

A History of Conversion to Islam in the United States, Volume 2

Muslim Minorities

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A History of Conversion to Islam in the United States, Volume 2

The African American Islamic Renaissance, 1920–1975

By

Patrick D. Bowen



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To my grandparents



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Abbreviations

AAA	Afro-American Association
AAC	Ansaaru Allah Community
AAIR	African American Islamic Renaissance
AAUAA	Addeynu Allahe-Universal Arabic Association
AD NIP	African Descendants Nationalist Independence Partition Party
AME	African Methodist Episcopal Church
AMP	ALI'S MEN PAPERS
AMWSA	African Moslem Welfare Society of America
AOI	Academy of Islam
APR	Ancient and Primitive Rite of Memphis and Misraim
BAM	Black Arts Movement
BHL	Bentley Historical Library
BLA	Black Liberation Army
BLF	Black Liberation Front
BPP	Black Panther Party
BVAL	Blackman's Volunteer Army of Liberation
COINTELPRO	Counterintelligence Program
CORE	Congress of Racial Equality
DAR	Dar-ul-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 of the United States and Canada
FOI	Fruit of Islam
FPCC	Fair Play for Cuba Committee
GOAL	Group on Advanced Leadership
<i>HCTIUS</i>	<i>A History of Conversion to Islam in the United States</i>
IMA	Islamic Mission of America
IMB	International Muslim Brotherhood
IMJC	Imam Mohamad Jawad Chirri
IMS	International Moslem Society
IPNA	Islamic Party of North America
IRM	Islamic Revivalist Movement
KKK	Ku Klux Klan
MBUSA	Moslem Brotherhood of the United States of America
MDNMNA	Moorish Science Temple, the Divine and National Movement of North America, Inc.

MGT-GCC	Muslim Girls' Training-General Civilization Class
MIB	Mosque of Islamic Brotherhood
MIIC	Moroccan Inter-Religious and International Conference
MMI	Muslim Mosque, Inc.
MMIRM WRHS	Masjid al-Mumin/Islamic Revivalist Movement Western Reserve Historical Society
MNIC	Moorish National Islamic Center
MOA	Moslems of America
MPSRC	Miscellaneous Publications from the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture
MSA	Muslim Students' Association of the United States and Canada
MSTA	Moorish Science Temple of America
MSTIAM	Moorish Science Temple of I AM
MUOF	Moroccan United Organization Federation
MWL	Muslim World League
NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
NEPCOC	National Emancipation Proclamation Centennial Observance Committee
NOI	Nation of Islam
OAAU	Organization of Afro-American Unity
OMA	Onward Movement of America
OOM	Oriental Order of the Magi
PME	Peace Movement of Ethiopia
PMEW	Pacific Movement of the Eastern World
RAM	Revolutionary Action Movement
RNA	Republic of New Afrika
SAB	Sharif Anael-Bey
SNCC	Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee
SWP	Socialist Workers Party
UANM	Universal African Nationalist Movement
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UIS	Universal Islamic Society
UISA	Uniting Islamic Society of America
UMS	United Moslem Society
UNIA	Universal Negro Improvement Association
WMC	World Muslim Council
WPA	Works Progress Administration
YMMA	Young Men's Moslem Association

Introduction

Starting around 1920, certain strands of African American folk culture were blended with orthodox Islamic knowledge, black nationalism, and various forms of esotericism to create a powerful and complex wave of Islamic movements. Over the next fifty-five years, literally hundreds of thousands of African Americans became aware of and interested in the notion that Islam may have been their 'original' religion; tens of thousands went beyond mere interest and embraced Islam outright; and hundreds of black Muslim leaders, writers, and artists took it upon themselves to develop, articulate, and shape the meaning of Islam for the broader African American community. The diversity and abundance of these Islamic currents was so great that the present book refers to the period between 1920 and 1975 as the era of the African American Islamic Renaissance (AAIR).

What distinguishes this volume from previous studies of black Muslims is its in-depth discussions of lesser-known roots, manifestations, and influences of African American Islam. Some of the most popular explanations for the attractiveness of Islam in the black community either focus on the charisma of prominent Muslim figures or look at what are typically framed as the 'political' motivations of the converts.¹ Although both factors undoubtedly contributed to the development of African American Islam, they hardly tell the whole story. In fact, for two decades now, scholars who have recognized the inadequacies of such theories have expressed a vague awareness that the early black Muslim leaders were also drawing on a deep cultural reservoir that resonated with their followers.² Nevertheless, so far this has not led to a nuanced appreciation of the multitude of specific African American cultural and religious traditions

1 Since the 1960s countless writers have attributed the Nation of Islam's expansion to Malcolm X, and it is now almost considered common knowledge that does not need to be rigorously defended. The political explanation was popularized by C. Eric Lincoln in his seminal study *The Black Muslims in America*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans; Trenton: Africa World Press, [1961] 1994).

2 For example, see the respective books of Richard Brent Turner, Robert Dannin, Dennis Walker, Michael Gomez, and Sherman Jackson: *Islam in the African American Experience*, 2nd ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, [1997] 2003); *Black Pilgrimage to Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); *Islam and the Search for African American Nationhood* (Atlanta: Clarity Press, 2005); *Black Crescent: The Experience and Legacy of African Muslims in the Americas* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); *Islam and the Blackamerican: Looking toward the Third Resurrection* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

that became the ideological roots of the AAIR, or of the numerous sociological and historical forces that led to the great diversity in the black Islamic experience. The present volume thus serves as both an analytical corrective and as an updated—though not completely comprehensive—chronicle of African American conversion to Islam before 1975.³

Deterritorialization, Reterritorialization, and Religion

In order to make clear the manifold factors that shaped twentieth-century African American Islam, this book situates the AAIR within the theoretical and historical framework of de- and reterritorialization. Deterritorialization, as identified by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, is the modern tendency for all human-related things to circulate as if there were no boundaries, a phenomenon that emerged as the outcome of millennia of travel networks, markets, and technology developing across the world.⁴ Still, as Deleuze and Guattari point out, even in this era of relative freedom of movement, not everything can move with equal ease. Indeed, numerous restrictions—*re*territorializations—have emerged, such as those imposed by political boundaries, access to technology, and cultural biases. De- and reterritorialization, then, are both historical forces and analytical concepts that help identify some of the dominant patterns shaping all elements of human culture in the modern era.

The impacts of de- and reterritorialization on religion have been numerous and complex. For example, through modern travel, communication technology, and the expansion of literacy, deterritorialization has enabled many to

3 Because there have been numerous excellent studies of the Nation of Islam and Malcolm X, I do not include many of the details brought up in those works. See, e.g., besides Lincoln's *Black Muslims*, E.U. Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism: A Search for an Identity in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962); Karl Evanzz, *The Messenger: The Rise and Fall of Elijah Muhammad* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1999); Claude A. Clegg, III, *An Original Man: The Life and Times of Elijah Muhammad* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997); Mattias Gardell, *In the Name of Elijah Muhammad: Louis Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996); Manning Marable, *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention* (New York: Viking, 2011).

4 See Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (New York: Viking Press, 1977). This discussion builds on the use of Deleuze and Guattari in Patrick D. Bowen, *A History of Conversion to Islam in the United States, Volume 1: White American Converts before 1975* (hereafter, *HCTIUS*) (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 7–16.

freely learn about, adopt, and develop religious ideas and practices to a degree that was unimaginable in prior eras. Nevertheless, the freedom to convert to a previously little-known religion does not guarantee that all religions will become equally widespread. In fact, it seems to be the case that no matter the relative freedom for religious seeking and expression, there are always reterritorializing restrictions on what is seen as an acceptable religion in a given region at a given time. One of the principal reasons for this is that religions always exist as 'goods' in a market of consumers and producers and, as in any market, the distribution of capital, access to production resources, and the ability to influence the regulation of the market itself all play significant roles in determining what the popular religions will be.⁵ Therefore, religions that are endorsed by a state and that are organized in officially-permitted formal institutions tend to be much more publicly prominent than those that do not receive either official endorsement or institutionalization. The latter religions, which have classically been referred to as 'folk' religions, exist at the peripheries of the mainstream modern religious markets. As such, they may sometimes be repressed by the larger society or its government, and they may even have their own small markets within the larger societal markets.⁶

The complexity of a modern religious market can vary significantly from place to place. In monoethnic societies with low class stratification and relative social harmony, there will not generally be great variation in the diversity of the religious goods demanded, and folk markets may be relatively few or may not face intense repression, particularly when traditional folk religions are incorporated into the dominant, institutionalized religions of that region. But in societies with great ethnic and class diversity, and especially where major tensions exist between social groups, demands for different religious goods will be incredibly diverse, and therefore there can be an abundance of folk markets. Such a situation is made even more extreme in cases like that of North America during the slave era, where, because of the cultural bias of white

5 See Bowen, *HCTIUS*, 1:esp. 14–16; Rodney Stark and Roger Finke, *Acts of Faith: Explaining the Human Side of Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990); Wendy Griswold, *Cultures and Societies in a Changing World* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press, 1994), 1–92. I also assume Foucauldian forms of power play an important role, but this concept is mostly helpful for understanding large world-historical transformations, a notion that I will address in a future work.

6 Here, although they do not use the concept of 'folk,' I am influenced by Griswold's *Cultures and Societies in a Changing World* and Bradford Verter's "Spiritual Capital: Theorizing Religion with Bourdieu against Bourdieu," *Sociological Theory* 21, no. 2 (2003): 150–74.

supremacy, multiple ethnic and religious groups were pushed against their will into the same 'racial' classification, thus forcing people with different religious demands to have to publicly identify with each other and sometimes with each other's religion, all while privately attempting to retain their traditional religion.

Making matters even more complicated is the fact that oppressed communities, in addition to practicing various ethnic-specific traditional religions and the blended religions that emerge in their mixed ethnic or class groups, also frequently develop what James C. Scott has labeled 'hidden transcripts': folk religious ideas and practices that protest the dominant social system and are intentionally hidden from the gaze of the group doing the oppressing.⁷ Because these transcripts are generally not institutionalized, they are especially prone to deterritorialization and can easily morph into different forms even within a single oppressed community. This is especially true when that community is, like that of North American slaves, spread over a large geographical area and is composed of a wide variety of ethnic, religious, social, and experiential influences. Therefore, hidden transcripts, like folk religions generally, can often take on regionally- and ethnically-distinct patterns—what might be called religious 'dialects'⁸—and can emerge in disparate regions simultaneously without direct or obvious influences on each other. Furthermore, because of the desire to keep such transcripts hidden, several tactics are employed to maintain the secrecy of this knowledge, which can result in even greater levels of religious complexity within a market. For example, in order to avoid detection from the dominant society, transcripts that oppose social systems might be transmitted clearly only when oppressed people are in private, but in a public setting they may cloak the transcript in language that can appear to the uninitiated to be perfectly in line with officially-permitted religious teachings, thereby inserting into a mainstream market elements that are opposed to that very market. Or, a transmitter of a hidden transcript may insist that a story is a mere 'tale,' when it is in fact used to communicate a very real perspective on society. Due to these factors, hidden transcripts can move between, and even function simultaneously in, mainstream markets, folk markets, and the small, isolated markets of regions, families, and individuals' social networks.

7 See his *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).

8 I have not seen the term 'religious dialects' used before; but I believe it naturally fits in with the current scholarly tendency to discuss religion using terms of communication, such as 'discourse,' 'vernacular,' and 'transcript.'

It should also be recognized that folk traditions can both die and transform into mainstream religious currents. Conscious awareness of folk traditions, for instance, can be lost with the passing of generations—a reality all the more common for hidden transcripts due to their being placed under heavy camouflage. Therefore, as time goes by, some traditions may disappear except for as vague vestiges, taking the forms of nearly-forgotten secrets, unarticulated thoughts, unconscious or little-understood behaviors, hazy memories, or abstract symbols in one's subconscious. Interestingly, though, on occasion after fading into near obscurity hidden transcripts and folk traditions can be later revived and even institutionalized—that is, reterritorialized—within folk and even mainstream markets. The reasons as to how and why this occurs can vary greatly. It seems, though, that it is often the case that such an event happens when a market, a group of markets, or a whole society has recently undergone a dramatic transformation—a phenomenon that some sociologists refer to as an 'institutional change.'⁹ In this scenario, there are both religious consumers and producers; the consumers desire older religious goods as, because those goods are familiar to them, they offer a form of cultural orientation to help navigate oneself during a period of instability and alienation, whereas the producers are typically individuals who have mastered the folk traditions and have determined how to make them relevant for the current context. Because institutions can provide those involved with them rewards that are difficult to obtain outside of institutions—such as formally-established cultural legitimacy, abundant resources for capital, and political and legal power—if the new market environment permits the institutionalization of these old traditions, then it is likely that ambitious and savvy producers will indeed institutionalize them. Therefore, given institutional change, even nearly-forgotten hidden transcripts have the potential to become reterritorialized into mainstream religious institutions.

One particular African American hidden transcript offers a fascinating study of this hidden transcript-to-institutional religion transformation. Since at least the first half of the nineteenth century, tales about Europeans having used a red flag as a lure to enslave Africans have wafted through black religious and cultural markets, sometimes becoming incorporated into regional or familial folklore, sometimes transforming and blending with different stories, and some-

9 My use of 'institutional change' is significantly influenced by Douglass C. North's *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990) and Mary C. Brinton and Victor Nee, eds., *The New Institutionalism in Sociology* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1998).

times finding no consumers at all.¹⁰ By the early twentieth century, although throughout the country a significant proportion of ex-slaves still knew different versions of the tale, the folk tradition about the red flag was clearly dying out. However, as will be shown later, before it went completely extinct, an early twentieth-century institutional change in African American culture allowed the tradition to become institutionalized by two religious organizations in the 1920s and 1930s. These groups were thus able to appeal to those individuals who either consciously recognized the tradition or felt a vague familiarity with it due to, probably, a hazy or subconscious awareness of elements of the story. Soon, then, these organizations were incredibly influential, and one in particular would eventually gain enough cultural power to bring about a whole new institutional change. Because the red flag tradition had originally emerged out of the deterritorialization of the African religions that were forced together during slavery, its journey to becoming an influential institutionalized religious concept serves as a clear example of the dynamic changes that religious traditions can undergo in a world of de- and reterritorialization.

The AAIR and the Red Flag

Over the years, a number of academics have observed a general similarity between African American Islamic teachings and the older African American religious tradition, but because they have not been able to convincingly identify the specific religious roots of the AAIR, many of the sociological, historical, and market mechanisms behind the AAIR's development out of pre-twentieth-century black religion have been missed. Of course, identifying specific religious roots is no easy task, especially in cases involving African American religion. Due to a large part of the black religious tradition having emerged from the blending of African traditions with European Christian traditions, it is often hard to persuasively prove that an influence on a later movement, such as African American Islam, came exclusively from the older African American tradition and not an independent European-based Christian tradition. And if one cannot do this, there will always be a lingering, subtle doubt as to whether the root genuinely came from black culture. On the other hand, if one can

10 This topic will be discussed in much greater detail below, especially in Chapter 1. For a brief summary of the tradition see Olli Alho, *The Religion of the Slaves: A Study of the Religious Tradition and Behaviour of Plantation Slaves in the United States, 1830–1865* (Helsinki: Academia Scientarium Fennica, 1976), 216.

demonstrate that a uniquely African American religious concept or practice was indeed a root, then that root becomes a foundation on which one can build a framework of evidence to reveal other links between the new religion and the older African American tradition.

