (1956 and 1957), the NOI impressively eclipsed the MST as the African-American Islamic group most mentioned in newspapers.

Interestingly, however, this unprecedented level of exposure to black America did not automatically translate into an unprecedented level of growth in official NOI membership numbers. In late 1959, after the NOI’s name had become so well-known that most white Americans had some familiarity with it, the group probably still had only

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<sup>1282</sup> This column was syndicated in various black newspapers throughout the country; see DeCaro, 108-109.

<sup>1283</sup> Malcolm’s column had in fact ended in early June, as it was originally only intended to have a short run. In early July, the *Amsterdam News* announced that Elijah would be writing a column. Elijah’s first article for the paper, which appeared on July 20, had a regular headline and not a formal title for a column, but starting on July 27 his column was titled “Islam World”; see “Moslem Leader to Write for Amsterdam News,” *New York Amsterdam News*, July 6, 1957, 3.

5,000 registered members.<sup>1284</sup> Even if that number was doubled, it would not have made the NOI technically that much larger than the early 1930s NOI or the late 1920s MST.

But this number is deceiving. The late 1950s NOI was undeniably more influential, and it could even legitimately be said “larger,” than its predecessors in the AAIR. What all the press attention and Malcolm’s efforts had helped produce was *an unprecedented level of unregistered believers and sympathizers*. These were people who, for example, eagerly awaited Elijah’s weekly columns, Malcolm’s speaking engagements, and may have attended NOI meetings. Elijah Muhammad and Malcolm X’s names were the subject of countless conversations throughout black America, and many people told their friends, relatives, and co-workers about how much respect they had for these dignified black men standing up to white racism. Tens of thousands believed in the NOI doctrines, perhaps even going as far as teaching them to their children, but they did so without become full members; they were not willing to make the numerous sacrifices that being a true member of the NOI meant.

Meanwhile, temples were continuously springing up. By the beginning of 1959, while there may have been only thirty *official* NOI temples,<sup>1285</sup> FBI lists—which contained temples that had not yet become official, including at least four in various prisons—showed that they totaled sixty, with around 3,000 registered members.<sup>1286</sup> In July, in the midst of the NOI’s impressive growth spurt, “The Hate that Hate Produce,” a five-part documentary on the NOI made by the reporters Mike Wallace and Louis

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<sup>1284</sup> Essien-Udom, 70-71.

<sup>1285</sup> Essien-Udom, 70.

<sup>1286</sup> See the temple summary data in Evanzz, 453-462.

Lomax, aired, reaching millions of Americans. Most people who watched the film had never heard of the NOI before, and its existence, frankly, shocked many whites. In the assessment of scholars and even of Malcolm X himself, the airing of this documentary, and the cultural impact it had, was another major turning point for the NOI.<sup>1287</sup> After July, it seemed as if every U.S. American now knew about the “Black Muslims.” By December 1959, the number of official temples had shot up to fifty, registered members numbered close to five thousand, unregistered “believers” totaled nearly 25,000, and there were probably over 75,000 sympathizers.<sup>1288</sup> Even if the rest of the AAIR groups had maintained their peak levels through this period and if sympathizers were added, the absolute maximum any one group would have had was around 15,000 people—only fifteen per cent of what the NOI had achieved by the end of the 1950s.

#### External Factors: Slow Growth, Stagnation, and Decline in the Rest of the AAIR

Although mass media was indeed an important factor in the NOI’s growth, by itself it was probably not sufficient to have caused the group’s surge in popularity. As has been mentioned, other AAIR groups had indeed received a relatively good deal of attention in the press throughout the period<sup>1289</sup> and some—particularly the MST—had

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<sup>1287</sup> X and Haley, 240-241; Lincoln, 103.

<sup>1288</sup> Essien-Udom, 70-71. As explained in chapter 1, Essien-Udom provides the most reliable numbers for the NOI circa 1960 because of he appears to have gone further than any other scholar at the time in trying to obtain highly accurate information about the NOI at the period. His numbers, unlike Lincoln’s, are not based on what the NOI publicly claimed, but rather on what an anonymous leading member of the NOI told him. Further evidence for the validity of these numbers is that, after making a detailed study of the group, Essien-Udom did not find these numbers to be inaccurate.

<sup>1289</sup> There were easily over 500 unique newspaper articles (i.e., not counting reprinting of news service articles, derived articles, or articles containing the same information from a single city’s competing newspapers) on the MST during the AAIR.

much more successful self-publishing efforts than the NOI had.<sup>1290</sup> Other factors, then, were playing a role in the NOI's surge.

One of these was the fact that the NOI was now facing less competition for members from other AAIR groups than it ever had in the past because, unlike for the NOI, for most AAIR groups the 1950s was a period of decline. To some extent, as was pointed out in earlier chapters, the other African-American Islamic groups that existed at the time had experienced a mild decline since the mid-1940s due to their inability to replenish, a factor that sociologists of religion tells us contributes to a group's eventual failure.<sup>1291</sup> The FBI had observed that the MST had declined since reaching its second peak in the early-to-mid 1940s; many temples had dwindled to only a handful of members, and some simply closed. The available evidence also suggests that, with the exception of Turner-El's faction, which had the backing of some smaller newspapers, proselytization efforts were essentially limited to word-of-mouth promotion. Ishmael Sammsan's Sunni community had some growth during this period, but current available evidence does not indicate to what degree—and it is likely that his was the group to lose over a dozen African-American Muslims when a family of fifteen black converts immigrated to Cairo.<sup>1292</sup> The only non-NOI AAIR group that seems to have been experiencing noticeable growth during this period was the community—particularly in Cleveland, Philadelphia, and New York City—building around around jazz musicians. These men were for the most part Qadiani Ahmadi, but several influential ones, including

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<sup>1290</sup> The Elijah-era NOI's popular newspaper, *Muhammad Speaks*, was not produced until the 1960s.

<sup>1291</sup> Stark, 265.

<sup>1292</sup> "Miscellanea," *Muslim World* 46 (1956): 183.

Ahmad Jamal, Lyn Hope, and Talib Dawud, had become influenced by Sunni Islam. In the end, though, their names probably still only drew in at most a few hundred in each city. Sheikh Faisal was one of the few non-jazz musician Sunni leaders of African-Americans to maintain a regular presence in the press, but his following in Brooklyn was still only 300 in the mid-to-late 1950s.<sup>1293</sup> Judging from newspaper articles, FBI files from the period, and other available sources, significant growth in the 1950s for African-American Muslims was almost entirely limited to the NOI.

In fact, during the 1950s, when the MST was mentioned in newspapers, it was usually in the obituaries. Turner-El and Kirkman Bey's rural communities for elderly African-American Moors had been relatively successful, but now had to deal with an inevitable deaths of those who had had moved to these communities in the 1940s. As a result, both the largest and, at the time, most prominent MST groups (Kirkman Bey's and Turner-El's, respectively) were suffering significant membership loss without getting new blood.

To make matters worse, the early 1950s brought the deaths and departures of several relatively influential early African-American Islamic leaders. First, the MST lost Ira Johnson in December 1950, and then his son and successor, George, a few months later.<sup>1294</sup> Around that same time, Saeed Akmal, a leading Lahori-Sunni in the Pittsburgh area, moved out to Los Angeles where he became involved with the immigrant-majority

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<sup>1293</sup> "About New York"; "Eyes to the East."