For the AAIR, the red flag hidden transcript is this foundational root. As it turns out, the red flag tale was one of the rare traditions that was truly unique to African Americans, and, as we will see, the very groups that reterritorialized it in the 1920s and 1930s happened to be the two most popular African American Muslim organizations of the AAIR.¹¹ We therefore have solid ground for comparing other specific black folk traditions with the teachings of the twentieth-century black American Islamic movements. When this is done, it becomes clear that a multitude of distinctly-African American stories, concepts, and practices were indeed incorporated into those groups. Despite the fact that there are very few examples of African American Muslims acknowledging that some of the specific teachings presented as Islamic had previously been non-Muslim folk traditions, in the opinion of this author, the evidence is overwhelming. Indeed, so many black Muslim doctrines show clear parallels with specific African American folk traditions that by recognizing the folk connections of certain central teachings of the Muslims, one can suddenly understand a number of notions and practices whose deeper meanings had previously been virtually impenetrable. From this perspective, then, the AAIR was a renaissance in the sense of a rebirth: African American Muslim groups had given new life to old folk beliefs.

But for those who actually embraced Islam, the AAIR was a different kind of rebirth. One of the distinguishing features of the AAIR is that the vast majority of its Islamic movements asserted that Islam was the religion of African Americans' ancestors in Africa. If 'Islam' is defined as a religion that is nearly identical to what most self-identified Muslims throughout history have practiced, then this claim is not just inaccurate for most African Americans, it is also rather hard to believe, especially if it is presented without any obvious supporting evidence, as it seems to have been during the AAIR. However, if it is recognized that AAIR leaders were essentially helping black folk adapt to their recent institutional change by telling them that many of the stories and practices they already knew were actually Islamic, it is much more understandable why these individuals felt that there was indeed good evidence that their ancestors were

11 It is likely that the popularity of displaying of the red communist flag among interwar African American communists may have folk roots as well, but I have not yet found documented evidence for this.

Muslims. For them, then, the AAIR was the period of the rebirth of their true Islamic heritage—and this, as will be shown, was a central theme of the AAIR.¹²

Still, it is not the case that every Islamic group that used black folk traditions became extremely popular. On the contrary; most did not, and sometimes only certain factions or certain leaders gained large followings. Furthermore, simply knowing that black folk traditions were employed cannot by itself explain why the various teachings of the different Islamic groups of the period each took on distinct traits. To help explicate the many different ways Islam and folk traditions were reterritorialized by black Muslim groups and why some groups became more popular than others, this book makes use of detailed historical and textual analysis as well as a number of sociological theories. As we will see, although the folk traditions of the AAIR are important to recognize, they are only one piece of the puzzle; a great deal of additional information about the mechanisms behind the growth of African American Islam is revealed in the finer points in the biographies and patterns of development of each of the AAIR's several unique Islamic currents.

When all of this information is pieced together, the picture that emerges is one of an African American Islamic Renaissance that was comprised of two distinct eras. The first era, which lasted from ca. 1920 to ca. 1945, was that of the first generation of African American Muslim movements and converts. It was during this period that the notion that African Americans were or could be Muslims first became popular; thousands embraced the religion and at least a half-dozen distinct movements appeared. However, although using folk traditions like the red flag hidden transcript was important for black Islamic groups to be able to win people over, during this era the fundamental reason African Americans were suddenly, on a large scale, so willing to accept the claim that their folk traditions were Islamic was that at the time Islam and Muslims had recently become subjects of great interest in the black community—a phenomenon largely attributable to the religion being endorsed by the institution-changing black nationalist movement led by Marcus Garvey. By successfully employing the market-shaping tools of mass media; recruiting numerous small social networks; and promoting programs, charismatic leaders, and folk traditions that appealed to the black masses, Garvey's movement deeply transformed African American cultural and religious markets, and in the process promoted and legitimized Islam for African Americans. Garvey's black nationalism thus served as a central pole around which all of the deterritorializing

12 This period has in fact been labeled by Warith Deen Mohammed as the 'First Resurrection' for this very reason.

Islamic currents of the period gravitated and multiplied; and, as a result, no single Islamic movement solidly dominated this era.

The second era, which lasted from roughly the end of the Second World War to the beginning of 1975, was similarly put on solid footing by a single organization that made effective use of mass media; social networks; and appealing programs, charismatic leaders, and folk traditions like the red flag tale. In this period, however, the culture-shaping organization was a Muslim one: the Nation of Islam (NOI). The NOI and its leading figures—most notably, Elijah Muhammad and Malcolm X—legitimized the major themes of African American Islam during this period in a way similar to that of Garvey's movement in the first era. But the America in which the Nation had found itself after World War II was very different from that in which Garvey had risen, and the NOI had developed new tools that helped it thrive when other Islamic and black nationalist groups were failing. Although its teachings were still strongly tied to black folk traditions, the particular traditions that it now emphasized better appealed to the new generation of African Americans. And unlike Garvey's movement, which had found a great deal of its support from church leaders, the NOI was tapping into the social networks of black prisoners/ex-convicts, black nationalists, non-NOI Muslims, and families. Through these and other efforts, the Nation became a new cultural pole, generating yet another institutional change in black American life, but one that, much more so than the previous era, made Islamic themes—particularly those that had been influenced by or connected to the NOI—widely-accepted elements of African American culture. It was in this second era, then, that Islam reached its fullest reterritorialization in the AAIR.

Limitations and Outline of the Book

To better bring to light the numerous distinct historical, sociological, and thematic currents within the AAIR's different periods, this book is divided into three parts: part 1, which examines African American religion and folk culture before the AAIR; part 2, which examines the first era of the AAIR; and part 3, which examines the AAIR's second era. The reader will note that part 2 is significantly longer than part 3; this is due to the fact that, since it was primarily during the first era that most of the main AAIR movements and concepts originally developed, this part contains the majority of this book's analysis of the teachings, founders, and emergence of the various Islamic organizations. Although several new Islamic groups appeared in the second era, none were as popular as the most influential organizations from the first, and, in fact, their

teachings were often derived from those of the first era. Spending extra time to lay a solid historical and analytical base in part 2 will therefore be of great help in explaining the post-1945 developments.

A few words might also be said at this point concerning some of the limitations and unique features of the book. First, the reader should be warned that although this volume makes significant use of sociological theories to help explain many of the patterns that appear to have defined African American Islam, it nevertheless remains primarily a work of history and, because of this, some of the book's larger claims veer beyond strict sociology to the realm of impressionistic generalizing, which is more common to history writing. It is my view that using the tools of both fields has many benefits, particularly in the offering of what I believe is a clearer and more expansive view of the topic at hand, but it may also be somewhat disappointing for those who desire to see a fuller development of the sociological concepts brought up throughout the course of the work.

Another issue that will undoubtedly be of concern to many readers will be the book's lack of significant attention to female Muslims and gender issues in general. This feature is largely the result of two factors: the book's dependence on documentary resources, which for this subject are significantly male-centered, and its focus on understanding the key forces, movements, and individuals that shaped the spread of Islam in African American culture—not on the ways in which African American Islamic culture developed after it had spread and settled. As we will see, the expansion of African American Islam was indeed dominated by men; the vast majority of the Islamic organizational leaders, writers, popular speakers, and news makers were men, and men seem to have made up a significant majority of the rank-and-file black Muslims as well. Save for the Moorish Science Temple of America, which had a small number of 'sheikesses' who established and ran their own branches of the movement, most of the AAIR groups did not even allow women to officially run anything more than local auxiliary organizations; in most cases, women were to play a subservient role to the men and were to focus on homemaking and other 'women's' affairs. There were of course a number of fairly prominent female writers, artists, auxiliary leaders, and informal branch and even movement leaders—such as Clara Muhammad, who served as her husband's leading representative for five years in the 1940s for the Nation of Islam—and I suspect women, particularly mothers, played an enormous but as yet undocumented role as transmitters of folk knowledge. However, in the vast majority of cases women were nowhere near as prominent in the public sphere as many of the men who served in similar roles. This reality seems to have been largely a factor of a gender bias within African American Islam, which itself was reflec-

tive of a similar gender bias in the broader African American culture and in American culture generally; in fact, as we will see, a major trend in the AAIR linked Islam specifically to deep and widespread traditions regarding masculinity. And because of these patterns, the primary sources themselves do not give great insight into the lives of women in these movements, making the chronicling of their dimension of the AAIR extremely difficult. Women are of course mentioned several times in the book and I cite nearly every existing study concerning pre-1975 African American female Muslims, but at no point is there an in-depth treatment of Muslim women or gender issues.

A third feature that will be noted by many readers is the particular terminology employed in this book. For those familiar with African American Islam, one of the most obvious examples of my terminology is the use of the words ‘conversion’ and ‘convert.’ Particularly since the 1970s (as will be discussed in Chapter 15), there has been a popular trend among African American Muslims to refer to their turning to Islam as ‘returning’ or ‘reversion’; for African Americans of that period, this language was generally based on the belief that prior to their enslavement all or at least a significant majority of Africans brought to North America before the nineteenth century identified as Muslims.¹³ However, beyond the fact that this idea is not supported by the extant historical evidence, it appears that not every African American who embraced Islam before 1975 believed in this claim; some black Muslims explicitly used the term ‘conversion’; and, finally, because ‘conversion’/‘convert’ are the preferred sociological terms for the phenomenon of religious switching, their use helps better link the sociological concepts that will be used here to elucidate the book’s subject.

In addition, in order to distinguish between the uniquely African American Islam that emerged in the United States and the various forms of Islam that have been practiced by Muslims throughout the rest of the world and were brought to the US by immigrants, I use the terms ‘orthodox Islam’ and ‘international Muslims.’ Despite the fact that the term ‘orthodox’ sometimes has the connotation of ‘right’ doctrine—that is, as opposed to a ‘wrong’ doctrine—in this book I employ the more common understanding of the term, using it to refer to what might be vaguely called the generic, mainstream form of Islam found in most of the world, what is often labeled by Westerners as ‘Sunni’ Islam. Similarly, the term ‘international’ is used not to imply that there are no interna-

13 Today, the terms are used by many whites and Britons as well, and they generally explain it as referring to the orthodox Islamic concept that all people are born with a predisposition to Islam—their ‘reversion’ is thus a return to that natural disposition.

tional roots or connections of African American Muslims, but rather that these Muslims were generally either not born in the Americas or were the children of immigrants from Muslim-majority regions. Of course, many have rightly argued that there is no true generic or mainstream form of Islam and, at the same time, all of Islam could be considered international; I hope, though, that the reader will understand the meanings for these terms in this book's particular context. Nevertheless, I still of course encourage those who wish to provide correctives to this volume's terminological and other shortcomings to do so.

With these issues addressed, we can now turn to the outline of the book, which begins, because of the foundational role of black religion for the AAIR, with an overview of some of the key trends in African American religion and culture that emerged prior to the end of the First World War. Two major institutions shaped black religion and culture during this period: slavery and Emancipation. Like the Garvey movement and the NOI later, the impact of both of these institutions was on the level of institutional change; that is, they reterritorialized life for black people who had been participating in many different regional and cultural markets. The emphasis in this chapter, however, is on the two aspects of black religion that are key for understanding the AAIR: the historical development of the increasingly complicated African American folk religiosity and on the presence of Islam in black religious life before 1920. It is argued that the reason Islam did not become a widespread religious identity during this period, despite Muslims accounting for perhaps up to twenty percent of all of enslaved persons brought from Africa to the Americas, is that there was both little demand and, for those who were interested in spreading Islam, relatively poor access to religious markets. In other words, the ways black religious markets had been shaped by slavery and Emancipation were not conducive to conversion to the ideological and organizational forms of Islam that were being presented at the time. Nevertheless, many of the elements that would become part of the later African American Islamic movement were developed during this period, especially numerous folk traditions and hidden transcripts that were being cultivated through the mixing of traditional African religious currents with Christian elements.

Part 2 presents the emergence and spread of Islam in the first era of the AAIR. Starting around the year 1920, we see for the first time the rise of widespread interest in and conversion to Islam. Although there were multiple actors playing a role in this development, my argument in Chapters 2 and 3 is that the single most important party was Marcus Garvey and his massively popular black nationalist movement the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). By the early 1920s, Garvey had successfully reterritorialized African American culture through the use of mass media, offering various beneficial programs

and ideas, and recruiting the leaders and leading institutions of numerous black communities throughout the country. Garvey's impact however went beyond mere culture. Since many of the UNIA's local leaders were connected to the church, Garvey also had a profound influence on religion. Indeed, he can be said to have initiated an institutional change that affected *both* black cultural life and black religious life. And, because while Garvey was doing this the UNIA was promoting the acceptance of Islam as a legitimate black religious identity, it was Garvey's movement that finally established a real market for Islam to circulate in the black community. Almost immediately after the UNIA endorsed the religion, a number of individuals began trying to exploit this market expansion, and the early 1920s saw several Muslim leaders—most of whom were nonorthodox and could appeal to folk beliefs—winning converts, and almost all of them had either direct or indirect connections to Garvey's movement.

The first major African American-led Islamic movement, however, did not appear until Garvey had been imprisoned. It was in 1925 that Noble Drew Ali, a former folk healer who had probably been raised by a Baptist preacher, brought forth a new Islamic teaching that would rapidly gain several thousand members. It will be shown in Chapters 4 and 5 that Drew Ali's teachings combined the red flag tale and other black folk religious beliefs with high intellectual ideals, white-derived esotericism, and black nationalist concepts. In fact, it does not seem to be a coincidence that Drew Ali's movement began making popular the assertion that African Americans were Muslim 'Moors' precisely when the UNIA was consistently praising and promoting North African Moors in its own newspaper. By so thoroughly connecting with the religious market Garvey had opened up, Drew Ali's Moorish Science Temple of America (MSTA) more fully established Islam as a legitimate identity in African American religious culture and, at the same time, appeared as if it were headed to become the dominant form of African American Islam for all of history. Schisms, however, were emerging and upon Drew Ali's death in 1929 the movement fractured into numerous factions that, although they spread the MSTA further across the country and gained possibly more converts than had Drew Ali during his life, prevented the development of a united and strong Muslim community.

But the death of Drew Ali had other, greater implications for the history of African American Islam, for it represented a *de facto* deregulation of the African American Muslim market, and black Islam was suddenly deterritorialized. Chapters 6 and 7 examine the emergence of a post-Drew Ali Islamic movement that would not just thrive in this environment, reterritorializing key elements of African American Islam, but would eventually gain by far the most profound impact on the presence of Islam in African American culture in the twentieth century. Established in the early 1930s by an eccentric immi-

grant named W.D. Fard, the Nation of Islam taught ideas that seem to have blended black folk traditions, black nationalism, Eastern Islamic teachings, and MSTA concepts along with deep knowledge of history, science, esotericism, various forms of Christian fundamentalism, and a profound desire to resist white racist violence. Particularly when communicated by its leading minister, Elijah Muhammad, himself the son of a Baptist preacher, the Nation's doctrines could speak to a wide variety of African Americans, and the movement seems to have been a relative success in its early years, gaining possibly several thousand followers in Detroit alone, as well as perhaps a few hundred more in Chicago and Milwaukee. Although it shared many similarities with the MSTA, the NOI was distinct in several ways, and its unique traits would prove to shape the movement's trajectory, although by the end of World War II its fate was not at all clear.

The NOI, nevertheless, was not the only Islamic movement to develop in Drew Ali's wake. As Chapter 8 shows, many new and revived expressions of African American Islam surged forth in the 1930s and 1940s. The diversity of forms of Muslim movements and identities during this period reveals the fact that African American Islam could be reterritorialized in a large number of ways, many of which were completely nonorthodox and often combined the teachings of the MSTA and NOI with other concepts. Despite this diversity, though, black nationalism and folk religion continued to play key roles, reflecting their fundamental reterritorializing positions in the development of African American Islam. This was true, as Chapter 9 explains, even when it came to the early spread of more orthodox forms of Islam from the 1920s through the 1940s. Several individuals who were either from or had visited orthodox Muslim communities throughout the world successfully promoted 'Sunni' Islam to probably a few hundred African Americans during this era, but they had often done so by appealing to the elements already present in the markets Garvey and the previous Muslims had so thoroughly shaped. Largely because of this fact, by the end of the Second World War, African American orthodox Islam was nearly just as deterritorialized and diverse as African American nonorthodox Islam.

With part 3 the second era of African American conversion to Islam is brought to light. The postwar generation was very different from the previous group of Muslims not only because its converts were far more likely to be urban-born and much less familiar with the old black folk traditions, but also because this era generally was a time of great change for African Americans, who were increasingly taking part in the remolding of American race relations. Fortunately for the Nation of Islam, the circumstances it had found itself in during the 1940s fostered a deep transformation that enabled it to develop tools

that would better reach the new generation, thus giving the group far greater influence on African American culture than any other Islamic organization had before. Chapters 10 and 11 describe and explain this remarkable reemergence of the NOI starting in the late 1940s. The incarceration of many of its members that decade put the movement in touch with a population that had not been significantly proselytized to before: prisoners and active criminals. This contact and other changes in the group led to a transmutation in the NOI's programs and approach, which now put greater emphasis on economic black nationalism, the use of mass media, and certain folk themes that were increasingly popular in urban centers—all of which enabled the NOI, now firmly under the leadership of Elijah Muhammad, to reach a fairly broad audience. Helping this growth, too, was the relative stagnation and decline of the various non-NOI Islamic movements. Although there were certainly a number of impressive developments in the non-NOI Muslim community, overall the community did not grow significantly, and therefore could not successfully compete with the NOI for the 'consumers' of African American Islam.

With its new prominence, the Nation of Islam also proved to be incredibly fertile religious soil for one Malcolm Little, an ex-convict and son of a Garveyite Baptist preacher. As Malcolm X, he became the NOI's most well-known minister and, after the movement received national attention in 1959, he was rocketed to the position of one of the most prominent, if controversial, speakers on the black experience in America. Chapters 12 and 13 explore how Malcolm X achieved an unprecedented amount of attention for African American Islam, culminating in, if not true mass conversion, true mass influence over American culture. However, upon gaining the national stage, Malcolm began to deviate from the quietest NOI teachings, increasingly calling for African American interreligious unity and revolution. Although his new rhetoric helped the NOI expand to have even greater influence on black culture than it might have had otherwise, philosophical differences between him and other leading members of the movement led to Malcolm, in March 1964, choosing to leave the Nation and embrace orthodox Islam. In so doing, Malcolm unleashed a new torrent of Islamic interpretations and influences, as well as a rapidly spreading current of black nationalist and revolutionary perspectives that were, although ostensibly non-Islamic, often laced with Islamic themes. By the time of Malcolm's assassination in February 1965, the African American religious and cultural markets had become peppered with Islamic elements so thoroughly that the NOI and Malcolm can be said to have brought about yet another institutional change.

Chapters 14 and 15, finally, look at how Islam was reterritorialized in the wake of Malcolm's death. Explicitly Islamic themes had now become incorporated into popular black folk culture, and Malcolm, the NOI, and other Islamic move-

ments had inspired and shaped numerous new non-Muslim cultural dynamics and markets that were themselves shaping—converting—black America. But, just as Drew Ali's death had released a flood of diverse Islamic currents, so too did Malcolm's passing, and a new wave of Islamic movements, leaders, and artistic expressions emerged in the African American community. Interestingly, although several nonorthodox currents developed and were revived by emphasizing their connections with the folk, the period also saw the rise of new forms of orthodox Islam that were significantly influenced by international Islamic trends, even if the black nationalist and folk roots were still present in their teachings. African American religiosity had thus undergone a dramatic transformation since the slave era; the de- and reterritorializations of its 350 years of North American experience had ultimately created an extremely diverse market of Islamic identities and cultural currents.

PART 1

The Years 1619–1919



African American Religion and Folk Culture before 1920

African American religious history through the First World War was deeply shaped by two major historical phenomena: slavery and Emancipation. The impacts of both were so profound, so institutionally-changing, that virtually nothing in African American religious culture escaped their influence. The present chapter provides overviews of some of the key religious and cultural de- and reterritorializations created by slavery and Emancipation in order to make two arguments that lay the foundation for the remainder of the book.

The first argument is that many of the fundamental elements that would constitute the religious core of the AAIR, which will be examined in later chapters, were originally components of African American folk religion and culture. African American religion and culture emerged from a mix of various African and Christian beliefs and practices during the eras that slavery and Emancipation directly molded black life. And it was because of this specific origin that African American religious currents frequently developed patterns and themes that reflected a desire for liberation from oppression, a strong racial consciousness, and a need to retain shared elements of traditional African religions—all of which are themes that would appear in the AAIR. Although not every element of black folk religion and culture would later be used by Muslims, several specific traditions were, and these will be highlighted in the present chapter.

The second argument presented here is that despite there being contact between African Americans and Muslims before 1920, the conditions necessary to create a widespread Islamic conversion movement did not emerge. Successful new religious movements generally require at least one relatively large preexisting network or market of people who are willing to ‘consume’ the innovative religious teachings, but the forms of Islam and their promoters that appeared in this period were unable to fully tap into any such networks or markets. This fact helps put into relief the dramatic transformation that African American religious culture would have to go through for the AAIR to come about.

The Slave Era

Between the years 1619 and 1860, roughly 350,000 human beings were brought in chains from Africa to the land that became the United States.¹ Although the vast majority arrived from a single large area—the sub-Saharan western coast of the continent—they represented a wide variety of ethnic, cultural, and religious backgrounds.² It was because of this great diversity that, when the enslaved began forming a shared religious culture, no single ethnic or religious current dominated. Muslims, for instance, may have accounted for somewhere between less than five and up to twenty percent of the imported slaves, but because their religion, like other specific religious and ethnic African identities, was eventually subsumed by a unifying black American culture, it is likely that after slave importation was outlawed in 1808, the presence and influence of Muslims rapidly declined.³ By 1860, when there were around four million US slaves, the religious and cultural lives of most African Americans were grounded primarily in the new blended folk culture, and those who consciously identified as Muslims or with other specific religious or cultural identities made up only a tiny fraction of the enslaved population.⁴

We know relatively little about the religious practices of the slaves prior to the nineteenth century, but what we do know suggests that, for those who

1 See the *Transatlantic Slave Trade Database*, available at <http://www.slavevoyages.org/>.

2 The following list shows the approximate percentage that each of the main contributing West African regions—each of which had their own cultures and religions—represented out of the overall slave population: Senegambia (14.5), Sierra Leone (15.8), Gold Coast (13.1), Bight of Benin (4.3), Bight of Biafra (24.4), and West Central Africa (26.1); source: Michael A. Gomez, *Exchanging Our Country Marks: The Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 29. For discussions of slaves from the less-represented African regions, see Wendy Wilson-Fall, *Memories of Madagascar and Slavery in the Black Atlantic* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2015) and Lhoussain Simour, *Recollecting History beyond Borders: Captives, Acrobats, Dancers and the Moroccan-American Narrative of Encounters* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014).

3 See the following overviews of Muslim slaves in North America: 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); Gomez, *Black Crescent*, 13, 18–20, 128–35, 144–52; Kambiz GhaneaBassiri, *A History of Islam in America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 15–94.

4 Gomez, *Black Crescent*, 144–52; GhaneaBassiri, *A History*, 63–73; Jackson, *Islam*, 39, 123.

followed a religion, it was more than likely an African-based tradition. It seems, first of all, that the vast majority of slaves before 1800 were not Christians,⁵ and a significant number continued the practice of their traditional religions when they could, either as individuals or within groups of slaves from the same ethnic background. During the 1730s, for instance, Job Ben Solomon, a Fulbe Muslim living in bondage in Maryland, was known to go off into the woods alone to pray at Islam's prescribed times,⁶ while enslaved Igbos on a Virginia plantation were coming together to bury their dead with 'necessaries'—items such as jewelry and tobacco pipes—a well-established practice in their Nigerian homeland.⁷

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- 5 Even by 1860, only about eleven percent of slaves officially belonged to a church and perhaps only twice that proportion was actively involved in formal Christian activities; see Alho, *Religion of the Slaves*, 58. The following discussion relies significantly on the following works: Alho, *Religion of the Slaves*; Gomez, *Exchanging*; Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South*, updated ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004); George P. Rawick, ed., *The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography*, 19 vols. (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing, 1972); Fisk University, Social Science Institute, *God Struck Me Dead: Religious Conversion Experiences and Autobiographies of Negro Ex-Slaves* (Nashville: Fisk University, 1945); Fisk University, Social Science Institute, *Unwritten History of Slavery: Autobiographical Account of Negro Ex-Slaves* (Nashville: Fisk University, 1945); Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Vintage Books, 1976); Savannah Unit Georgia Writers' Project Work Projects Administration, *Drums and Shadows: Survival Studies among Georgia Coastal Negroes* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1940); Charles L. Perdue, Jr., Thomas E. Barden, and Robert K. Phillips, *Weevils in the Wheat: Interviews with Virginia Ex-Slaves* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1992); Mechal Sobel, *Trabelin' on: The Slave Journey to an Afro-Baptist Faith* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1979); Ras Michael Brown, *African-Atlantic Cultures and the South Carolina Lowcountry* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Yvonne P. Chireau, *Black Magic: Religion and the African American Conjuring Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Lawrence W. Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977); John W. Blassingame, *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972); Jason R. Young, *Rituals of Resistance: African Atlantic Religion in Kongo and the Lowcountry South in the Era of Slavery* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2007).
- 6 Douglas Grant, *The Fortunate Slave: An Illustration of African Slavery in the Early Eighteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 82.
- 7 Lorena S. Walsh, *From Calabar to Carter's Grove: The History of a Virginia Slave Community* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1997), 105–06. Walsh points out that "Until 1687 Virginia slave owners seem often to have permitted slaves 'to meete in great Numbers' to hold 'Funeralls for Dead Negroes,' many apparently involving non-Christian, West African rites," but that year such practices were outlawed due to fears of slaves using those funerals to meet to plan revolts.

There is also some evidence that in addition to the more ethnically-specific practices, some of the bondspersons had already begun finding religious common ground across ethnic lines. Funerary rites, like the one described above, were probably a prominent venue for this mixing, as West and Central Africans generally greatly valued the ceremony and had similar practices. The ring shout, however, is the most well-known example of an interethnically-mixed religious practice to have emerged among North American slaves. The act of shouting and dancing while moving as a group in a counterclockwise direction in order to venerate ancestors was widely-practiced along the western coast of Africa and seems to have served as one of the earliest unifying slave religious rituals.⁸ Material artifacts were acquiring shared meanings as well, particularly objects associated with divination, spells, and charms, which were being exchanged both among the bondspersons and with Europeans, contributing to a new hybrid magical tradition known as conjure.⁹ Finally, folktales, folk rhymes, and folk proverbs were undoubtedly transmitted between different slave ethnic groups, leading to the development of a shared oral tradition, although, as with most pre-nineteenth-century slave religious practices, we can say relatively little about the specific developments that were taking place with regards to such folk discourse mixing during the colonial and revolutionary eras.¹⁰

In the early nineteenth century, with the importation of slaves being outlawed and the American-born bondspersons already far outnumbering the African-born, the blended traditions began to flourish.¹¹ African-based magic, to take one example, had gained a distinct appearance, being predominantly influenced by West Central African and Protestant practices and beliefs, as opposed to the voodoo (Vodou) of Louisiana and Haiti, both of which were dominated by the Yoruba and Catholic traditions. Later known as 'hoodoo,'

8 Gomez, *Exchanging*, 264–72.

9 Chireau, *Black Magic*, 35–57.

10 Thomas W. Talley identified a folk rhyme that was most likely from the colonial era; see his *Negro Folk Rhymes Wise and Otherwise with a Study* (New York: Macmillan, 1922), 40, 247–48. It has long been recognized that African American folk rhymes were made up of a blend of African elements; for an early discussion, see L.J. Vance, "Plantation Folk-Lore," *Open Court* 2 (1888): 1029–32, 1074–76, 1092–95. For a study of similarities between African and African American proverbs, see Theophine Maria Campbell, "African and Afro-American Proverb Parallels" (MA thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 1975).

11 Unfortunately, the research on Islamic elements in the African American blended traditions—such as in jazz music, the ring shout, and quilting—has not yet produced especially persuasive arguments, although the existing theories are tantalizing.

United States conjure developed a strong affinity for mixing references to Jesus and Moses, spirits with supernatural powers, and, as we will see, a West Central African sense of spatial-temporal orientation. Yet, despite its distinctiveness, because of the contributions of a wide variety of ethnic groups and the slaves' tendency to blend common spiritual themes, North American conjure still contained elements that could be found in African communities throughout the Americas. One of these was the holding of the color red in especially high esteem. Red was not only the preferred color for the conjurers' magical bags and, on occasion, their garments, among slaves generally it was frequently used for painting objects and was the favorite color for clothing, especially for their brimless hats and kerchiefs.¹² This widespread preference is thought to be reflective of the high value placed on the color in numerous African cultures, where red dye was used for a variety of objects and clothing, not the least of which were the red headpieces and robes of spiritual leaders in multiple African ethnic and religious communities, including some Muslim ones.¹³

A second area that represented a major blending of beliefs and practices was the emerging North American black folktale tradition. African American folklore, like the folklore of most communities, touched on nearly every topic concerning the human condition, yet it was also distinguished by its proclivity for tales about animals, especially the trickster figure Bre'r Rabbit. Because conjure was such a prominent feature of the lives of the enslaved, it was frequently intermixed with the folktales as well,¹⁴ and stories of traditional African spirits and conjurers controlling the weather—particularly rain—were well-known; Bre'r Rabbit was even said to have had his own red conjure bag.¹⁵

12 Newbell Niles Puckett, *Folk Beliefs of the Southern Negro* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1926), *passim.*, esp. 220–21; Perdue et al., *Weevils*, 155, 263; Genovese, *Roll*, 121, 557–58; Brown, *African-Atlantic*, 103, 123, 240; Savannah Unit, *Drums and Shadows*, 76, 139, 216; Chireau, *Black Magic*, 22. References to red clothing are so numerous in Rawick's *American Slave* collection that it hardly requires citation.

13 Anita Jacobson-Widding, *Red-White-Black as a Mode of Thought: A Study of Triadic Classification by Colours in the Ritual Symbolism and Cognitive Thought of the Peoples of the Lower Congo* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1979); John Beattie and John Middleton, eds., *Spirit Mediumship and Society in Africa* (New York: Africana Publishing Corporation, 1969), 18, 86, 213; Fritz W. Kramer, *The Red Fez: Art and Spirit Possession in Africa* (New York: Verso, 1993).

14 Mary Alicia Owen, *Voodoo Tales; as Told among the Negroes of the Southwest* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1893).

15 Brown, *African-Atlantic*, *passim.*; Talley, *Negro Folk Rhymes*, 101; Ruth Bas, "Mojo," in *Mother Wit from the Laughing Barrel: Readings in the Interpretation of Afro-American Folklore*, ed. Alan Dundes (New York: Garland Publishing, 1981), 382. We are told that Rabbit's

There was, it seems, a deep cultural connection between conjure and black folklore's trickster, a fact belied not only by the widespread use of the term 'trick' for conjure spells, but also by the popular trickster folktale 'Coon in the Box,' wherein a slave, after his owner mistakenly comes to believe he possesses supernatural powers, cleverly exploits the conjure identity to his advantage.¹⁶

'Tricks,' however, could be employed by evil figures too. The Devil himself was known in black folklore as a trickster, a liar, and a master conjurer,¹⁷ and whites were said to have 'tricked' the bondspersons to keep them enslaved. On plantations, for instance, African Americans were aware that whites often tried to dissuade stealing by claiming that certain foods they farmed would, if eaten, kill black people, and some even invented ghost stories to instill a fear of the wilderness so that the enslaved would not run away into the woods.¹⁸ In fact, an evil 'trick' of whites served as the subject of one of the most important tales and hidden transcripts in the black folk tradition. As mentioned in the introduction to this volume, among the enslaved and their descendants was a widespread belief that Africans had been 'tricked' into coming to the Americas by white slave traders who presented a red object—in most versions the object was a flag or handkerchief; in some cases the slave boat itself was red; and in others it was a piece of red cloth placed among other nice-looking trinkets that were, in some versions, handed out at a big dance or picnic—that attracted Africans onto their slave ships.¹⁹ Because this act was understood as a trap specifically designed to ensnare naïve Africans, this story was regarded not just as a trickster tale, but also as part of another large slave folktale genre wherein Europeans kidnapped—'stole'—Africans from Africa.²⁰

bag was made of wolf skin but tanned in the part of a creek that was surrounded by a patch of the red-colored sumac plant; see Owen, *Voodoo Tales*, 114.