<sup>1294</sup> "Cremate Head of Moorish Order Here," *Philadelphia Tribune*, December 12, 1950, 1; "'Moors' hold 24 Hr. Vigil Beside Dead Leader: Drew Ali Reigned 3 Months," *Philadelphia Tribune*, April 7, 1951, 1, 8.

community.<sup>1295</sup> In 1952, William Gravitt-El, a staple in New Jersey's MST community since 1929, passed away.<sup>1296</sup> Then, in 1954—the same year Malcolm X was made Harlem's NOI leader—several prominent AAIR leaders died, including Paul Nathaniel Johnson, the first influential African-American Ahmadi leader and then the prophet of the Fahamme Temples;<sup>1297</sup> Abdul Wadood Bey, the MNIC leader and IMS founder;<sup>1298</sup> and one of the most important figures in early African-American Sunni history, Muhammad Ezaldeen.<sup>1299</sup> Finally, in 1959, Kirkman Bey, the most influential post-Drew Ali MST leader, also passed.<sup>1300</sup> Although Kirkman Bey, Ezaldeen, and (probably) Johnson left successors, it is notable that almost none of these early leaders had children. In fact, many of the leading non-NOI leaders—including Suleiman, Drew Ali, Sheikh Daoud Faisal, Abdul Mohammed, and Frederick Turner-El—had no known scions who might have been more accepted in their respective communities as successors than other people. This, then, is another feature that distinguishes the NOI; Elijah had several children, and the expectation that one of them could serve as a legitimate successor, even as a backup

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<sup>1295</sup> Hazel Carland, "Things to Talk about," *Pittsburgh Courier*, May 12, 1951, 13.

<sup>1296</sup> William Gravitt-El—who may have also used the names Joseph and Arthur and who probably was the father of the NOI leader Joseph Gravitt—had been a leader at the MST temple number 10 in Newark since 1929, one of the largest and most influential temples in the country; see "Capsule News." Unfortunately, I have found no evidence to support Evanzz's claim that William belonged to the Detroit NOI temple in the early 1930s. More research is needed on William's life in order to clear up the numerous questions about it remaining in the literature.

<sup>1297</sup> Onwuachi, *Fahamme Temple*, 9.

<sup>1298</sup> "In Memoriam," *New York Times*, October 28, 1954, 35.

<sup>1299</sup> Dannin 286 n. 4. I have seen other dates for Ezaldeen's death, but I have not been able to confirm any of these; so, I will rely on Dannin's date until more reliable evidence is presented.

<sup>1300</sup> Mubashshir, 88; Obituary for Charles Kirkman Bay [sic], *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 28, 1959, 18.

in case another chosen successor failed to unite the community, may have contributed to the NOI's comparatively stronger cohesion in the 1950s.

The decline of the rest of the AAIR groups undoubtedly made for there being at least some room for an existing group to expand its share of the African-American Muslim market niche.<sup>1301</sup> Decline in similar types of religious groups is a phenomenon that, as has been demonstrated throughout this dissertation, had led to the rise of several AAIR organization (such as the MST, Ahmadis, the early NOI, the Fahamme Temple, the Takahashi/Manansala groups, and the AAUAA). Nevertheless, the total number of post-1954 NOI believers and sympathizers far exceeded the totals lost in the other African-American Islamic groups. Something must have caused the African-American Muslim niche to expand enough to be able to draw in numbers greatly exceeding those that it had drawn in the past.

#### Social Change in the Civil Rights Era

In 1958, Louis E. Burnham, an African-American columnist for the radical leftist weekly *The National Guardian*, while discussing the NOI's rise, commented that it was “an anomaly that just at the time the fight against segregation has scored significant victories, [a] movement should arise among Negroes rejecting integration and social equality as a devilish snare and delusion.”<sup>1302</sup> Indeed, at first glance it is rather surprising that the NOI—with its deeply racialized if not racist rhetoric—was growing by leaps and bounds precisely when African Americans were winning social and political victories for

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<sup>1301</sup> Stark and Finke say that religious niches tend to be stable (Stark and Finke, 195). While Stark and Finke primarily use “niche” to refer to a religious group's level of tension with society, I believe it can be applied to religious discourse as well, particularly in times of religious pluralism.

<sup>1302</sup> Louis E. Burnham, “The Spectator: Our own Islam,” *National Guardian*, July 28, 1958, 8.

equality. In fact, 1954—the year that marks the beginning of the transformation of the NOI from being merely one of many African-American Islamic groups to the most dominant—was the year of two landmark Civil Rights cases, *Brown v. Board of Education* and *Hernandez v. Texas*.

Scholars have tended to argue that the NOI's rise was a product of the general cultural change created by the Great Migration, World War II, and the post-war independence movements, all of which were generating a greater sense of black identity and a feeling that equal treatment was the right of African Americans.<sup>1303</sup> Another related argument that is made is that the NOI simply represented the style of political activism preferred by some African Americans. While some black Americans were more in favor of the peaceful, integrationist approach epitomized by Martin Luther King, Jr., others preferred the more militant and separatist view epitomized by Malcolm and the NOI—a dichotomy that has been succinctly captured and popularized in James Cone's 1991 study of "Martin and Malcolm's" views. Indeed, the fact that there was no strong equivalent to the UNIA in the 1950s meant that the NOI could fill the role of the main black nationalist organization in the U.S.

However, while all of these factors certainly played very important roles in the ability of the NOI to achieve the level of influence that it did, I believe there are a few other factors that more directly address the paradox pointed out by Burnham. The work of the sociologists of religion Rodney Stark and Roger Finke offers some useful theories

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<sup>1303</sup> For example, Turner vaguely points to the "general aftermath" of the Second World War and the Great Migration (Turner, 169), while Lincoln stresses that the "corporate structure" was transforming during this period, again, largely due to the Great Migration (Lincoln, 95-96).

along these lines. Stark and Finke, first of all, might identify the emergence of the Civil Rights movement as an event that, by reducing the costs (social, physical, and economic) for African Americans to enter and act in the public sphere, led to some de facto deregulation of African-American religion, and this, in turn, produced an increase in both religious commitment and diversity.<sup>1304</sup> Deregulation is a local change in power dynamics (usually due to changes in a government's control over religion) that allows for a greater level of deterritorialization in that particular location. The reason that there is not just increased religious diversity but often increased religious commitment in a location with deregulated (and deterritorialized) religion is that

A) Even though the religious market expands, there is still not an infinite number of people who desire each type of religious niche being offered, so there is now, because more religious groups can enter the market, potentially increased competition between these groups to gain followers from their niche, thereby making the groups themselves more competitive, which gives them an elevated sense of commitment to their religion.

B) Even if new groups do not appear, because the numbers of people willing to join smaller niches has grown, there will be an attempt by some of the existing groups to reach the new people in the niche, and those groups that already have higher levels of religious commitment will usually be the most successful at recruiting the new people in the niche, particularly when these groups 1) have highly motivated members, 2) more actively promote their group, and 3) make effective use of media to spread their group's

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<sup>1304</sup> Stark and Finke, 198-201.

name and ideas.<sup>1305</sup> These groups will generally prosper over similar, less active groups with weaker motivation and less effective exploitation of media.

C) The new recruits in the niche will take on the relatively high level of religious commitment of the group that recruited them, so these new recruits will be good proselytizers and thus able to help the group continue to grow and compete.

Given what has been discussed in this chapter, it is clear that the NOI in the 1950s was a group with a relatively high level of religious commitment; a growing, highly motivated membership; several promotional activities; and effective use of media—while the non-NOI AAIR groups in the 1950s were relatively weaker on all these counts. Therefore, when seeing the NOI in the context of the wider AAIR, its 1950s' growth can to a large extent be explained by Stark and Finke's model of religious success in a location with deregulated religion.