16 Richard M. Dorson, ed., *Negro Folktales in Michigan* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956), 50–53.

17 Dorson, *Negro Folktales*, 156.

18 Gladys-Marie Fry, *Night Riders in Black Folk History* ([Knoxville]: University of Tennessee Press, 1975), 50, 59–81.

19 Rawick, *American Slave*, 3:64; 7:24–25, 102, 169; 12:119; 13:331; 14:190; 17:336; Savannah Unit, *Drums and Shadows*, 70, 121, 145, 164, 176; Miguel Barnet, *Biography of a Runaway Slave*, trans. Nick Hill (Willimantic, CT: Curbstone Press, 1994), 18; Orland Kay Armstrong, *Old Massa's People: The Old Slaves Tell Their Story* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1931), 45; William D. Piersen, *Black Legacy: America's Hidden Heritage* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993), 35–42.

20 Alho, *Religion of the Slaves*, 188; Sobel, *Trabelin'*, 394n20; Piersen, *Black Legacy*, esp. 37, 42–49.

There are several aspects of the red flag hidden transcript that make it particularly significant for understanding the development of black folk culture and religion during slavery. First of all, because it consciously recognizes the pervasiveness of the African interest in the color red, it is possible that a somewhat unified slave cultural identity had already developed before the story's coalescence, thus suggesting that the trend that had begun with the ring shout and mixed funerary rites had indeed somewhat solidified before the end of slavery. The preexistence of a unified culture is further suggested by the fact that although not all slaves or their descendants were familiar with the tale, and despite the reality that most slaves were aware of African slave traders' own complicity in the trans-Atlantic slave system and that relatively few Europeans had actually kidnapped Africans, let alone used red items to do it,²¹ the red flag story was still remarkably popular, being found from Texas to Virginia and down to the Caribbean, and transmitted by descendants of slaves of a wide variety of ethnic and religious backgrounds, including Muslims.²² Historian Michael Gomez has proposed on this basis that the red flag story represents one of the few conscious attempts by enslaved elders to overcome ethnic and religious differences and unify African Americans along racial lines in order to better address their shared experience in the Americas, where the dominant social identifier was race.²³ African complicity in this tale was thus generally ignored out of a desire for unity; whites were blamed as the ultimate designers of the harsh system of slavery in America, which had no parallel in Africa. The folk explanation for African complicity, Gomez argues, was separated and told less frequently in the tale of 'King Buzzard,' a conjurer who, because he tricked Africans to board slave ships, was cursed to roam the Earth forever.²⁴ There were, of course, some exceptions to this pattern of separating African complicity from the red flag 'trick'—in a least one family tradition, for example, an African king is said to have sold his princess daughter to a slave trader for several yards of red flannel²⁵—nonetheless, for the most part the crime of

21 This does not mean, however, that Europeans never flew red flags—in fact, they did for multiple reasons, though rarely would these reasons have come up in the process of slave trading. See, e.g., W.G. Perrin, *British Flags: Their Early History, and Their Development at Sea. With an Account of the Origin of the Flag as a National Device* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1922).

22 Savannah Unit, *Drums and Shadows*, 164; Piersen, *Black Legacy*, 35–42.

23 Gomez, *Exchanging*, 207–09.

24 Gomez, *Exchanging*, 209–12.

25 Samuel Gaillard Stoney and Gertrude Matthews Shelby, *Black Genesis: A Chronicle* (New York: Macmillan, 1930), xxiv.

the red flag was tied exclusively to the Europeans and represented the popular history of the Africans' enslavement.

Considering, however, that the red flag story sometimes took on forms that were very distinct from each other, and on several occasions the tale was said to have been transmitted directly from African-born slaves who were discussing their personal experience, it is reasonable to conclude that prior to becoming diffused throughout black American culture, at least some elements of the different versions of the tale were genuinely brought from Africa. One of these elements was probably the importance placed on flags. In Africa, flags were employed by many kingdoms throughout history, but there was a significant rise in their use by Africans in the seventeenth century, largely due to contact with flag-bearing Europeans.²⁶ Apparently flags of a variety of colors soon became greatly valued by many African groups across the continent, a phenomenon that is most clearly reflected today in the popularity of flags among practitioners of Vodou in Haiti, where slaves achieved national independence in the early nineteenth century.²⁷ It is worth noting, too, that in the late seventeenth century, Morocco's Muslim Alaouite dynasty adopted for its country's symbol the plain red flag, which had been used for hundreds of years by various Muslim communities, but was not at that time the symbol of another major African country.²⁸ Although—given the fact that the number of Moroccan slaves in North America by the eighteenth century was minuscule²⁹—Morocco

26 Patrick Polk, "Sacred Banners and the Divine Cavalry Charge," in *Sacred Arts of Haitian Vodou*, ed. Donald J. Cosentino (Los Angeles: UCLA Fowler Museum of Cultural History, 1995), 332–35. Fascinatingly, the Europeans' use of flags had been significantly stimulated by contact with flag-using Muslims during the Crusades; see Whitney Smith, *Flags through the Ages and across the World* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1975), 41–42.

27 Polk, "Sacred Banners," 325–56.

28 Nabil Mouline claims that the Alaouites adopted the red flag when they annexed the city of Rabat, which was being run by exiled Andalusians, who were themselves already users of the red flag. Others have argued that the Alaouites adopted the red flag because the Moroccan Filali tribe from which they emerged claimed to be, like the sharifs of Mecca who traditionally used a red flag, descendants of the Prophet Muhammad's grandson, Hasan ibn Ali. In the modern period, the plain red flag was also occasionally used by Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, and Turkey and on Arab ships—a fact, interestingly, that led to some European ships adopting the red flag so that they could pass unmolested in the Arabian Sea. See Nabil Mouline, "Drapeau marocain, insigne ou symbole?" *Zamane* (March 2014): 62–67; B. Dubreuil, *Les pavillons des états musulmans* (Rabat: Centre Universitaire de la Recherche Scientifique, [1961?]); Charles E. Davies, *The Blood-Red Arab Flag: An Investigation into Qasimi Piracy 1797–1820* (Exeter, UK: University of Exeter Press, 1997).

29 Simour, *Recollecting History*, 41–82; Gomez, *Exchanging*, 29.

probably played a very minor role in the development of the red flag folk tradition, with the widespread African preference for the color red there may have indeed been some African cultural basis to the folktale's claim.

In any case, by its placing the blame for slavery squarely on the shoulders of whites, the red flag story can also be interpreted as part of a broader current within slave folk culture that showed a strong resistance to white cultural dominance. Slaves, it seems, were not just learning to identify with each other in terms of race, they were also expressing resistance to and rejection of the culture of the whites. A number of enslaved persons, for example, despite pressure to conform to European standards, gave themselves, their children, and other slaves multiple personal names that were tied to Africa in some way. On many occasions, even when masters made slaves take European first names, bondspersons secretly bestowed upon their children African or African-related names, such as names that were days of the week or names, like Prince, King, or Queen, which suggested that the family had come from African royalty.³⁰ The practice of nicknaming adult black men 'uncle,' a term that would later be primarily identified with the obsequious slave stereotype of 'Uncle Tom,' was apparently originally regarded by many slaves as an African practice as well, and was typically employed as a term of respect when used by slaves for each other.³¹ In general, bondspersons placed great value on their names, and in several instances individuals who either converted to Christianity or obtained freedom promptly adopted new names, an action that suggests the continuation of a common African practice wherein a person takes a new name upon entering a new stage in life.³²

Although not as well known, certain race-conscious folk traditions were also used to show opposition to the whites' Christian religion. As the missionary Charles Stearns observed in the nineteenth century, the Bible was often identified by bondspersons as a "slave-holding document" and was therefore completely rejected by many as an illegitimate spiritual text.³³ There were, in addition, two popular variations of this theme. One was the belief that a real

30 Newbell Niles Puckett, "Names of American Negro Slaves," in *Studies in the Science of Society*, ed. George Peter Murdock (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1937), 471–94; J.L. Dillard, *Black Names* (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1976), 17–35; Terry Alford, *Prince among Slaves* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977), 43–44, 233.

31 Armstrong, *Old Massa's People*, 45; Puckett, "Names," 484.

32 Genovese, *Roll*, 443–50; Dillard, *Black Names*, 17–35; Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, 29; Sobel, *Trabelin'*, 88.

33 See his *The Black Man of the South, and the Rebels; or, the Characteristics of the Former, and the Recent Outrages of the Latter* (New York: American News, 1872), 347, 350.

Bible did exist somewhere, but that it was not what whites were showing to the Africans.³⁴ The other tradition, used by many black Christians, was that most of the whites' Bible should be accepted, but not the parts that endorsed slavery; those verses, it was asserted, were inserted into the book by wicked, proslavery whites.³⁵ It seems, then, that as the generations passed and slaves became more and more accepting that they were living in a world based on racial, not ethnic differences, they became increasingly willing to shed their ethnic distinctiveness and embrace a mixed culture that was consciously different from and opposed to that of their oppressors.

Still, to argue that such blended traditions were prominent in slaves' religious and cultural lives is not to insist that there were no other forms of religious activity, or even that all slaves practiced a religion. Indeed, some of the bondspersons were uninterested in spiritual matters; and several accounts of secular black folktales and folk rhymes from the nineteenth century suggest that there may have been sufficient non-religious pastimes to entertain those who did not desire spirituality.³⁶ However, it is somewhat difficult to judge how extensive non-religiosity was if we rely on existing records. While there are multiple accounts of enslaved individuals saying that they were not interested in 'religion,' the word 'religion' at the time was, due to the Christian bias of the dominant white culture, almost exclusively associated with Christianity. This becomes an issue when it is observed that occasionally people would say that they did not participate or believe in 'religion' because they loved to take part in activities like dancing or gambling. At that time those activities were typically considered by white and black Christians alike as non-Christian and sinful and, as they are today, were also generally regarded as secular. Yet it is very likely that for many slaves, dancing and partaking in games of chance took on religious dimensions as they often had in Africa.

There are, in addition, clear references to continued ethnically- and religiously-specific spiritual practices in the nineteenth century, especially among the African-born. Interestingly, the culturally-specific practices that are perhaps easiest to identify are those of the Muslims because they were so distinct

34 Alho, *Religion of the Slaves*, 138.

35 Alho, *Religion of the Slaves*, 65, 138–40.

36 One ex-slave even admitted to pretending to believe in 'religion' for a time, which was apparently not a unique phenomenon; Langston Hughes and Arna Bontemps, eds., *The Book of Negro Folklore* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1958), 60. On secular folk traditions, see Talley, *Negro Folk Rhymes* and Bruce Jackson, ed., *The Negro and His Folklore in Nineteenth-Century Periodicals* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1967).

from those of other Africans.³⁷ For example, Bilali, the head of a small enslaved Muslim community in the Georgia Sea Islands, was well-known for wearing a fez, praying on a prayer rug while facing east, observing Muslim religious fasts and feasts, and abstaining from alcohol.³⁸ Other accounts of Islamic practices, such as the use of a prayer mat, the writing of Qur'anic verses, and the making of Muslim talismans, appear surprisingly frequently in nineteenth-century sources.³⁹ In some cases, the cultural uniqueness of Muslims and perhaps other Africans may even have won them converts.⁴⁰ When, for instance, the slave Abd ar-Rahman was sent on an American tour prior to returning to Africa, despite having nominally embraced Christianity, he was touted as being a 'Moor' and, apparently as a result, a number of bondsmen dubiously began claiming that they too were Muslims and should be returned to their homelands.⁴¹ Bilali, meanwhile, seems to have converted at least his wife, and possibly a few other people on his plantation on Salepo Island—while not an incredibly common event, there were probably at least a few hundred other slave conversions to Islam of this type.⁴² Similarly, although we lack strong evidence for it, it is likely that some families kept distinct religious identities alive among their American-born descendants. Recently, in fact, one man has even claimed that Islam had been secretly passed down since slave times to each first-born son in his family.⁴³ It should be noted, however, that not even self-identified followers of specific traditions always maintained a 'pure' form of their religion. For instance, in the case of Muslims, because Islamic cultures in Africa frequently incorporated non-Muslim African traditions, in the US this practice seems to have continued among many Muslim bondspersons, so the notion that some

37 This may have also been a factor of the geographic concentration of many Muslim slaves on the South Carolina and Georgia coast (several Muslims in the former location have recently been identified by Jeffrey R. Halverson in "West African Islam in Colonia and Antebellum South Carolina," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 36, no. 3 [2016]: 413–26).

38 Austin, *African Muslims ... Transatlantic*, 85–99.

39 See Austin, *African Muslims ... A Sourcebook*, *passim*.

40 Gomez, *Black Crescent*, 173–82.

41 Alford, *Prince among Slaves*, 137.

42 Gomez, *Black Crescent*, 156.

43 Muhammad Ali Salaam, *A Black Man's Journey in America: Glimpses of Islam, Conversations and Travels* (n.p.: Xlibris, 2011). Salaam's story, however, strikes me as rather unconvincing because it makes a number of highly improbable claims—hopefully experts in South Carolina slavery will offer their opinions on this text. I would like to thank Peter Gaffney for his input on the subject.

slaves maintained distinct traditions does not fully appreciate the complexity of the reality of slaves' religious lives.⁴⁴

However, out of all of the 'distinct' religious identities of the enslaved, none was more obviously blended than that of slave Christians. After several decades of whites taking little-to-no interest in having the bondspersons embrace the religion that had been brought from Europe, in the 1730s a major revival began sweeping the country, one that ultimately led to the Christian conversion of tens of thousands of African Americans. During this period of America's Great Awakening, there were two distinguishing traits of the popular Christianity that made it especially attractive to blacks. One was a strong emphasis on equality. Eighteenth-century revival Christianity saw blacks and whites worshipping together throughout the colonies; many Methodist and Baptist ministers were passionate abolitionists; and in a handful of cases black ministers rose to lead mixed congregations. For those slaves who desired freedom from the burden of second-class treatment, Christianity, even if it only offered temporary relief, was thus a very attractive option. The second characteristic was the revival churches' acceptance of a wide variety of expressions of communion with God's Spirit. A large number of the Africans had known spirit possession, through which in Africa it was common to shout, dance, and speak in tongues, and the white openness to these activities enabled many bondspersons to finally release their religious urgings. The African forms of spiritual expression became so popular, in fact, that many whites began imitating them.

But this era of relative equality in religion was not to last. Around 1790, due to the Baptist and Methodist denominations becoming mainstream enough to have a large slaveholder membership, their antislavery emphases and desire to convert the enslaved suddenly dissipated. This resulted in a bifurcation of the development of religious life among African Americans. For the enslaved, because most whites were no longer attempting to convert them to Christianity, the religion stopped spreading rapidly and its practice was often relegated to secret meetings. It was apparently also during this time that slave Christianity truly started forming a distinct but mixed identity, with certain practices like the ring shout becoming normalized in black Christian worship meetings. A theological distinctiveness also seems to have emerged at this time apparently due to many African Americans believing that Christianity—but particularly Old Testament the stories of the Israelites' captivities in Egypt and Babylon—offered an explanation for their own mass suffering, which traditional African

44 GhaneaBassiri, *A History*, 63–73.

religions lacked.⁴⁵ Partly due to the influence of their traditional African religions, but also because the vast majority of slaves were illiterate, there was also a subtle, but growing sense of pride that their Christianity was based not so much on reading the Bible, but more on spiritual communication with the divine. In addition, it was apparently also during this period that Christian-based black folk songs, known widely as 'Negro spirituals,' began developing. These songs would contain major elements of black folk religion: the blending of African influences, the African American interpretation of slavery, and knowledge of orally-transmitted biblical stories.