Still, there is another important factor that Stark and Finke point to that contributed to the NOI's rise—a factor that earlier scholars have observed for the NOI. It is that, generally, “religious firms can generate high levels of participation to the extent that the firms serve as the primary organizational vehicles for social conflict.”<sup>1306</sup> As most scholars of the NOI have pointed out, the NOI was seen not just as the most important African-American Islamic movement, but also, and probably more significantly, as the most important black nationalist movement at the time. The NOI—

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<sup>1305</sup> Stark and Finke, 201-202.

<sup>1306</sup> Stark and Finke, 202.

because of the very traits that made it a successful competitor among African-American Islamic groups—was a successful competitor among black nationalist groups to recruit those who believed that black nationalism was the only way for African Americans to achieve true empowerment. The Civil Rights movement (along with other international independence and justice movements) had helped deregulate, in addition to religion, cultural expressions like black nationalism—particularly more radical forms of black nationalism, like that of the NOI, that were perhaps too radical in the interwar period to achieve widespread adherence—and the NOI was poised to succeed in this environment. It of course also did not hurt the NOI that it had the highly charismatic and verbally skilled Malcolm X and Elijah Muhammad.

This dissertation has, hopefully, demonstrated that attributing the NOI's success to one or more of its notable traits—its doctrines, business practices, promotional activities, or charismatic figures—does not fully explain its reemergence in the mid-to-late 1950s. All of these elements were used by other AAIR groups with varying success. And even in the early years of the NOI using them, they did not automatically produce immense popularity. To properly understand the rise and dominance of the NOI it is important to understand the religio-cultural environment it was a part of—the AAIR—and how the NOI related to other groups in that environment. The degree of popularity that communities like the MST and the AAUAA had for a large portion of the AAIR cannot be ignored. By neglecting to make a careful study of the growth of the non-NOI

AAIR groups, there was a failure in previous scholarship to recognize a number of key things: the diversity of elements that contributed to the AAIR and made it attractive; the great degree of change that important factors—the nature of the NOI, the transformations in non-NOI AAIR groups, and the socio-religious landscape in the U.S.—had to undergo in the 1950s for the NOI to gain its dominance; and that throughout the AAIR there was a very clear trend of African-American Islamic groups gaining success precisely at the time and in the location when similar Islamic groups began declining, usually when they lost their charismatic leaders. But now that there is both a fairly thorough outline of the non-NOI AAIR groups' growth, and a discussion of how precisely the NOI was and was not distinct from the other groups, Stark and Finke's economic model of religious growth seems to offer the best explanation for the rise and dominance of the NOI, and it does so without, as has sometimes been done, dismissing the importance of the NOI's religious elements.<sup>1307</sup>

The Civil Rights movement, therefore, is the key structural factor that led to the dominance of the NOI in the late 1950s. It produced religious deregulation in which the more highly motivated and better promoting group of a particular niche of religion (in this case, African-American Islam and, to some extent, black nationalist ideology) would succeed, and it created a social conflict in which the NOI became a leading player (as the most prominent black nationalist group). As a result of these events, African-American

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<sup>1307</sup> Lincoln, somewhat notoriously, argues that religious values only have secondary importance in the NOI, as they are “not part of the [NOI's] basic appeal”; see Lincoln, 26. Stark and Finke, meanwhile might not agree that the NOI meets their definition of religion (see pages 89-106) because of its ostensible rejection of the supernatural (what it calls the “mystery God”), though it does have other elements that might be called “supernatural”; plus its strong millennialism puts it very much in line with the core element Stark and Finke attribute to genuine religions—concern about the afterlife.

Islamic culture would no longer be characterized by extreme diversity, as it had been during the previous three-and-a-half decades. The AAIR had ended and a new era in African-American Islam—one unquestionably dominated by the NOI—had begun.

## **Chapter Eight: Conclusion**

### **Summary and Periodization**

The African-American Islamic Renaissance was a period of heightened and diversified interests in Islam in African-American culture. It began, rather suddenly, in early 1920s New York City, where Islam was being promoted by the Ahmadis, Abdul Hamid Suleiman, lesser-known immigrant Muslims, Muslim mystics, and the UNIA. All these groups, directly or indirectly, had contact with each other and were creating a rather complex stew of Islamic themes and identities. But because the UNIA—which during that time was seen as a leader in the social conflict of the demand for African-American empowerment and dignity—was by far the most influential of these groups, its Islamophilia would have the greatest impact. At least two of the early Islamic groups for African Americans, Suleiman’s Caananites Temple and the Ahmadis, realized how great of an influence the UNIA had on African-American culture, and they attempted to align themselves with Garvey. Soon after, the UNIA became the primary inspiration for the first African-American Islamic group to gain several thousand members and political influence: the MST. The MST’s success was attained so quickly that it seemed destined to dominate African-American Islam. But, as would be the case throughout the AAIR, infighting, particularly after the death or departure of a charismatic leader, was a significant problem in the MST. After Noble Drew Ali’s death in 1929, internecine conflict led to a major schism—a Great Schism—that left the Moorish Americans and

other Islamophilic African Americans in a long-lasting state of disunion. Numerous groups and independent figures sprang up, drawing from and mixing a wide variety of Islamic sources.

Wallace Fard, who probably came from a Pashtun background and had become familiar with the UNIA-connected Islamophilia, was able to successfully, if only briefly, reunify and strengthen African-American Islam, particularly in Detroit. But, with his departure and the decline of schismatic fighting in the MST, by 1935, his movement had all but collapsed. This time, however, there were numerous Islamic-themed organizations in the country and no single dominant one, so African-American Islam returned to a state of extreme diversity. Even within a single Islamic community, such as the MST, ways of being a Muslim could vary significantly between factions and even between temples/mosques within a single faction. As a result, even though most of the AAIR groups were inspired by Garvey-tinged black nationalism, some were rather integrationist-leaning while others were extremely millennialistic and militant. For some African-American Muslims of the period, this feature of the AAIR was a boon; it allowed for their unique beliefs and voices to be expressed and heard. For others, though, they learned through personal experience with highly contentious and sometimes violent schisms that too much diversity had the potential to destroy their dreams of gaining dignity through Islam. Many of these individuals chose to join or stay in sectarian groups, but a number of others began embracing Sunni Islam, which, because it connected them to the wider Islamic world, offered them much more legitimacy and authority, and therefore the power and dignity that they were seeking. Slowly, “mystical” and syncretic

Islam began losing importance, while the value of international and immigrant ties was increasing. Still, even “Sunni” Islam during this period could take multiple forms, and true unity was hard to come by in the African-American Sunni network.

In spite of all this deterritorialization, the unification of the greater part of the African-American Islamic culture and the decline of diversity did eventually occur, being a consequence of several complex factors. Beginning in the mid-1940s, the NOI, which already had a more militant tinge, gained both improved leadership and a new sense of purpose. Its membership was mobilized and its growth strategies were refined. The NOI also benefitted from two important external factors. First was the fact that the other AAIR groups had become relatively weak by the 1950s; they, for the most part, had run out of steam and were unable to achieve the growth that they had seen in the previous three decades. As a result, the NOI had little competition for the Islamic niche in African-American religious culture. At the same time, the Civil Rights movement was fundamentally transforming that culture by making it easier for highly-motivated non-mainstream groups to draw new members and by providing a social conflict that, if one of those groups could come to be seen as the leading or most promising figure in it, would give that group the opportunity for significant growth. These were the conditions that led, in the late 1950s, to the rise and dominance of the NOI in African-American Islamic culture and the end of the AAIR.

This broad outline of the history of the AAIR can be expressed in the following periodization of the AAIR:

#### I. Birth, 1920-25

II. Rise and Dominance of the MST, 1926-29

III. The Great Schism, 1929-34

IV. Diversification, 1935-42

V. Mergers and Maturation, 1942-47

VI. Dispersement and Decline, 1948-54

VII. Reemergence of the NOI, 1955-1959

### **The AAIR's Impact on the Four Dynamics**

At this point, I would like to revisit the four macro-level dynamics that shaped the emergence of the AAIR (as discussed in chapter two). Suter tells us that macro-level structures can sometimes change during the course of a major historical event. Was this the case for the four macro-level dynamics that I have used to frame this study? To some degree, the answer for all is both no and yes. The four major structures—de- and re-territorialization of religion, “mystical” Islam in the West, Muslim interaction with African-Americans, and the religious aspects of the African-American struggle for dignity—all are so deeply embedded in historical, cultural, and ecological forces that the AAIR and the NOI's rise could not change their fundamental shape. At the same time, though, the AAIR, and NOI in particular, have somewhat altered the way these dynamics appear in the contemporary period.

The deterritorialization of religion—because it is, out of the four, the dynamic that is most grounded in deep ecological factors—is probably the dynamic that has been least affected by the AAIR. While it is true that, as communication and transportation technologies have made significant advancements in speed, deterritorialization has in

many ways increased tremendously since the time of the AAIR, but this had little to do with the AAIR itself. Perhaps what the AAIR did do, though, was popularize Islam in the U.S., particularly among African Americans. It made many people much more receptive of Islam than they might otherwise have been; in other words, the AAIR acted as a de facto deregulator of religion in the U.S. Deterritorialization cannot occur if the ecology does not permit the information that is traveling to flourish in new environments; so it could be said that the AAIR changed the soil of the U.S. religious landscape, making it a much more of a fertile ground for Islam. This may explain why it is that since the AAIR the U.S. has had several hundred thousand converts to Islam—both black and white—while each Western European country has produced at most twenty thousand or so.<sup>1308</sup> At the same time, though, the idea of what constitutes Islam—particularly for African Americans—may have been limited, or reterritorialized, by the unparalleled popularity that the NOI achieved.

The “mystical” Islam dynamic, meanwhile, has also persisted. Today Sufism is far more popular than it was during the AAIR, largely because of the boom of interest in Sufism during the 1960s among white Americans and the growing number of immigrant Muslims practicing Sufism in the U.S. However, the AAIR significantly shaped the “mystical” Islam popular among African Americans, and to some degree this has affected

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<sup>1308</sup> For estimates of numbers of Western converts over the years, see Ghayur, “Muslims in the United States”; Ghayur, “Ethnic Distribution of American Muslims”; Ihsan Bagby, *The American Mosque 2011* (n.p.: Council on American-Islamic Relations, 2012), 12-13; Stefano Allievi, *Les Convertis a l’Islam* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1998), 65-70; Jordi Moreras, “Muslims in Spain: Between the Historical Heritage and the Minority Construction,” *Muslim World* 92 (2002): 132; Stéphane Lathion, “Muslims in Switzerland: is Citizenship Really Incompatible with Muslim Identity?,” *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 28 (2008): 53; James A. Toronto, “Islam *Italiano*: Prospects for Integration of Muslims in Italy’s Religious Landscape,” *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 28 (2008): 62; Kate Zebiri, *British Muslim Converts* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2008), 42.

the wider understanding of “mystical” Islam in U.S. culture. As has been emphasized throughout this dissertation, many of the AAIR groups and leading figures promoted some sort of “mystical” Islam. This is most obvious in the MST and NOI, both of which had gnostic characteristics and the magic of exaltation. Sometimes “natural magic” and magical symbols have also been stressed by members of these communities and their break-offs, such as the Clock of Destiny and the Nation of Gods and Earths (a NOI break-off sect that emerged in the 1960s). The “mystical” elements in these groups are frequently seen as being connected to other “mystical” or esoteric traditions, such as “mystical” Freemasonry, which are often—because these groups are highly influenced by Pan-African and Pan-Islamic thought—claimed by these groups to have originally come from various parts of Africa or from Muslims from Asia. Today, there are numerous small communities (many of which are internet-based) of people interested in the African-Islamic “mystical” traditions. These people—the majority of whom are African-American, though there are some Latina/os, Native Americans, and whites—study the literature and histories of many of the groups discussed in this dissertation, especially the MST and NOI. While some are official members of a particular Islamic organization, given the tendency of many of these people to look for commonalities between all the African-American sectarian movements, it is likely that many of these people identify with more than one group. The other less well-known forms of “mystical” Islam in the AAIR have, unsurprisingly, received much less attention and in fact most of them have been all but forgotten. Perhaps with the occasional rare exception, African-American Sufis today, for instance, have no idea that Sufism of any sort was spread among African

Americans before 1960. Still, though, the AAIR definitely played a role in shaping the kinds of “mystical” Islam in which contemporary Americans show interest.

Immigrant Muslim-African-American interaction was a dynamic that was significantly transformed in the AAIR. On the one hand, a number of AAIR Sunni communities, particularly those formed in New York City, Ohio, and Pennsylvania, continued to exist after the AAIR, and even saw increased participation. But the biggest impact came out of the 1950s rise of the NOI, and the criticisms of it from the immigrant Muslim community. Pre-1965 immigrant Muslims, because they had their own older Islamic traditions and because for the most part they were not themselves black, often could not identify or even sympathize with African-Americans who were in sectarian groups like the NOI, and the NOI’s popularity only increased the immigrant Muslims’ antagonism towards African-American Islamic groups. To some extent, this position vis-à-vis African-American groups has continued, as African Americans are still today the most segregated ethnic group within mainstream Islam in the U.S. (though currently they are more involved with immigrant Muslims than ever before).<sup>1309</sup> On the other hand, the development of the African-American *Sunni* community during the AAIR may have set a lasting precedent of African-American Muslims looking to international forms of Islam for the legitimacy and authority it can offer African-American Muslims. The fact that A) Malcolm X and his sister, Ella, had ties to several black Sunnis in the U.S. and B) several AAIR-era Sunni groups continued to draw members after 1959—and some, like the AAUAA, Wali Akram’s Cleveland community, and Talib Dawud’s Philadelphia group—

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<sup>1309</sup> See Bagby, *The American Mosque 2011*.

still exist today, reflects the importance of the AAIR in establishing a strong multi-ethnic Sunni foundation on which the African-American Islamic community could later build.

Finally, the religious dimension of the African-American struggle for dignity was obviously altered by AAIR in a major way. Simply put: the AAIR made Islam a legitimate religious and political symbol for African Americans. There is no conclusive evidence that there were *any* African-American Muslim converts 100 years ago, but today there are at least 200,000 African-American members of mainstream Islamic mosques, probably around 30,000 members of African-American-majority sectarian Islamic groups (like the MST and NOI), and perhaps over 100,000 believers who are not officially affiliated with any particular organization. These numbers do not even begin to reflect the impact AAIR figures and groups have had on African-American culture and broader American culture, where Elijah Muhammad, Malcolm X, and Louis Farrakhan are all still well-known names. Malcolm X, in particular, has risen far beyond a mere symbol of the NOI and its messages—his name and image have become representative of and an inspiration for all oppressed people who stand up to their oppressors with fearlessness and dignity. Although Malcolm’s legacy was not cemented until the early 1960s, after the AAIR, it took the AAIR—all its various currents, accomplishments, and failures—for Malcolm X’s memory to be able to attain the symbolic position that it now has.