But the folk Christianity of the slaves was not the only form of Christianity present in the African American community. The late eighteenth century also saw the blossoming of the formally organized black church. Almost exclusively found in urban centers, slave-era African American churches were typically Baptist and Methodist and had been established by free blacks. Unlike the enslaved, the free blacks, who were often mulattoes, were seeking respectability in white society, and therefore, although they too emphasized the Old Testament stories, they expressed a strong anti-African impulse. Their services were less emotional than those of the enslaved and there existed a greater effort to demonstrate Bible literacy. Although some slaves were members of these black churches, most were not, and the strong differences between the practices of slaves and free blacks meant that a religious class distinction had started to develop. Further reinforcing this was the fact that many free black men were also involved in the black Freemasonic movement—known as 'Prince Hall,' having been named after its African American founder—which, like the white Freemasonry of the period, encouraged the cultivation of middle-class and even elite respectability and mores. Prince Hall Masonry also provided its members with a deep sense of dignity by teaching that they were the descendants of the ancient Egyptian progenitors of Masonic knowledge.⁴⁶ Free blacks, then, even if their own religious culture was the product of mixing, were living in a world extremely different from that of their enslaved brethren.⁴⁷

45 See, e.g., Howard Thurman, *Deep River: Reflections of the Religious Insight of Certain of the Negro Spirituals* (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1969).

46 See Joanna Brooks, "Prince Hall, Freemasonry, and Genealogy," *African American Review* 34, no. 2 (2000): 197–216; Martin Delany, *The Origin and Objects of Ancient Freemasonry* (Pittsburgh: W.S. Haven, 1853).

47 Masons were of course not completely separate from slaves, and in fact several black Masons were abolitionists and some may have helped with the Underground Railroad; see Daryl Lamar Andrews, *Masonic Abolitionists: Freemasonry and the Underground Railroad in Illinois* (Chicago: Andrews Press, 2011).

Around 1830 the religious lives of slaves began undergoing another shift, one that would only further separate them from free blacks, when Southern whites initiated a new, reactionary wave of Christian proselytization. At the time, proslavery white leaders were deeply concerned with not only the rising abolitionist movement, which laced much of its rhetoric with biblical references, but also the two largest slave revolt efforts of the nineteenth century—Denmark Vesey’s 1822 activities in South Carolina and the bloody revolt of Nat Turner in Virginia in 1831—which were both led by self-professed black Christians. Across the US the responses to these affronts to the culture of slavery came in the forms of both incredible violence—producing an eruption of anti-abolitionist riots in the North and growing anti-black vigilantism in the South—and a massive concerted effort to take control of black religiosity and intellectual life.⁴⁸ White ministers were increasingly invited to plantations where they began converting slaves en masse while emphasizing New Testament verses that reinforced their enslavement, most famously Ephesians 6:5 and Colossians 3:22. African Americans—both free and enslaved—were prohibited from meeting in groups without whites present, and a growing number of states passed laws outlawing the teaching of reading and writing to the bondspersons. Although even in this period white Christian doctrines could vary, and there were of course small pockets that still adhered to the notion of equality, overall the white Christian message was ‘Slaves, obey your masters.’⁴⁹

In this context, the slaves’ folk Christianity and slave culture generally moved further underground and became more blended than ever before. The bondspersons, for example, took great care to hide their religious lives, building

48 On antebellum white violence, see Leonard L. Richards, *Gentlemen of Property and Standing: Anti-Abolition Mobs in Jacksonian America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970); John Hope Franklin, *The Militant South: 1800–1861* ([Boston]: Beacon Press, 1968); Dickson D. Bruce, Jr., *Violence and Culture in the Antebellum South* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979); Richard Maxwell Brown, *Strain of Violence: Historical Studies of American Violence and Vigilantism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975).

49 On the topic of diversity in white Christianity in the last decades of slavery, consider the fact that in just one small collection of ex-slave narratives from Georgia, white preachers were reported to have told the enslaved the following contradictory ideas about entering heaven: that blacks could never go to heaven in any form (a notion sometimes paired with the claim that slaves had no souls); that they could go to ‘the kitchen of heaven,’ but not heaven proper; and that African Americans could indeed enter heaven if they were obedient enough to their masters (sometimes accompanied by the claim that slaves did in fact have souls). See William C. Emerson, *Stories and Spirituals of the Negro Slave* (Boston: Richard G. Badger, 1929), 18, 35, 42, 53, 71.

out in wooded areas cabins made of sticks and leaves—‘brush arbors’—to where at night they would quietly ‘steal away’ to hold religious meetings. During these sessions, pots, which among the Yoruba were associated with gods who protected people,⁵⁰ were placed on the ground upside down both to provide divine defense and to muffle the sounds of the singing; meanwhile, slave guards stood watch outside the cabins, ever mindful of the white slave patrols. To further ensure that whites would not discover either the meetings or the content of their religiosity, many of the slaves’ songs, rhymes, and folktales were developed as hidden transcripts, being given double meanings. Typically the ostensible interpretation was in line with white supremacist expectations that slaves humbly serve their masters until they die, but their words could also communicate a yearning for this-worldly liberation, information about the Underground Railroad, or details about when a religious meeting was to take place.⁵¹ Slaves could even be deceptive about their Christian faith during white-supervised church meetings, as black preachers sometimes changed the themes of their sermons when whites were present.⁵² And, since it was the Baptist denomination that allowed for the most agency and spiritual freedom, some slaves privately identified as Baptist while presenting themselves to whites as Catholic, Methodist, or whatever denomination their master expected them to be.⁵³ Although in general deception was recognized by slaves as an evil activity—and slaves readily condemned as ‘hypocrites’ those who faked their religious commitment when among other slaves—given the oppressive circumstances, such practices were not considered by slaves to be sinful in God’s eyes.⁵⁴ A number of secular folk rhymes thus emerged to enshrine the slaves’ desire to hide the truth about themselves and their community from whites.⁵⁵

Soon, shared ideas and African-based practices were shaping other elements of slave Christianity. For instance, blended liberationist themes appear to have become increasingly prominent during this period. Nearly one half of slave spirituals contained at least allusions to a Judgment Day/Apocalypse in which slaves would be redeemed and saved, and around one quarter made reference

50 George Eaton Simpson, *Black Religions in the New World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), 218.

51 Alho, *Religion of the Slaves*, 118–21; Talley, *Negro Folk Rhymes*, 300–02.

52 Alho, *Religion of the Slaves*, 179–81.

53 Sobel, *Trabelin’*, 130–31.

54 Alho, *Religion of the Slaves*, 106–07.

55 Blassingame, *Black Culture*, xiii; Talley, *Negro Folk Rhymes*, 214.

to a coming messiah—and of those, Jesus was often either conflated with Moses or was depicted as a Revelation-like militant redeemer.⁵⁶ During the Civil War, interestingly, this practice of mixing various important figures with each other led to contemporary leaders like President Lincoln and General Grant being referred to as living messiah-liberators. These trends reflected the larger tendency in slave Christianity to emphasize and blend the slaves' own hopes and experiences with themes from the Book of Revelation and Old Testament stories about freedom from bondage. Indeed, it appears that Hebrew Bible references dominated slave Christian rhetoric; the Israelites' prophet Daniel, who foretold the end of the Babylonian captivity, was probably behind only Jesus and Moses in the slave Christian figure hierarchy. Biblical allusions to the resurrection of the dead were also abundant in spirituals; although for some slaves and most white observers these were regarded as references to Jesus' revival of Lazarus and thus the importance of the New Testament, for most slaves the real reference was Ezekiel's vision of the 'four winds' breathing life into the bones—what were often called 'dry bones'—in the valley, which symbolized the liberation of the the Israelites after their captivity in Babylon.⁵⁷ Related to this identification with the Dry Bones story, a tradition even emerged wherein some blacks referred themselves to as 'nations underground,' reflecting at once their awareness of their shared oppressed state, their feeling of being 'dead' to the world, and their deep identification with the Israelites.⁵⁸ It is notable, too, that references to hell were somewhat rare in the spirituals. This was more than likely due to slaves feeling that they were already experiencing the relentless torture of the Devil. When the words 'hell' and 'Devil' were employed, then, they were often coded—that is, hidden transcript—references to the South and cruel whites, respectively.⁵⁹ Partly because they allowed slaves to express without reprisal such criticisms of both whites and their present condition, spirituals became numerous and widely shared—so much so, in fact, that even slaves who did not profess to

56 Alho, *Religion of the Slaves*, 73, 74, 84–87, 252, 253, 340n1.

57 Alho, *Religion of the Slaves*, 88–94. This topic will be addressed further below.

58 Alho, *Religion of the Slaves*, 89.

59 Russell Ames, "Protest & Irony in Negro Folksong," in *Mother Wit from the Laughing Barrel: Readings in the Interpretation of Afro-American Folklore*, ed. Alan Dundes (New York: Garland Publishing, 1981), 488; Margaret Y. Jackson, "Folklore in Slave Narratives before the Civil War," *Folklore Quarterly* 11 (1955): 9. African Americans even referred to Richmond, Virginia's slave market at the 'Devil's Half Acre'; see Leon F. Litwack, *Been in the Storm So Long: The Aftermath of Slavery* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), 168.

be Christians sometimes partook in their singing.⁶⁰ Spirituals, it seems, were so important for slave religiosity that for many of the bondspersons the songs themselves were the true Bible and the source of 'real' religion.⁶¹

Because Christianity had several parallels with various African traditions, other aspects of the religion became channels through which African Americans could emphasize many of their shared African-based religious beliefs and practices. The notion of a high, all-powerful God is one of these parallels; so, if a slave ostensibly claimed to believe in a Christian God, he or she may have secretly or partly identified that God with an African one. At the same time, because slaves from several different African ethnic backgrounds could also do the same thing, Christianity served as a tool for slaves to feel as if they were worshipping the same African God. Baptisms also had parallels with African practices, particularly for the various ethnicities of West Central Africa, where there was both an emphasis on rivers as significant spiritual sites and the habit of using white robes in rituals to symbolize the entering into a new realm; baptisms were thus seen by slaves from many different cultures as a rebirth in a new life. Christian funerals, too, were of increasing importance for slaves, especially those who came from African traditions that emphasized ancestor worship and the existence of ancestor spirits in the world. In slave Christian funerals, then, the dead were believed to be returning 'home' where their ancestors lived—in other words, the Christian heaven was equated with Africa. Thus, as more and more slaves became Christians, Christianity was uniting them with a common mixed African-based religious identity.

In addition to using existing white Christian beliefs and rituals to find common ground, African Americans were also mixing blended, but distinctively African elements with their folk Christianity. This is seen, for example, in the slave tendency to articulate a notion of cyclical time, which was popular in African religions but was not an obvious interpretation of the deeply linear narratives of the Bible.⁶² Christian bondspersons also saw great spiritual significance in cosmic events, reflecting traditional African beliefs; among enslaved Christians the appearances of the Sun, Moon, and stars frequently were interpreted as signs of an imminent apocalypse.⁶³ The strong emphasis on flying and birds in black spirituals probably has a traditional African source as well

60 Andrew Polk Watson, "Primitive Religion among Negroes in Tennessee" (MA thesis, Fisk University, 1932), 30–31.

61 Alho, *Religion of the Slaves*, 131.

62 Alho, *Religion of the Slaves*, 292, 86, 87, 92, 147; Sobel, *Trabelin'*, xxiii, 126.

63 Alho, *Religion of the Slaves*, 143–44, 195, 227; Sobel, *Trabelin'*, 11.

since, particularly among the Igbo, there were numerous rumors of slaves who could fly; typically it was said that these slaves flew 'home.'

But what was perhaps the most fascinating blended African-based addition in slave folk Christianity was manifested in the slave conversion experience.⁶⁴ Slave conversions were similar to whites' to a large extent, but their differences were very distinct. Like white converts, slave 'sinners,' after being struck with a profound sense of guilt and hopelessness, traveled to a field—often called 'the valley' or 'the wilderness'—to beg God for forgiveness and salvation. At this point, however, the slave conversion narrative diverges from the white one since it is generally not God or Jesus who saves the sinner as it is in the white narrative, but rather a figure known as the 'little man from the East.' Although clearly an African-influenced element, the source of the little man is not quite clear; it is likely mixed with different traditions. In some versions of the story he is apparently a representative of the soul of the convert, as suggested by the fact that some converts identified him as 'little me.' Yet in other conversion narratives he seems to be a slightly different figure, perhaps an ancestor spirit or something related to Legba, the West African divinity who announces death. His appearance changes as well; he is sometimes identified as a white man or as a man dressed in white, but sometimes, as was conveyed in various folk songs, he wore a black robe instead. The claim that his home is the 'East' is similarly not always invoked; when it is, it may be a blending of the increasingly popular slave tradition of identifying the East with heaven/'home'/Africa, and even with God and Jesus—the latter being a practice most likely influenced by Matthew 24:27: "For just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes even to the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be." In any case, after arriving, the little man usually 'kills' the sinner. Next, the person is taken on a journey first to hell and then up to heaven where he or she receives a 'starry crown' and a white robe and converses with various biblical figures. Since heaven is also 'home,' the convert's ancestors are there and the setting is generally considered to be Africa. After this experience, the convert awakens from his or her vision feeling reborn. He or she is given a new private Christian name that reflects his or her spiritual essence, and then he or she is set on a path to be a 'messenger'

64 The best collection of conversion narratives of former slaves is Fisk University's *God Struck Me Dead*. The following discussion relies on that as well as on the analyses in Ruth Bass, "The Little Man," in *Mother Wit from the Laughing Barrel: Readings in the Interpretation of Afro-American Folklore*, ed. Alan Dundes (New York: Garland Publishing, 1981), 388–96; Alho, *Religion of the Slaves*, 93, 144–49, 184, 185, 208; Sobel, *Trabelin'*, 6, 14, 36, 71, 109–113, 119; Smith, *Black Religions*, 217–18.

to spread God's religion.⁶⁵ As we will see, this is one of the many African-based slave folk traditions that would be reterritorialized in the AAIR.

Estimates from the early 1860s suggest that only about one quarter of the two million adult slaves—or roughly eleven percent of the total slave population—officially belonged to a church.⁶⁶ However, there was undoubtedly a large number of adult and child slaves who identified as Christian, attended the secret prayer meetings, and practiced folk Christianity, but who were not counted in this number. It is likely, then, that the Christian population was well over thirty percent. And because spirituals and other elements of Christianity had spread throughout slave culture, it is probable that the proportion of the slaves who identified with Christianity in some way actually far exceeded fifty percent. On the eve of Emancipation, then, black folk Christianity was serving as a core conduit of the blended African American folk identity.

Emancipation through World War I

Emancipation brought a second institutional change to African American religious and cultural life.⁶⁷ Many ex-slaves now felt they had the liberty to pursue the religiosity they had been quietly cultivating or desiring to practice for their entire enslaved existence. Thus, from 1865 to 1919 the number of black churches increased exponentially, organized conjure groups seem to have gained in popularity, and African Americans flocked to new religious movements—from Holiness and Pentecostal communities to 'spiritual' and 'New Thought'-influenced organizations. But this new freedom was not unlimited and new reterritorializations abounded. Some of the new territories developed out of color and class distinctions. In Southern small towns, black churches were frequently divided by skin tone; in cities, meanwhile, many of

65 Sobel, *Trabelin'*, 88, 114; Alho, *Religion of the Slaves*, 146.

66 Alho, *Religion of the Slaves*, 58.

67 The present section relies significantly on William E. Montgomery, *Under Their Own Vine and Fig Tree: The African American Church in the South 1865–1900* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1993); Daniel W. Stowell, *Rebuilding Zion: The Religious Reconstruction of the South, 1863–1877* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998); Paul Harvey, *Redeeming the South: Religious Cultures and Racial Identities among Southern Baptists, 1865–1925* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997); Donald G. Nieman, ed., *Church and Community among Black Southerners 1865–1900* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1994); Edward L. Wheeler, *Uplifting the Race: The Black Minister in the New South 1865–1902* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1986).

the increasing numbers of African Americans who moved there began gaining near-middle-class positions, producing a widening gap between these individuals and the folk. Restrictions also came from the outside. With the failures of Reconstruction and the rise of the New South, black Americans' religiosity had to contend with the reality of the perpetuation of severe social discrimination, vigilante violence, and debt slavery. Many sought escape in the West and North, in all-black towns and urban centers, yet even in these locations race-based struggles could not be avoided and, in response, there was a growing current of religious black nationalism. Still, despite all of this change, we know of almost no African Americans who converted to Islam during this period, a reality that is made even more surprising by the fact that this period saw new contact with Muslims and numerous promotions of Islamic themes. The African American religious market was changing, but it was still not yet the market that would produce the AAIR. The present section examines these various transmutations in African American religion between the end of the Civil War and the end of World War I by focusing on three groups of religious currents: mainstream Christianity and folk religion, new religious movements, and encounters with Islam.

Mainstream Christianity and Folk Religion

The initial transformations of post-slavery African American religion had commenced even before the Civil War came to a close. By the second year of the war, dozens of black and white missionaries from the North began pouring into the South with hopes of reforming what they referred to as 'heathen' religious practices—namely, those practices that they considered to be excessively emotional, immoral, and reflective of biblical ignorance. Their goal was to counter these aspects of slave folk Christianity by helping the bondspersons, and later the freed persons, obtain their own churches, better morals, and technical religious instruction, what, collectively, AME missionaries referred to as 'civilization and Christianity.'⁶⁸ Partly as a result of their efforts, membership in black Baptist and Methodist organizations exploded. By 1890, 2,600,000 African Americans officially belonged to a church, an increase of roughly five hundred percent since 1860.⁶⁹

But despite this massive institutionalization of African American religion, the reality was that the folk Christianity of the slave days thrived into the beginning of the next century, as freed persons, despite having joined churches, put

68 Montgomery, *Under Their Own*, 63.

69 Montgomery, *Under Their Own*, 343.

up great resistance to religious reform. Because Emancipation was looked upon as a confirmation of the slave-era belief that Jesus and Moses would deliver blacks to the Canaan Land of liberty, African American Christians would not now abandon the faith that had sustained them to this great event. Moreover, since the prophet Micah had foretold that in Zion liberated Israelites would sit “under their own vine and fig tree” (4:4), ex-slaves rushed out of the white-dominated mixed churches to form their own congregations, an event that, by concentrating the freed persons together without any white influence, only further solidified their folk religiosity. Unsurprisingly, then, ex-slaves often did not change their denomination. Over half of the Southerners who joined all-black churches were Baptists, the majority denomination during slavery, and although Methodist membership rose significantly, many of the newcomers to Methodist churches had been raised on Methodist-dominated plantations, which meant that prior to officially joining the Methodist church they had often already identified with the denomination.⁷⁰ Many African Americans, therefore, continued to shout and be killed by the little man, and they took pride in adhering to what would be called ‘old time religion’—a phrase that for whites evoked the revivals of the Great Awakening, but for African Americans more alluded to the brush arbor meetings and even traditional African religiosity.

The world was changing, however. As growing numbers of freed slaves obtained educations and entered the paid workforce, the black elite population began to expand, and thus there was a greater desire for refinement. Particularly in cities, membership in the more white-oriented denominations increased, as did the desire for a subdued religiosity and educated men of the cloth. In Baptist and Methodist churches this change was becoming especially apparent as the ministry—one of the few offices of leadership available to the African American community—was being flooded with ambitious men who desired both personal fulfillment and the power to—as they termed it—‘uplift’ their people. More and more, black ministers were reaching the achievements of the middle class: they obtained formal training and professional careers, often as educators and newspaper editors, and many began joining fraternal lodges, which, after they started opening in the South at the close of the Civil War, by 1888 already had an estimated one million African American members; by 1915 two-thirds of the most prominent black Americans held positions in both a church and a national fraternal order.⁷¹ Having been deeply shaped

70 Montgomery, *Under Their Own*, 105; Stowell, *Rebuilding Zion*, 90–99.

71 Wheeler, *Uplifting the Race*, appendix; John M. Giggie, “For God and Lodge: Black Fraternal

by these middle-class institutions, many of the ministers of this new generation began developing middle-class-based activities designed to help their congregants deal with the still-racist nation in which they found themselves. Educational and social welfare programs were instituted widely, and, under the pastors' direction, several congregations started pooling their money to purchase church buildings, bibles, religious decorations, cheap cure-alls, and other goods, as material consumption was both an expression of their freedom and a means to build up their communities.⁷²

Such activities, however, were generally concentrated in urban areas. Congregations in rural communities, where the vast majority of African Americans were living, largely remained poor and many only had ordained ministers visit them once or twice a month—and these itinerant rural preachers rarely had either the lodge affiliation or education of their urban counterparts; some, in fact, continued to criticize the educated class's 'Bible religion' while endorsing the folk's illiterate 'religion of the heart.'⁷³ The black folk, Carter G. Woodson observed nearly one hundred years ago, frequently preferred such a preacher because, like any religious community, they desired a leader who saw the world from a similar perspective and "explained its mysteries in the dialect and in the manner in which [they] could understand it."⁷⁴ Although overall in the black community there was a growing resentment towards ministers, particularly those who appeared to be greedy and lacked high moral character, extreme and even sometimes violent loyalty was shown to a pastor who could earn the folk's trust.⁷⁵ Such a pattern, of course, only further reinforced the 'old time' folk religion.

Although the freedom to form their own churches was undoubtedly a major factor contributing to the persistence of old folk beliefs, what was perhaps even more important was the fact that the African American masses had found

Orders and the Evolution of African American Religion in the Postbellum South," in *The Struggle for Equality: Essays on Sectional Conflict, the Civil War, and the Long Reconstruction*, eds. Orville Vernon Burton, Jerald Podair, and Jennifer L. Weber (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011), 198–218; David G. Hackett, "The Prince Hall Masons and the African American Church: The Labors of Grand Master and Bishop James Walker Hood, 1831–1918," *Church History* 69, no. 4 (2000): 771.

72 John M. Giggie, "Preachers and Peddlers of God': Ex-Slaves and the Selling of African American Religion in the American South," in *Commodifying Everything: Relationships of the Market*, ed. Susan Strasser (New York: Routledge, 2003), 169–90.

73 See, e.g., Watson, "Primitive Religion," 46.

74 *History of the Negro Church*, 2nd ed. (Washington, DC: Associated Publishers, 1921), 197.

75 Montgomery, *Under Their Own*, 320–38.

themselves in a world that was very similar to the one they had known before the war. Many were forced by violence as well as oppressive economic and legal conditions to repeatedly take labor contracts on plantations where they either worked for poverty wages or as tenant sharecroppers who remained constantly in debt to their landlords.⁷⁶ As new laws ostensibly against ‘vagrancy’ and ‘false pretense’ were put into place to protect this system, a fully-sanctioned culture of peonage—what might be legitimately called debt slavery—was born. Whites, meanwhile, continued to treat African Americans with incredible inhumanity: the whip was still used, black necks were still being chained in iron, and women were still raped.⁷⁷ Slave patrols turned into the White Caps and Ku Klux Klan, and, armed with guns, knives, and most notoriously the rope, vigilante mobs terrorized the black community in an era that would come to be known euphemistically as the ‘nadir of race relations.’⁷⁸

In response, Northern blacks commenced an ambitious anti-lynching campaign and some Southern African American communities organized to physically defend themselves, but for the majority of ex-slaves, life in the United States was one filled with great fear and longing for relief—and their folk culture reflected this. In coming to terms with the fact that, despite technically obtaining liberty, in Jim Crow America African Americans had not yet fully arrived in the Promised Land, black Christians turned again to the Old Testament and Revelation. There seems to have been, first of all, a festering but vague expectation that Christ or some sort of prophet would soon come to fully

76 On this topic, see Douglas A. Blackmon, *Slavery by Another Name: The Re-enslavement of Black Americans from the Civil War to World War II* (New York: Doubleday, 2008); Donald G. Nieman, ed., *From Slavery to Sharecropping: White Land and Black Labor in the Rural South 1865–1900* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1994); Pete Daniel, *The Shadow of Slavery: Peonage in the South 1901–1969* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1972).

77 E.g., Daniel, *Shadow of Slavery*, 29, 31, 39, 59; Kidada E. Williams, *They Left Great Marks on Me: African American Testimonies of Racial Violence from Emancipation to World War I* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), *passim*.

78 There is a significant amount of literature on the topic. See, e.g., George C. Rable, *But there Was No Peace: The Role of Violence in the Politics of Reconstruction* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1984); Ann V. Collins, *All Hell Broke Loose: American Race Riots from the Progressive Era through World War II* (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2012); Herbert Shapiro, *White Violence and Black Response: From Reconstruction to Montgomery* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988); Michael J. Pfeifer, *Rough Justice: Lynching and American Society, 1874–1947* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004); Stewart E. Tolnay and E.M. Beck, *A Festival of Violence: An Analysis of Southern Lynchings, 1882–1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995); Equal Justice Initiative, *Lynching in America: Confronting the Legacy of Racial Terror* (Montgomery, AL: Equal Justice Initiative, 2015).

'redeem' black people. One popular version of this belief was that God would send a Joshua-like figure to fight off the oppressive Canaanites of America—in other words, white people, at least in this particular narrative. This theory received wide circulation through the “De Sun Do Move” sermon given by the famous preacher Jasper John, who recounted God’s stopping of the Sun as Joshua battled the Israelites’ enemies (Joshua 10:12–13).⁷⁹ But for many living under Jim Crow, there seems to have been a feeling that the entire US or even the world itself was enveloped in evil, and that something greater was bound to arrive for African Americans. Increasingly, then, black folk religion turned away from the hope for change in the world and showed a growing anticipation for a great millennial Armageddon; or, as well-known sermons and spirituals boldly put it, a ‘Judgment Day’ when ‘God’s gonna set dis world on fire.’⁸⁰ One of the most popular black Christian themes expressing this feeling during this period was the story of the Dry Bones; that is, the ‘underground nation’ that Ezekiel had envisioned rising up from the valley after the ‘four winds’ had breathed life into it.⁸¹ Although the popular version of this tradition would eventually lose much of its substance when James Weldon Johnson’s 1920s spiritual about the story was popularized as the children’s song “Dem Bones,” prior to that time it had been the topic of a powerful and oft-repeated Jim Crow-era sermon that

79 Hughes and Bontemps, *Book of Negro Folklore*, 225–33.

80 Timothy E. Fulop, “‘The Future Golden Day of the Race’: Millennialism and Black Americans in the Nadir, 1877–1901,” in *African American Religion: Interpretive Essays in History and Culture*, eds. Timothy E. Fulop and Albert J. Raboteau (New York: Routledge, 1997), 228–54; 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; Nancy B. McGhee, “The Folk Sermon: A Facet of the Black Literary Heritage,” *CLA Journal* 13 (1964): 59; Hughes and Bontemps, *Book of Negro Folklore*, 299.

81 Ez. 37:1–14. On the ‘Dry Bones’ story, see Floyd C. Watkins, “De Dry Bones in de Valley,” *Southern Folklore Quarterly* 20 (1956): 136–49; Grace Sims Holt, “Stylin outta the Black Pulpit,” in *Rappin’ and Sytlin’ out: Communication in Urban Black America*, ed. Thomas Kochman (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1972), 202–04; William E. Barton, “Hymns of the Slave and the Freedman,” in *The Social Implications of Early Negro Music in the United States*, ed. Bernard Katz (New York: Arno Press, 1969), 105; Hughes and Bontemps, *Book of Negro Folklore*, 253–55; John A. Lomax and Alan Lomax, *American Ballads and Folk Songs* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1934), 597–600; Newman I. White, *American Negro Folk-Songs* (Hatboro, PA: Folklore Associates, Inc., 1965), 83–85; James Weldon Johnson, *God’s Trombones: Seven Negro Sermons in Verse* (New York: Viking Press, 1955), 1, 53–56.

many interpreted as foretelling an Armageddon that would end with destruction of evil white Americans. It was said, furthermore, that the underground nation would come together as a 'great army,' which, with the "De Sun Do Move" imagery, suggests a festering militant attitude among the black masses—in fact, at least a few black preachers were overtly preparing their flocks to fight in what they believed was an imminent race war.⁸² It is unclear if another growing tendency in black folk culture, in which non-Christian blacks were referred to as the 'dead,' was based on the Dry Bones sermon as well, but it nevertheless was also an increasingly popular notion and it reinforced the same millennial attitude.⁸³

As this widespread belief in a redeeming Apocalypse indicates, most black Christians saw themselves as possessing a special relationship with God that whites did not have. In the opinion of many Jim Crow-era African Americans, they were the only authentic Christians because whites as a whole did not live up to the morals preached in their Bible.⁸⁴ Furthermore, according to this view, African American Christianity itself was also more authentic than that of whites because it contained more 'spirit'—what many whites perceived as emotionalism—and African Americans often considered themselves to be a special 'holy,' 'heavenly people,' whom their preachers occasionally called 'a number,' which was probably a reference to something in Revelation, either the 144,000 saved souls or the number seven, which recurs throughout the book.⁸⁵ In many instances, interestingly, biblical figures, especially the angels and the first people, Adam and Eve, were said to be black themselves.⁸⁶ Such stories were probably largely African-derived; there were indeed some West African cultures that taught that blacks were the first people and, especially among the Igbos, there was a popular tradition that at one point in the past all black people had wings—a physical characteristic that one could easily identify with angels.⁸⁷

82 Litwack, *Been in the Storm*, 469.

83 For an example, see Watson, "Primitive Religion," 8, 45–46.

84 Montgomery, *Under Their Own*, 286, 340–41.

85 Sobel, *Trabelin'*, 149; Watson, "Primitive Religion," 53; Alho, *Religion of the Slaves*, 89, 97.

86 Alho, *Religion of the Slaves*, 95–96; Richard M. Dorson, *Negro Tales from Pine Bluff, Arkansas, and Calvin, Michigan* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1958), 79–80. The Adam and Eve story in Stoney and Shelby, *Black Genesis*, 26, has Adam behave so much like a slave/sharecropper that, although it is not explicit, the oral transmitters undoubtedly saw him as black.

87 Pierson, *Black Legacy*, 27; Hughes and Bontemps, *Book of Negro Folklore*, 62–65.

Another example of African Americans' folk belief in their special spiritual status was the repeated notion that they had the power to kill the Devil.⁸⁸ There are a number of Jim Crow-era folktales that discuss African Americans killing Satan by using the gospel—which was often called in these tales the 'gospel gun'—or sometimes with hoodoo or even with a physical weapon.⁸⁹ It is not entirely clear why this tradition developed; it is possible that one of its roots was the ritual practice of hunting devils that was performed within some West African secret societies.⁹⁰ In any case, these various traditions had coalesced to give black folk a deep feeling of righteousness vis-à-vis the oppressive white world in which they lived.