### **Key Implications of this Study**

In this section, I will highlight this study’s key implications, which will be grouped by the academic area for which they have the greatest importance.

## African-American Islam

This dissertation's main points—that 1) the period between 1920 and 1959 was one of great Islamic diversity for African-American culture and 2) the NOI, which was not particularly unique in the AAIR, only came to its position of dominance in African-American Islamic culture after a series of significant changes started taking place in the AAIR in the 1950s—have a number of important implications for the study of African-American Islam. First of all, the presence of such diversity of views even within early African-American Islam indicates that there is no single or “natural” form of Islam in African-American culture. This suggests that when one particular form gains dominance, such as when the NOI did in the late 1950s, this may not be so much a factor of one group's ideology being inherently more attractive, but rather more a factor of specific historical and social forces at a particular period. One historical factor that was particularly prominent in the AAIR, for instance, was the presence of highly influential charismatic leaders. These individuals—many of whom presented themselves as prophets or as having unique mystical powers—were able to attract numerous African Americans to their teachings. The importance of charismatic leaders for AAIR groups is reflected in the fact that over and over again, AAIR groups fell into schisms when their leaders departed, suggesting that it was the leader, not the teachings or the organization itself, that held these groups together. In fact, no group in the AAIR seems to have overcome this dilemma—the NOI was simply fortunate in that it transformed into a mass movement long before its head died. But whatever the main factors were that have brought African Americans to Islam, understanding them may help shed light on why different forms of

Islam later became popular in African-American culture. This concept may be particularly helpful in trying to explain why so many African American Muslims who had been committed to NOI doctrines were willing to abandon those doctrines and become Sunni Muslims after 1975. It should seriously be considered whether it is the doctrines themselves or other factors that are at the base of what draws African Americans to Islam.

Another important implication of this study is that it reveals the degree to which the diverse African-American Islamic sects have been able to retain followings. Although studies of African-American Islam generally ignore most of the post-1975 sects, knowing that these sects were—contrary to how they have been presented in the literature—relatively active and strong before 1960 suggests that more research into these sects’ contemporary conditions may reveal them to be far more popular than has previously been assumed. One of my hopes for this dissertation is that it—or the book that comes out of it—will become a sourcebook for data on the various early African-American Islamic sects, and will help foster increased research on non-Sunni groups. Similarly, by pushing against the tendency in previous literature to emphasize the Midwest as the birthplace of early African-American Islamic culture and instead looking to New York, research on contemporary groups might reexamine the levels of influence of the assumed cultural centers of African-American Islam.

Finally, this dissertation has, by refining the explanation for the rise of the NOI, better established the importance of African-American Islam’s ability to become seen as a leader in a socio-political movement in the 1950s as a crucial reason for its popularity.

This begs the question of whether—or to what degree—African-American Islam is today seen as a leader in a movement to achieve socio-political goals. And if it is not, this dissertation will hopefully motivate the search for an alternative explanation for African-American Islam's continued vitality.

#### Islam in America

As has been repeatedly emphasized throughout this dissertation, African-American Islam was incredibly diverse between 1920 and the mid-1950s—and it was often diverse even despite its increasing contact with Sunni Muslim immigrants. Indeed, one of the larger implications this dissertation has for the broader study of Islam in America is that it more firmly establishes the religious diversity and flexibility of a relatively large number Muslims in the U.S. before 1965 (the year of an important immigration act that dramatically shifted the dynamics of Islam in the U.S.). And, given the fact that this diversity was largely a factor of lack of Islamic religious training, it will be particularly important to acknowledge this pre-1965 Islamic diversity when discussing early white and Latina/o converts, most of whom had less religious training than their African-American and immigrant co-religionists. Along these same lines, this dissertation has also discussed some early forms of Sufi thought in the U.S. that have never before been discussed in the field of Islam in America. Hopefully, this will help lead to greater understanding of the development of Sufism in America.

#### Broader American Religious Culture and History

Taking a broader perspective, one of the ideas I have emphasized that may have significant implications is the role of the Civil Rights Movement as a de facto deregulator

of religion. Of course, the movement has long been acknowledged as a cultural force that helped initiate the new dynamic of religious experimentation that emerged in the 1960s, but as far as I know, this specific sociological function of the Civil Rights Movement has not been explicitly addressed before. Future research into the deregulating powers of the Civil Rights Movement may yield new insights into religious change in the mid-twentieth-century U.S.

On a related note, much more research is needed on the diversity of religious movements of all types before and during the AAIR. The fact that most of the AAIR sects were previously only glanced over or, in some cases, completely ignored suggests that many, many other pre-1960 American religious groups have similarly evaded the consideration of scholars. It seems, then, that, especially as more and more older newspapers get digitized, future researchers will be able to find out about these groups and reevaluate older theories about pre-1960 religion in America—particularly the aspects of those theories that address religious diversity.

#### Islamic Studies

To an extent, the main importance of this dissertation for Islamic studies has already been addressed: it demonstrates the diversity and flexibility of Islam in a Western Muslim-minority country in the first half of the twentieth century. I believe, though, that this finding may have greater implications for Islamic studies, as I touched on in chapters 1 and 2. This diversity was not simply the outcome of people with little religious training trying to practice Islam in a country that lacked cultural forces supporting the practice of Islam. Functioning on a deeper level was de- and re-territorialization, phenomena that

have almost never been explicitly considered in terms of Islamic culture and history. By offering my theory on the subject—that because Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of deterritorialization is based off of Foucault’s understanding of cultural change, and that this understanding shares some key fundamental views with Hodgson’s understanding of Islamic history, we can legitimately consider deterritorialization as a phenomenon that should be highlighted in Islamic history—I hope that other scholars might start considering how the concept of deterritorialization can help the rethinking of Islamic history and culture. The concepts of de- and re-territorialization de-emphasize static and intrinsic characteristics and put in their place a focus on cultural change. Applying de- and re-territorialization to Islamic history might therefore assist researchers and theorists in responding to limited, “orientalist” views of Islam and instead offering views that bring to light the varying dynamics of the religion.

#### Theories of Religion and Conversion

The concepts of de- and re-territorialization, and their relationship to an ecological perspective of world history, may also be useful for theorists of religion and conversion. Again, these notions help us resist static conceptualizations of religion—which are often incredibly unsatisfactory when one is searching for explanations of religious change—and instead make religious change the focus of research. This approach to the study of religion may help scholars better identify what it is exactly they are referring to when they talk about “religion.” One great benefit of combining Deleuze and Guattari with Foucault and Hodgson—both of whom relied heavily on earlier sociologists and theorists of religion, particularly Durkheim—is that it provides a

structure through which sociological, cultural, historical, and post-structuralist theories can be integrated into a single system, enabling theorists to more easily attempt to compare and unify varying theories of religion.

At the same time, by focusing on the dynamics of deterritorialization and its relationship to ecological change, scholars of religious conversion might be able to start developing theories that better integrate explanations of conversions of people with theories of cultural change. And, particularly when dealing with conversions in the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries, where religious diversity is abounding and there seems to be a growing cohort of people claiming to be open to all religions, the notion of deterritorialization may help in challenging old concepts of religious conversion, which generally imply conversion to a single “religion.”