It is worth noting here that, as blacks began to urbanize in the late nineteenth century, the killing devils tradition was increasingly found in connection with a new secular folk hero: the badman.⁹¹ Possibly emerging from a mixture of tales about the trickster, hunting devils, and Shango, the Yoruba god of thunder, the African American outlaw hero rapidly rose in popularity at the end of the 1800s, undoubtedly partly due to a greater desire for a model of a black person who had the strength to stand up to whites—which the badman did in several of the folktales, short folk rhymes, and longer rhymed toasts that described his activities. Clever, arrogant, and violent figures like Wild Negro Bill and Stackolee were quick to hurt and even kill anyone who stood in their way, including blacks, whites, and the Devil—a trait that both won the admiration of many African Americans who were tired of being perpetual victims, and marked the badman as the model protest figure. Although most of the badman

88 A collection of black folklore about the Devil was published by Virginia Frazer Boyle as *Devil Tales* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1900).

89 Lomax and Lomax, *American Ballads*, 588–91; Talley, *Negro Folk Rhymes*, 104; Boyle, *Devil Tales*, *passim.*, esp. 72–75. Although killing the Devil is mostly regarded as a positive act, occasionally there are hard consequences, such as when Big Sixteen, a large, strong slave in African American folklore, after killing the Devil was rejected by both heaven and hell, and forced to roam the earth as Jack O'Lantern; see Hughes and Bontemps, *Book of Negro Folklore*, 61–62.

90 See John W. Nunley, *Moving with the Face of the Devil: Art and Politics in Urban West Africa* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987).

91 On the black badman, see William L. Van Deburg, *Hoodlums: Black Villains and Social Bandits in American Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004); John W. Roberts, *From Trickster to Badman: The Black Folk Hero in Slavery and Freedom* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989); Cecil Brown, *Stagolee Shot Billy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003); Frederick William Turner, 111, "Badmen, Black and White: The Continuity of American Folk Traditions" (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1965); Lomax and Lomax, *American Ballads*, 89–120.

tales emphasized the man's extreme selfishness, one badman, Shine, displayed great race pride and, according to the famous toast, let whites die on the Titanic instead of helping them.

Of course, white people, playing such a major role in shaping the lives of African Americans, were not just folktale foils—they were often important subjects of the folk stories. For example, there were several tales that explained how whites came to be. Frequently the first appearance of pale skin tone was associated with a negative event: white skin could be a curse from God; a disease similar to leprosy;⁹² or, as in some versions of the black Adam and Eve tales, Cain, the couple's son, became the first white person when his skin turned pale and his hair straightened from fear upon seeing an angry God.⁹³ In some stories, on the other hand, white skin was a mark of superiority; one tradition has an angel telling blacks in Canaan to wash themselves in the Jordan River, but only the ones with 'more sense' did this, and they were turned white in the process.⁹⁴

The latter story, it is worth noting, appears to be part of a larger genre in black folklore wherein whites' superior position in the contemporary world was explained. The old Judeo-Christian traditions concerning the identification of Africans with Ham and the Curse of Cain were probably among the most well-known such tales in this genre, particularly among black Christians.⁹⁵ However another very popular set of folk explanations, what William D. Piersen has labeled the 'God's gift to the races' genre, does not contain explicitly Christian elements. Usually in these tales there is no indication of which race came first; the story typically picks up in an ancient time where whites and blacks already exist as separate groups, but when God gives them both a choice or a contest to obtain a particular gift, the black people often choose or win riches whereas whites choose or win education—the lesson being that black people have been oppressed because, although they possess physical superiority over whites, their innate greediness and lack of foresight has prevented them from accessing

92 Piersen, *Black Legacy*, 13–14.

93 Hughes and Bontemps, *Book of Negro Folklore*, 155.

94 B.A. Botkin, ed., *A Treasury of American Folklore: Stories, Ballads, and Traditions of the People* (Garden City, NY: Garden City Books, 1951), 428–29.

95 Piersen, *Black Legacy*, 13. See also Sylvester Johnson, *Myth of Ham in Nineteenth-Century American Christianity: Race, Heathens, and the People of God* (Gordonsville, VA: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); Thomas F. Gossett, *Race: The History of an Idea in America* (New York: Shocken Books, 1971); Leon Poliakov, *The Aryan Myth*, trans. Edmund Howard (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1974 [1966]).

the main tool of modern power.⁹⁶ This widespread tradition, which could be found in both Africa and the Americas, surely contributed to a negative African American self-image, which itself later became an object of criticism in many black Muslim movements.

But white skin was not always regarded as superior, as we have seen, and in many cases folk traditions also accounted for white sinfulness and cruelty. Back in Africa during the days of slavery, it was widely believed that whites were cannibals or ‘bloodsuckers,’⁹⁷ and in the Americas whites were increasingly associated with the use of lies and ‘tricks’—the Devil’s tools—for oppressing African Americans.⁹⁸ In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, such views were still alive and well; even the red flag tale was being passed on, as many collectors of ex-slaves’ stories noted in the 1930s.⁹⁹ In addition, accounts of white violence against blacks were widely circulated. Stories about wicked slave patrollers were still being told as late as the mid-twentieth century,¹⁰⁰ and along with this was a growing new folk history concerning Jim Crow-era white violence.¹⁰¹ Frequently the latter type of stories were transmitted in a secular way that built on slave-era perceptions of whites—but particularly slave patrollers—as sadistic; in the rural South, tales about seeing or experiencing the violence of the White Caps and the KKK often framed these groups as the patrollers’ modern equivalent and, when African Americans started to move to cities, the local police, who were often just as abusive, were said to have filled that same role.¹⁰² Such stories about white violence were so common that they were even seeping into the new musical genre known as the blues, and thus were being further popularized.¹⁰³

There were, in addition to the secular tales, at least three traditions that combined white evilness with concepts of the supernatural. One appears to

96 Piersen, *Black Legacy*, 14–34.

97 Piersen, *Black Legacy*, 5–12.

98 Fry, *Night Riders*, viii, 3, 7, 15, 29–30, 38, 50; Rawick, *American Slave*, 3:64; 7:24–25, 102, 169; 12:119; 13:331; 14:190; 17:336; Savannah Unit, *Drums and Shadows*, 70, 121, 145, 164, 176; Armstrong, *Old Massa’s*, 45.

99 I am of course referring here to the Works Project Administration’s collections, reprinted by Rawick in *American Slave* and cited above. The tale was recorded as late as the 1970s; see Piersen, *Black Legacy*, 36.

100 Dorson, *Negro Tales*, 174–76.

101 Williams, *They Left Great*, *passim.*, esp. 8, 9, 19.

102 Fry, *Night Riders*, 103, 105.

103 Adam Gussow, *Seems Like Murder Here: Southern Violence and the Blues Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

have been intentionally cultivated by whites themselves: It is likely that the wearing of white hoods by the White Caps and the KKK was done partly to take advantage of the stories whites used to tell about ghosts to keep slaves from running away, and may have even been modeled on what Africans believed ghosts and devils looked like. But whatever the reason, the Jim Crow-era black folktales about the various white sheet-wearing 'night riders' seem to have been strongly associated with ghost stories in black folk culture.¹⁰⁴ Another tradition was that of what were called 'night doctors' or 'body snatchers'; ghost-like beings, said to be medical students, mad scientists, or professional body thieves, who kidnapped African Americans in order to perform experiments on them.¹⁰⁵ This tradition probably has its broad roots in the popular folk belief that whites had kidnapped Africans for slavery, but the roots of the story's specific element of scientific experimentation may go back as far as the late 1700s, when reports started circulating about white medical students studying anatomy by using black bodies—both live and dead—and the practice of slave breeding became an increasingly known phenomenon.¹⁰⁶ When African Americans later moved to the North and into the cities, the tradition lost much of its supernatural element and became more science fiction-like in its tone, while still retaining the fundamental fear of science experiments being conducted on African Americans—a feeling that would only be reinforced when the Tuskegee experiments began in 1932.

The third supernatural tradition was one that had long existed as a hidden transcript, but, with lynchings and other forms of white violence and oppression on the rise, was now being publicly expressed and combined with a related folk tradition. By the 1890s, certain leading figures in the black community, including a handful of preachers and newspaper editors, were sometimes in their sermons and editorials referring to violent whites as 'white devils,' and on

104 Piersen, *Black Legacy*, 137–55; Fry, *Night Riders*, 59–81, 135–52.

105 Fry, *Night Riders*, 170–211.

106 See Michael Sappol, *A Traffic of Dead Bodies: Anatomy and Embodied Social Identity in Nineteenth-Century America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002); Robert L. Blakely and Judith M. Harrington, eds., *Bones in the Basement: Postmortem Racism in Nineteenth-Century Medical Training* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997); Harriet A. Washington, *Medical Apartheid: The Dark History of Medical Experimentation on Black Americans from Colonial Times to the Present* (New York: Doubleday, 2006); Gregory D. Smithers, *Slave Breeding: Sex, Violence, and Memory in African American History* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2012); Ned Sublette and Constance Sublette, *The American Slave Coast: A History of the Slave-Breeding Industry* (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 2016).

occasion were calling for the murder of these ‘devils.’¹⁰⁷ It appears, then, that it took Emancipation and Jim Crow for African Americans to be both free enough and angry enough to merge in public the old view of whites as devils with the killing devils tradition. Being grounded in both folklore and African Americans’ real encounters with whites, this tradition would not soon be forgotten.

The main location of the supernatural in post-Emancipation black folk culture, however, was within the world of conjure—or hoodoo, as it was increasingly called.¹⁰⁸ Because we know so little about its practice before 1865, it is unclear how much conjure changed between the slave era and the early Jim Crow era. Regardless, though, we have a fair amount of information about the latter period, and it seems that by the turn of the century, hoodoo was a somewhat elaborate folk religion, the principal concerns of which were protection against harm, assistance in obtaining love and money, and improving one’s health. The practice of hoodoo, furthermore, could vary significantly. While hoodoo professionals—conjure ‘doctors’ and ‘root workers’—might attempt to provide clients with direct assistance by reading ‘signs’ in nature or giving them various concoctions made from plants, often their help came instead in the form of instructions for the client to follow, and sometimes these instructions were passed on from layperson to layperson without the involvement of a conjurer. Hoodoo instructions usually included collecting various natural objects, such as parts of animals and types of dirt; putting the collected objects in a specific location, such as under a bed, buried in the ground, or in a conjure bag; and saying a spell, which typically included references to Jesus, Moses, or particular passages from the Bible. These practices also often involved specific numbers of repetitions and were to be performed for a certain prescribed period of time; days or nights in multiples of nine or seven were especially common lengths. In fact, both of these numbers were used for many different aspects of hoodoo rit-

107 Litwack, *Been in the Storm*, 469; Leon F. Litwack, *Trouble in Mind: Black Southerners in the Age of Jim Crow* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998), 423.

108 The present discussion of conjure/hoodoo in the late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries relies primarily on Chireau, *Black Magic*; Carolyn Morrow Long, *Spiritual Merchants: Religion, Magic, and Commerce* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2001); Hans A. Baer, *The Black Spiritual Movement: A Religious Response to Racism* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1984); Zora Hurston, “Hoodoo in America,” *Journal of American Folk-Lore* 44 (1931): 317–417; Harry Middleton Hyatt, *Hoodoo, Conjuraton, Witchcraft, Rootwork: Beliefs Accepted by Many Negroes and White Persons, These Being Orally Recorded among Blacks and Whites*, 5 vols. (Hannibal, MO: Western Publishing, Inc., 1970–1978); Michael Edward Bell, “Pattern, Structure, and Logic in Afro-American Hoodoo Performance” (PhD diss., Indiana University, 1980).

uals; individuals were often told to perform certain acts or say certain phrases in repetitions of nine or seven or to use seven magical items, such as seven candles. In addition, a significant number of known hoodoo rituals involved either the doctor or layperson drawing magical symbols—usually an ‘x,’ but also a square or a cross within a circle, represented as ⊕.¹⁰⁹

It is almost certain that the latter symbol, which was very rarely used as a talisman in European or Native American magical practices,¹¹⁰ was adopted in hoodoo from its use by the Bakongo from West Central Africa. Bakongo people made up a substantial part of the enslaved population and placed high religious value on the symbol—which they termed the ‘four moments of the sun.’¹¹¹ In hoodoo, this shape was often referred to as the ‘four corners of the world’ or the ‘four winds of heaven,’ with each of the four points on the edge of the circle being said to represent one of the cardinal directions.¹¹² The fact that this circle, images of squares, drawings of an x, and other references to the four corners and four winds were used in countless hoodoo rites indicates that the idea these symbols represented was of immense importance in conjure. According to hoodoo doctors, the significance of these symbols came from Revelation 7:1.¹¹³

And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree.

Although the relevance of this passage for magical purposes is not immediately clear, since we know African American folk religion put special emphasis on the Book of Revelation generally, it is probable that these symbols were understood not just as references to 7:1, but also to Revelation as a whole and especially to the seventh chapter, in which the 144,000 members of the twelve tribes of Israel—with whom it was common for African Americans to identify—are

109 See Hyatt, *Hoodoo*, *passim*, esp. 1266.

110 For a basic overview of talismans throughout the world, see E.A. Wallis Budge, *Amulets and Talismans* (New Hyde Park, NY: University Books, 1961).

111 The Bakongo-hoodoo connection for this symbol is discussed in Chireau, *Black Magic*, 37; Long, *Spiritual Merchants*, 8, 15, 267n12; Robert Farris Thompson and Joseph Cornet, *The Four Moments of the Sun: Kongo Art in Two Worlds* (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 1981). The symbol is also discussed in several of the previously-cited works on slave religion.

112 See Hyatt, *Hoodoo*, 1266 for a facsimile and a brief discussion from a hoodoo doctor.

113 Hyatt, *Hoodoo*, 1266, 827–28.

marked with a seal that will protect them in the coming Apocalypse. The various four-pointed symbols in hoodoo may therefore have been understood as this very seal, or at least as possessing spiritual power because of the symbols' connection with what was regarded as the spiritual destiny of African Americans—the 'four winds,' after all, were also an important component in Ezekiel's vision of the revival of the dry bones. It is probably for these reasons, then, that the encircled cross remained a potent symbol for believers in hoodoo until at least the 1970s.¹¹⁴

It might be reemphasized here that the African American folk religious tradition of calling the black community 'a number' was likely also a reference either to the 144,000 of Revelation 7 or to another mystical numeral that was associated with the seal placed on the Israelites.¹¹⁵ Given the prominence of the number seven both in the Book of Revelation and in hoodoo generally, many surely believed that seven—which also represents in Revelation the number of seals that secured the book of secret knowledge being opened up by the Lion of Judah, an act that produced the Apocalyptic events—was itself that 'number.' The number seven was in fact very prominent in African American folk culture. One could find in folk speech and the folk music of the blues numerous references to the seventh day or hour, seven dollars, and seven doctors; at least one African American wrote a popular "seven seals" book concerning her divinely-given visions of the future of her race;¹¹⁶ and it was commonly believed that a family's seventh son was much more likely to possess rare spiritual powers, such as 'second sight'—unsurprisingly, many conjurers claimed to be seventh sons themselves.¹¹⁷ As we will see, the importance of the number seven and the associated four-pointed symbols (\oplus and \times) would be retained in various African American Islamic movements.

Another practice associated with hoodoo was the ability to communicate with spirits. Spirit possession, such as that which could be witnessed in the ring shout, was a popular aspect of African American religious life due to the fact

114 Tracey E. Hucks, *Yoruba Traditions and African American Religious Nationalism* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2012), 1–2.

115 See Alho, *Religion*, 89, 97; Watson, "Primitive Religion," 53.

116 Lucinda Smith-Young, *The Seven Seals* (Philadelphia: J. Gordon Baugh, Jr., 1903). For reasons that will become apparent later, it is interesting to note that what appears to be the first edition of the book, published in 1903, had a cover that was solid red except for the gold-embossed title on the front. The book was still being promoted in Richmond, Virginia's black newspaper *Richmond Planet* into the early 1920s.