### **Final Remarks**

This dissertation has been an attempt to carefully document and explain a period in American, Africana, and Islamic history that witnessed incredible religious change. This change was not the result of the influence of a single cultural or historical dynamic, but rather was the product of several different forces that converged in the 1920s, inspiring and enabling tens of thousands of people to reject their old ways of thinking about the world and themselves, and turn to (almost) completely new ideas and ways of life that, although their details often varied from group to group, all revolved around the notion that African-Americans will gain dignity by becoming Muslims. This transmutation of religious culture was no mere fad, either; its impact has been historically significant and lasting. It is my hope that this microscopic view of an important turning

point in religious history—with its diversity of sects, ideas, leaders, and causes of religious success and failure—will inspire others to reexamine different periods of great religious change throughout human history, particularly those periods for which the explanations are suspiciously simple.

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## Appendix

The following contains tables, a timeline, and two maps that have been created using the data given throughout this dissertation, primarily in the footnotes. They present a clear picture of the development of the AAIR in terms of numbers of followers, organizational and sectarian diversity, the estimated membership sizes of the main groups, key events, and geographic dynamics.

### Abbreviation Key

AAIR = African-American Islamic Renaissance  
AAUAA = Addeynu Allahe-Universal Arabic Association  
AMWSA = African Moslem Welfare Society of America  
AOI = Academy of Islam  
DOAM = Development of Our AM  
DOO = Development of Our Own  
EPM = Eastern Pacific Movement  
FBI = Federal Bureau of Investigation  
FIA = Federation of Islamic Associations in the United States and Canada  
IMA = Islamic Mission of America  
IMB = International Muslim Brotherhood  
IMS = International Moslem Society (303 Mosque)  
MDNMNA = Moorish Science Temple, the Divine and National Movement of North America (Turner-El)  
MIIC = Moroccan Inter-Religious and International Conference  
MNIC = Moorish National Islamic Center  
MOA = Moslems of America  
MST = Moorish Science Temple  
MSTA = Moorish Science Temple of America  
MSTIAM = Moorish Science Temple of I AM  
MUOF = Moroccan United Organization Federation  
NAACP = National Association for the Advancement of Colored People  
NOI = Nation of Islam  
OMA = Onward Movement of America  
PME = Peace Movement of Ethiopia  
PMEW = Pacific Movement of the Eastern World  
UDHR = Universal Declaration of Human Rights  
UISA = Uniting Islamic Society of America  
UMS = United Moslem Society  
UNIA = United Negro Improvement Association

## AAIR Groups

### Ahmadis

- Qadianis
- Lahoris (eastern U.S.)/MOA
- Lahoris (western U.S.)

### MST

- Noble Drew Ali
- Kirkman Bey
- Givens-El
- Turner-El
- Ira Johnson
- Father Mohammed Bey
- Joshua Way Bey
- Shelby-El
- Mealey-El

### NOI

- Fard
- Elijah Muhammad
- Kallat Muhammad
- Rebels Against the Will of Allah

### Takahashi/Manansala Factions

- DOO (original)
- DOO (Abdul Mohamed)
- DOO (Manansala)
- DOO (Emanuel Pharr)
- OMA
- PME
- PMEW
- MSTIAM
- EPM

### Fahamme Temples of Islam and Culture

Clock of Destiny

Sufi Abdul Hamid

Sufi Rajaba

Hazret Ismet Ali

Gurdjieff

Mecca Medina Temple

Islamic Unity Society

Canaanite Temple

Canaanite Temple (Drew Ali)

Caananites Temple (Suleiman)

Canaanite Temple, No. 1, Inc. (1924)

Sunni

AAUAA

AMWSA

Moslem Welfare Society

UISA

IMA

IMS (Harlem)

AOI

MNIC

Moorish Church Temple

Moslem League of Philadelphia

MOA

IMB

Muslim Brotherhood, U.S.A.

### AAIR Groups and Branches by Founding Date

founding date	group name	location
1910	Mecca Medina Temple	New York - NYC (Harlem)
1913	Canaanite Temple (?)	New Jersey - Newark
1920	Ahmadi – Qadiani	New York - NYC (Manhattan)
1921		
1922	Caananites Temple (c. 1922)	New Jersey - Newark
1923		
1924	Canaanite Temple, No. 1, Inc.	New Jersey - Newark

1925	MST – NDA	Illinois - Chicago
1926		
1927	MST – NDA	West Virginia - Charleston
1927	MST – NDA	Wisconsin - Milwaukee
1927	MST - NDA	Michigan - Detroit
1927	MST - NDA	Pennsylvania - Pittsburgh
1928	MST - NDA	Virginia - Richmond
1928	MST - NDA	Ohio - Cleveland
1928	MST - NDA	Arkansas - Pine Bluff
1928	MST - NDA	Illinois - Chicago
1928	MST - NDA	New Jersey - Newark
1928	MST - NDA	Pennsylvania - Philadelphia
1928	MST - NDA	Ohio - Youngstown
1928	MST - NDA	Maryland - Baltimore
1928	MST - NDA	Virginia - Petersburg
1928	MST - NDA	Michigan - Lansing
1928	MST - NDA	Ohio - Toledo
1928	MST - NDA	Illinois - Chicago
1928	Ahmadi - Qadiani	Ohio - Cincinnati
1929	MST - NDA	Ohio - East Toledo
1929	MST - NDA	Maryland - Baltimore
1930	Ahmadi - Qadiani	Pennsylvania - Pittsburgh
1930	Fahamme	Missouri - St. Louis
1930	NOI	Michigan - Detroit
1931	Ahmadi - Qadiani	Ohio - Youngstown
1932	NOI	Illinois - Chicago
1932	SAH	New York - NYC (Harlem)
1932	Ahmadi - Qadiani	Pennsylvania - Washington
1932	NOI	Wisconsin - Milwaukee
1933	Ahmadi - Qadiani	New York - Buffalo
1933	Ahmadi - Qadiani	Ohio - Columbus
1933	Ahmadi - Qadiani	Ohio - Akron
1933	Ahmadi - Qadiani	Ohio - Dayton
1933	Ahmadi - Qadiani	Pennsylvania - Braddock
1933	Ahmadi - Qadiani	Ohio - Stubenville
1933	Ahmadi - Qadiani	Pennsylvania - Homestead
1933	MST - Unknown	Georgia - Augusta

1933	DOO	Michigan - Detroit
1934	Ahmadi - Qadiani	Ohio - Mansfield
1934	Ahmadi - Qadiani	Pennsylvania - Philadelphia
1934	Ahmadi - Lahori	Pennsylvania - Pittsburgh
1934	Ahmadi - Lahori	Pennsylvania - Braddock
1934	Ahmadi - Lahori	Ohio - Youngstown
1934	Ahmadi - Lahori	Ohio - Columbus
1935	Moslems of America (c. 1935)	New York - Buffalo
1935	MST - CKB	Indiana - Anderson
1935	MST - CKB	Kansas - Atchinson
1935	MST - CKB	New York - NYC (Brooklyn)
1935	MST - CKB	Ohio - Cleveland
1935	MST - CKB	Illinois - Chicago
1935	MST - CKB	Michigan - Detroit
1935	MST - CKB	Michigan - Flint
1935	MST - CKB	Indiana - East Chicago
1935	MST - CKB	Indiana - Indianapolis
1935	MST - CKB	Kansas - Kansas City
1935	MST - CKB	Michigan - Mt. Clemens
1935	MST - CKB	Ohio - Toledo
1935	MST - CKB	New York - NYC
1935	MST - CKB	New York - NYC
1935	MST - CKB	New Jersey - Newark
1935	MST - CKB	Pennsylvania - Philadelphia
1935	MST - CKB	Pennsylvania - Philadelphia
1935	MST - CKB	Pennsylvania - Philadelphia
1935	MST - CKB	Indiana - South Bend
1935	MST - CKB	Kentucky - Louisville
1935	MST - CKB	Illinois - Chicago
1935	MST - CKB	West Virginia - Charleston
1935	MST - CKB	Wisconsin - Milwaukee
1935	MST - CKB	Michigan - Detroit
1935	MST - CKB	Ohio - Columbus
1935	MST - CKB	Virginia - Richmond
1935	MST - CKB	Arkansas - Pine Bluff

1935	MST - CKB	Maryland - Baltimore
1935	MST - CKB	Ohio - Akron
1935	MST - CKB	Tennessee - Chattanooga
1935	MST - CKB	Michigan - Pontiac
1935	MST - CKB	New York - NYC (Brooklyn)
1935	MST - CKB	Georgia - Atlanta
1935	MST - CKB	Ohio - Stubenville
1935	MST - CKB	New Jersey - Glassboro
1935	MST - CKB	Illinois - Cairo
1935	MST - CKB	Tennessee - Chattanooga
1935	MST - CKB	Massachusetts - Boston
1935	MST - CKB	Massachusetts - Springfield
1935	MST - CKB	Connecticut - Hartford
1935	MST - CKB	Michigan - Bonton Harbor
1935	MST - CKB	Illinois - Harvey
1935	MST - CKB	Ohio - Cincinnati
1935	MST - CKB	New York - NYC
1935	MST - CKB	Michigan - Saginaw
1935	MST - CKB	Indiana - Columbus
1935	MST - CKB	Ohio - Fostoria
1935	MST - CKB	Indiana - Indiana Harbor
1935	MST - CKB	Indiana - Gary
1936		
1937	Islamic Unity Society	New York - NYC
1938	AAUAA	New York - NYC
1938	AAUAA	New Jersey - Camden
1938	AAUAA	New York - Buffalo
1938	MSTIAM	Michigan - Detroit
1939	AAUAA	New York - Rochester
1939	NOI	Washington, D.C.
1940	AAUAA	New Jersey - Newark
1941	AAUAA	New York - West Valley
1942		
1943		
1944		
1945		
1946	NOI	New York - NYC (Harlem)

1947	Ahmadi - Qadiani (1947?)	New York - NYC (Brooklyn)
1947	COD	Ohio - Cleveland
1947	Ahmadi - Lahori	California - San Francisco
1948		
1949	International Muslim Brotherhood	Pennsylvania - Philadelphia
1950	Ahmadi - Qadiani	Washington, D.C.
1951		
1952		
1953	NOI	Massachusetts - Boston

### AAIR Groups and Branches by Location

location	group name	founding date
Arkansas - Pine Bluff	MST - NDA	1928
Arkansas - Pine Bluff	MST - CKB	1935
California - San Francisco	Ahmadi - Lahori	1947
Connecticut - Hartford	MST - CKB	1935
Georgia - Atlanta	MST - CKB	1935
Georgia - Augusta	MST - Unknown	1933
Illinois - Harvey	MST - CKB	1935
Illinois - Cairo	MST - CKB	1935
Illinois - Chicago	MST - NDA	1925
Illinois - Chicago	MST - NDA	1928
Illinois - Chicago	MST - NDA	1928
Illinois - Chicago	NOI	1932
Illinois - Chicago	MST - CKB	1935
Illinois - Chicago	MST - CKB	1935
Indiana - Anderson	MST - CKB	1935
Indiana - Columbus	MST - CKB	1935
Indiana - East Chicago	MST - CKB	1935
Indiana - Gary	MST - CKB	1935
Indiana - Indiana Harbor	MST - CKB	1935
Indiana - Indianapolis	MST - CKB	1935
Indiana - South Bend	MST - CKB	1935
Kansas - Atchinson	MST - CKB	1935
Kansas - Kansas City	MST - CKB	1935

Kentucky - Louisville	MST - CKB	1935
Maryland - Baltimore	MST - NDA	1928
Maryland - Baltimore	MST - NDA	1929
Maryland - Baltimore	MST - CKB	1935
Massachusetts - Boston	MST - CKB	1935
Massachusetts - Boston	NOI	1953
Massachusetts - Springfield	MST - CKB	1935
Michigan - Bonton Harbor	MST - CKB	1935
Michigan - Detroit	MST - NDA	1927
Michigan - Detroit	NOI	1930
Michigan - Detroit	SDOO	1933
Michigan - Detroit	MST - CKB	1935
Michigan - Detroit	MST - CKB	1935
Michigan - Detroit	MSTIAM	1938
Michigan - Flint	MST - CKB	1935
Michigan - Lansing	MST - NDA	1928
Michigan - Mt. Clemens	MST - CKB	1935
Michigan - Pontiac	MST - CKB	1935
Michigan - Saginaw	MST - CKB	1935
Missouri - St. Louis	Fahamme	1930
New Jersey - Camden	AAUAA	1938
New Jersey - Glassboro	MST - CKB	1935
New Jersey - Newark	Canaanite Temple (?)	1913
New Jersey - Newark	Caananites Temple (c. 1922)	1922
New Jersey - Newark	Canaanite Temple, No. 1, Inc.	1924
New Jersey - Newark	MST - NDA	1928
New Jersey - Newark	MST - CKB	1935
New Jersey - Newark	AAUAA	1940
New York - Buffalo	Ahmadi - Qadiani	1933
New York - Buffalo	Moslems of America (c. 1935)	1935
New York - Buffalo	AAUAA	1938
New York - NYC	MST - CKB	1935
New York - NYC	MST - CKB	1935
New York - NYC	MST - CKB	1935
New York - NYC	Islamic Unity Society	1937
New York - NYC	AAUAA	1938
New York - NYC (Brooklyn)	MST - CKB	1935
New York - NYC	MST - CKB	1935

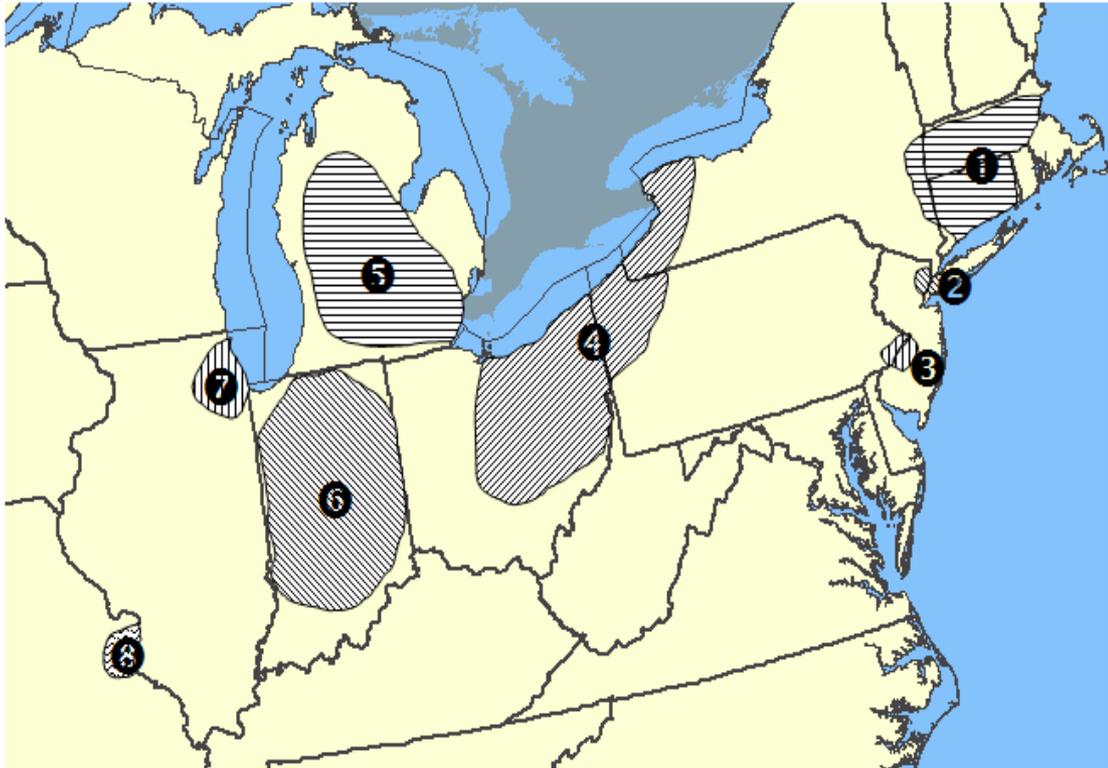
(Brooklyn)		
New York - NYC (Brooklyn)	Ahmadi - Qadiani (1947?)	1947
New York - NYC (Harlem)	Mecca Medina Temple	1910
New York - NYC (Harlem)	SAH	1932
New York - NYC (Harlem)	NOI	1946
New York - NYC (Manhattan)	Ahmadi - Qadiani	1920
New York - Rochester	AAUAA	1939
New York - West Valley	AAUAA	1941
Ohio - Akron	Ahmadi - Qadiani	1933
Ohio - Akron	MST - CKB	1935
Ohio - Cincinnati	Ahmadi - Qadiani	1928
Ohio - Cincinnati	MST - CKB	1935
Ohio - Cleveland	MST - NDA	1928
Ohio - Cleveland	MST - CKB	1935
Ohio - Cleveland	COD	1947
Ohio - Columbus	Ahmadi - Qadiani	1933
Ohio - Columbus	Ahmadi - Lahori	1934
Ohio - Columbus	MST - CKB	1935
Ohio - Dayton	Ahmadi - Qadiani	1933
Ohio - East Toledo	MST - NDA	1929
Ohio - Fostoria	MST - CKB	1935
Ohio - Mansfield	Ahmadi - Qadiani	1934
Ohio - Stubenville	Ahmadi - Qadiani	1933
Ohio - Stubenville	MST - CKB	1935
Ohio - Toledo	MST - NDA	1928
Ohio - Toledo	MST - CKB	1935
Ohio - Youngstown	MST - NDA	1928
Ohio - Youngstown	Ahmadi - Qadiani	1931
Ohio - Youngstown	Ahmadi - Lahori	1934
Pennsylvania - Braddock	Ahmadi - Qadiani	1933
Pennsylvania - Braddock	Ahmadi - Lahori	1934
Pennsylvania - Homestead	Ahmadi - Qadiani	1933
Pennsylvania - Philadelphia	MST - NDA	1928
Pennsylvania - Philadelphia	Ahmadi - Qadiani	1934

Pennsylvania - Philadelphia	MST - CKB	1935
Pennsylvania - Philadelphia	MST - CKB	1935
Pennsylvania - Philadelphia	MST - CKB	1935
Pennsylvania - Philadelphia	International Muslim Brotherhood	1949
Pennsylvania - Pittsburgh	MST - NDA	1927
Pennsylvania - Pittsburgh	Ahmadi - Qadiani	1930
Pennsylvania - Pittsburgh	Ahmadi - Lahori	1934
Pennsylvania - Washington	Ahmadi - Qadiani	1932
Tennessee - Chattanooga	MST - CKB	1935
Tennessee - Chattanooga	MST - CKB	1935
Virginia - Petersburg	MST - NDA	1928
Virginia - Richmond	MST - NDA	1928
Virginia - Richmond	MST - CKB	1935
Washington, D.C.	NOI	1939
Washington, D.C.	Ahmadi - Qadiani	1950
West Virginia - Charleston	MST - NDA	1927
West Virginia - Charleston	MST - CKB	1935
Wisconsin - Milwaukee	MST - NDA	1927
Wisconsin - Milwaukee	NOI	1932
Wisconsin - Milwaukee	MST - CKB	1935

### Map of AAIR Group Density



### Map of Distinct Cultural Zones in the AAIR



1. New England – Primarily dominated by Frederick Turner-El’s MDNMNA.
2. New York City – The New York City zone (which includes Newark) is notable for being 1) the zone with the most diverse Islamic influences; 2) the location of the UNIA headquarters, which had a significant role in influencing Islamophilia in African-American culture in the 1920s; 3) the location of one of the two main regions in the AAIR to develop a relatively strong African-American Sunni community; and 4) a region that was particularly important for the NOI’s 1950s expansion.
3. Philadelphia/Western New Jersey – MST and Sunni influences were particularly important here.
4. Ohio/Western Pennsylvania/Western New York – Distinct because of the the strong influence of Ahmadiyya Islam (both Qadiani and Lahori) that served as the base for a vibrant African-American Sunni network that developed in the late 1930s/1940s.
5. Detroit/Michigan – Most notable for being the original home of the NOI. However, for most of the AAIR, African-American Islam there was dominated by the MST. Detroit/Michigan was also the zone the most influenced by Japanese nationalism in the AAIR.

6. Indiana – A stronghold of the MST; primarily composed of small Kirikman Bey temples scattered throughout the state.

7. Chicago – While it was the headquarters of the Ahmadis for most of the AAIR, the MST (composed of a wide variety of factions) was the most influential AAIR movement there until, perhaps, the late 1950s when the NOI experienced its second wave of growth.

8. St. Louis – For most of the AAIR, African-American Islam in St. Louis was primarily influenced by Paul Nathaniel Johnson, the early black Ahmadi leader and, after 1930, the head of his sectarian group, the Fahamme Temples of Islam and Culture.

### AAIR Size Estimates by Year

Year	US Qadiani Ahmadis	MST (combined)	Nation of Islam	Sunnis and Lahoris
1920	100			
1921	200			
1922	500			
1923	700			
1924	850			
1925	1,000	50		
1926	700	150		
1927	400	2,500		40
1928	400	6,000		75
1929	350	7,000		100
1930	500	4,000	300	125
1931	1,200	3,000	2,000	125
1932	1,600	2,000	6,000	100
1933	2,000	2,000	2,000	100
1934	3,000	2,000	700	1,500
1935	1,800	2,500	250	1,600
1936	1,500	2,500	275	1,800
1937	1,200	2,500	300	2,000
1938	1,000	2,800	300	1,800
1939	900	3,300	325	1,400
1940	400	4,000	350	1,000
1941	300	4,000	325	1,200
1942	300	4,000	300	1,400
1943	300	4,000	280	1,600
1944	400	4,000	300	1,800
1945	400	3,500	310	2,000
1946	500	3,500	330	1,800
1947	600	3,000	350	1,700
1948	600	3,000	360	1,600
1949	300	3,000	370	1,400
1950	200	2,500	380	1,200
1951	300	2,500	390	1,200
1952	400	2,000	400	1,200
1953	500	2,000	500	1,100

1954	500	2,000	900	1,100
1955	500	2,000	1,400	1,000
1956	500	2,000	2,000	900
1957	500	1,500	3,000	900
1958	500	1,500	5,000	800
1959	500	1,500	10,000	800

## AAIR Timeline