117 The blues contained numerous hoodoo references; see Mimi Clar, "Folk Belief and Custom in the Blues," *Western Folklore* 19, no. 3 (1960): 173–89.

that many Africans believed that ancestor and nature-based spirits existed on Earth and could inhabit the bodies of living things. However starting in the late 1840s this tradition was sometimes blended with the recently popular white form of extra-church spirit communication known as spiritualism, wherein a 'medium' usually repeated a message given from the spirit of a deceased person. Because there was a strong liberal strain in the white spiritualist community, a few African Americans who claimed to be in contact with spirits received some prominence, especially in New Orleans, where figures like Dr. Barthet and Dr. Valmour became celebrities.¹¹⁸ Fascinatingly, connections between African Americans and Islam made a few appearances within the spiritualist community as well. For instance, an Arabic-speaking enslaved Muslim who communicated with spirits was a character in a spiritualist novel by the white abolitionist Epes Sargent, and at least one black man claimed to channel the Prophet Muhammad.¹¹⁹

The latter individual, Paschal Beverly Randolph, was one of the most famous spiritualists of his day, and because of his ties to Islam his life is worth briefly recounting here.¹²⁰ An orphaned son of a white man and black—possibly Malagasy—mother, Randolph spent his youth working on ships and living in white-populated alternative religious communities, and by the 1850s he had become a popular medium in the Northeast. After being introduced to European occultism and, he claimed, Islamic mysticism in North Africa,¹²¹ in the late 1850s Randolph began moving away from spiritualism and towards organized occultism, which he labeled as 'Rosicrucian' after the famous European esoteric movement of the same name. Over the next twenty years Randolph organized Rosicrucian groups for whites across the country, and in the early 1870s he introduced into his teachings sexual magic and Islamic themes, which were likely building off of older white esotericist rumors about sexual magic among certain Shi'i Islamic sects. After he committed suicide in 1875, a number of white occult groups started forming, most famously the Theosophical

118 Baer, *Black Spiritual Movement*, 19. See also Ann Braude, *Radical Spirits: Spiritualism and Women's Rights in Nineteenth-Century America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989). On spiritualism's connection to white conversion to Islam, see Bowen, *HCTIUS*, 1:esp. 51–108.

119 *Peculiar; a Tale of the Great Transition* (New York: Carleton, 1864), 191–99.

120 John Patrick Deveney, *Paschal Beverly Randolph: A Nineteenth Century Black American Spiritualist* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1996). For Randolph's channeling Muhammad, see page 22. On Randolph's important, though indirect connections with white American conversion to Islam, see Bowen, *HCTIUS*, 1:59–87, 97–108.

121 This evidence suggests, however, that he was not actually influenced by true Islamic occultism.

Society and the Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor, and they used Randolph's teachings as part of their ideological foundations. Notably, the first white American Sufi and Islamic movements emerged out of these groups, and Randolph lingered as a tangential influence in those movements as well.¹²² It is unclear to what extent Randolph's interest in spiritualism and esotericism reflected genuine African traditions, but, nevertheless, Randolph's career itself highlights the diversity and transformation of African American non-Christian religiosity in the nineteenth century.

New Religious Movements

The doctrines and organizations of Paschal Beverly Randolph were but a few examples of an increasingly popular trend in post-Emancipation African American religious culture: the establishment of new concepts and communities. These new religious ideas and movements varied greatly depending on the local context and individuals involved; often they were simply outgrowths and break-offs of existing concepts and organizations. But whatever the sources, the emergence of new religious concepts and movements helped lay the cultural foundation for the AAIR's even more diverse religious environment.

Within mainstream black Christianity, the penchant for new religious ideas and groups usually took the form of sectarianism and schisms, as black churches and denominational conventions were now constantly dividing and producing new congregations and associations.¹²³ Having endured the totalitarian world of slavery for so long, African Americans were quick to reject as leaders anyone who appeared to be too controlling, or at least too paternalistic. It was partly for this reason, in fact, that the Baptist church, which provided for the greatest congregational autonomy, remained the dominant denomination in the black community.

The desire to remove oneself from oppressive circumstances was also a prominent feature in the popular newer religion-related currents of black nationalism and the promotion of emigration to either the American West or Africa.¹²⁴ In these movements there was a widespread identification with Ethiopia, the black nation known to Bible readers as the great Abyssinia, particularly after the country defeated Italy's attempt to invade it in 1896, which marked the first time a European power was stopped from annexing an African nation. Identification with Ethiopia became so strong that many even began

122 See Bowen, *HCTIUS*, 1:97–114, 139–59.

123 Montgomery, *Under Their Own*, 103–04, 116–17.

124 See Edwin S. Redkey, *Black Exodus: Black Nationalist and Back-to-Africa Movements, 1890–1910* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969).

calling all of Africa's inhabitants and their descendants in America 'Ethiopians.' The most famous black nationalist and emigrationist preacher of the period, Henry McNeal Turner, contributed additional important elements to these movements' religious discourse when he, being a subscriber to the notion that the original humans were black, publicly rejected the idea that Jesus was white and instead insisted that it was the Devil who was white—God was, according to Turner, "a Negro."¹²⁵ Turner, here, was very self-consciously revolting against the widespread association of the color white with God and black with Satan, and the implications these had on racial perceptions. Privately, Turner believed that no race was superior and that God had no color, but he felt the only way for the present color-based social system to be disrupted was by inverting it.

Perhaps the most popular Christian-based new religious currents during this era were the Holiness movement and its various offshoots, including Pentecostalism and the early 'black Jews' movements.¹²⁶ The former was an egalitarian, ecstatic-based religiosity that initially emerged out of white Methodism in the 1830s. By the 1880s the movement was making great inroads among African Americans in the South, many of whom found it to be highly welcoming of black folk traditions, including both the concept that African Americans were 'holy' people—a notion reinforced by the Methodist belief in the holiness of the laity—and the spirit-possessing shouting of slave days. Pentecostalism, which grew out of Holiness, took this welcoming perspective to a higher level when it emphasized the phenomenon of speaking in tongues, which even further legitimized African American shouting. There were, however, other elements of these movements that attracted African Americans. One was the insistence that as members of these movements they were following the original form of Christianity and therefore that members should, like the first Christians, adhere to some Old Testament rituals—a concept that was probably appealing for those who identified deeply with the Israelites of the Hebrew Bible. Holiness preachers, notably, also won converts through their criticisms of the growing materialism and elitism among the Baptist and Methodist ministers.¹²⁷

125 Stephen Ward Angell, *Bishop Henry McNeal Turner and African American Religion in the South* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992), 261–67.

126 On the Holiness and Pentecostal movements, see Vinson Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition: Charismatic Movements in the Twentieth Century*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1997); Cheryl J. Sanders, *Saints in Exile: The Holiness-Pentecostal Experience in African American Religion and Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

127 Giggie, "Preachers and Peddlers"; John M. Giggie, "The Consumer Market and the Origins

This materialist critique was in fact a central issue for the early Holiness leader William Christian, a figure who by the late 1880s had introduced an additional notion to his followers: that black people were not just similar to the Israelites of the Bible, but were in fact the true 'Jews.'¹²⁸ Christian asserted that the Israelites of the Bible were black, Jesus—as a Jew—was therefore black, and modern African Americans were the direct descendants of both. The source of this claim is uncertain; it is likely that Christian had been influenced by the folk identification with the Israelites, but he also may have been influenced by some of the handful of African Jews living in the US in the late nineteenth century.¹²⁹ Whatever his source, though, it was in Christian's Church of the Living God that African Americans were for the first time identifying as actual Jews and performing Old Testament rituals. By the mid-1890s, a similar Holiness-based 'black Jews' movement had appeared, this time being led by one William Saunders Crowdy and known as the Church of God and Saints in Christ. Both groups would achieve significant popularity and produce numerous offshoots of their own. Interestingly, both also seem to have brought into their movements elements of Freemasonry. Crowdy was a confirmed former Masonic lodge leader; Christian, on the other hand, although he denied having been a member of any lodge, insisted that the religion transmitted by God to the Jews was Masonry, and he therefore occasionally called his movement 'Free Mason Religion.'¹³⁰

Sometimes new religious groups departed from Christianity in ways very different from Christian and Crowdy's movements. In the early twentieth century, for instance, several black spiritualists, many of whom were familiar with hoodoo and European occultism, started organizing groups similar to Randolph's, wherein these non-mainstream traditions were blended with black folk Christianity and—especially in Louisiana—Catholicism.¹³¹ These 'spiritual' churches, which were often very Christian-like in their rituals, sprang up

of the African American Holiness Movement," in *Markets, Morals & Religion*, ed. Jonathan B. Imber (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2008), 191–206.

128 On Christian, see Giggie, "Consumer Market"; and also see, for overviews of the early black Jew groups, Jacob S. Dorman, *Chosen People: The Rise of American Black Israelite Religions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); James E. Landing, *Black Judaism: Story of An American Movement* (Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 2002).

129 For an account of an African Hebrew in Hartford in 1899, see "A Negro Wonder," *Crescent*, October 11, 1899, 231.

130 William Christian, "Notice to All Free Masons in the World," reprinted in "Dangerous Doctrines," *Arkansas Gazette*, June 22, 1890 and *idem.*, *Poor Pilgrim's Work, in the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost* (Texarkana: Joe Ehrlich's Print, 1896).

131 See Baer, *Black Spiritual Movement*.

rapidly in New Orleans and a few Northern cities. Sometimes, however, new religious organizations were more purely hoodoo and folk-oriented. Rumors tell of hoodoo 'schools' existing in the black community as far back as the late eighteenth century,¹³² and after the Civil War reports about what were called hoodoo 'circles' started appearing with regularity.

Evidence suggests that, similar to the spiritual churches, these circles appealed to diverse black folk beliefs and sometimes developed around highly revered conjure men, some of whom claimed to be incarnations of the Divine. A report from the 1870s tells of an individual who, claiming that he was 'the second Jesus Christ' and possessed the ability to heal people using spiritual powers, one day walked into a church and tore up the congregation's only Bible, saying that because the Bible they used was the wrong kind, God had commanded him to set the community on the correct path; the congregation, accepting this popular folk assertion, decided to follow this 'second Jesus Christ' for the next two years.¹³³ This was not at all an isolated incident; by the first decade of the twentieth century, there were several known hoodoo leaders and organized groups, and they seem to have become increasingly standardized and influential. A 1908 study asserted that for many of these communities there was a belief that hoodoo abilities were separated into four 'degrees,' implying that some sort of organized authority had authorized this system, and possibly that they had borrowed occult elements from the degree-based initiatory system of Freemasonry, which by that time had become a minor element in black folklore, having been mixed with folk stories about biblical figures.¹³⁴ The same 1908 study also asserted that there was a large regional organization called, simply, 'Circle,' which was composed of various East Coast hoodoo practitioners who occasionally came together to share their knowledge of magic and increase the strength of their community. In Chicago, meanwhile, when several women began congregating around a conjurer known only as 'Old Man,' their belief in their hoodoo powers became so strong that they lost all fear that they would be harmed by the police with whom they frequently clashed—a notion that was becoming more and more popular in hoodoo-oriented groups as African Americans continued to move to cities.¹³⁵

132 Chireau, *Black Magic*, 22–23.

133 "Some Conjure Doctors We Have Heard of," *Southern Workman* 26 (1897): 38.

134 Marvin Dana, "Voodoo: Its Effect on the Negro Race," *Metropolitan Magazine* 28 (August 1908): 530; Roark Bradford, *Ol' Man Adam an' His Chillun: Being the Tales They Tell about the Time When the Lord Walked the Earth Like a Natural Man* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1928), 132–38.

135 Dana, "Voodoo," 534. For other examples of hoodoo in pre-First World War Chicago, see

Related to the hoodoo current was the rise of leaders in the African American community who, despite not being traditional conjure doctors, insisted that either they alone or all people were manifestations of God. Some of these individuals were white men who claimed to be God returned to Earth, apparently taking advantage of the widespread millennial, Revelation-based expectations of many black folk. For instance, on the Georgia coast in the late 1880s, the white Dupont Bell (born Jacob Orth) started what was known as a 'Christ Craze' when he announced himself as a messiah and convinced one thousand poor African Americans to leave their jobs in anticipation of the imminent end of the world.¹³⁶ After he was forced to leave town, prophetic black leaders—such as 'Justice of the Peace,' Edward James; 'King Solomon,' Shadrach Walthour; and 'Queen of Sheba,' Ella Roberts—sprang up to try to reel in his former followers. Then, in the early 1900s, a 'New Christ,' Paul Blandin Mnason (born Mason T. Huntsman), after leading a white-populated communal farm in New Jersey in the late nineteenth century, wound up at an offshoot of William Christian's Church of the Living God where he was praised by its African American members as 'God.'¹³⁷

There were of course also African Americans who claimed special connections to the Divine, and frequently, ideas about black divinity were derived almost entirely from traditional Christianity, although this was starting to change as the black religious world expanded.¹³⁸ In the late 1800s, Samuel Morris, also known as Father Jehovah, claimed that the notion of African American divinity came to him as a revelation while reading 1 Corinthians 3:16: "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the spirit of God dwelleth in

"Tell Their Woes to Voodoo Doctor," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 22, 1904, 31. This theme is found numerous times in Hyatt's *Hoodoo*.

136 Thomas F. Armstrong, "The Christ Craze of 1889: A Millennial Response to Economic and Social Change," in *Toward a New South? Studies in Post-Civil War Southern Communities*, eds. Orville Vernon Burton and Robert C. McMath, Jr. (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1982), 223–45.

137 Theodore Schroeder, "Psychology of One Pantheist," *Psychoanalytic Review* 8 (1921): 314–28; *idem.*, "Anarchism and 'The Lord's Farm.' Record of a Social Experiment," *Open Court* 33, no. 10 (1919): 589–607; Robert S. Fogarty, *Dictionary of American Communal and Utopian History* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1980), 57, 215; Ernest S. Wooster, *Communities of the Past and Present* (Newllano, LA: Llano Colonist, 1924), 66–70.

138 The main source for the following discussion is St. Clair McKelway and A.J. Liebling, "Who is this King of Glory?" *New Yorker*, June 13, 1936, 21–28. Additional valuable observations have been made by Jill Watts in *God, Harlem U.S.A., the Father Divine Story* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 22–30.

you?"¹³⁹ However, George Baker, Morris' most well-known follower, had been influenced in this concept by two additional elements: Pentecostalism, because of its insistence that God could speak through individuals, and the liberal white American current of New Thought, which taught that all people are a 'thought' of God, and therefore are divine.¹⁴⁰ Some African Americans had in fact been embracing the latter movement practically as soon as it had come into existence in organized form in the 1880s, perhaps being attracted to the abolitionist and anti-colorist views of some of its early promoters and influencers.¹⁴¹ These various sources, along with what appears to be knowledge of hoodoo and Freemasonry, were soon blended by Morris and Baker; in fact, Baker—who had initially used the old Christian convert title 'the messenger'—received from Morris the title 'God in the Sonship Degree,' and Morris began going as 'God in the Fathership Degree.'¹⁴² Despite the New Thought influences, then, the two men were asserting that they themselves were the only manifestations of God in the world. We have little information about the activities of Morris and Baker during the pre-World War I years, but eventually Baker would leave to blaze his own trail, and by the 1930s he would be famous as the multiracial sect leader Father Divine.

In 1908, prior to the Morris-Baker split, John Hickerson, a former member of William Christian's Church of the Living God who did not subscribe to the belief that only certain individuals were God, joined up with Morris and Baker in Baltimore. Having come out of the Holiness movement, which stressed the laity's obtaining holiness through sanctification, he instead insisted that all people—not just a few divinely-chosen individuals—became Gods when they read 1 Corinthians 3:16. Perhaps because of their theological differences, in 1912 the Baltimore group broke up and Hickerson, using the hoodoo-symbolic title of St. John Divine (or 'the Vine'), moved to Harlem where he started his own Church of the Living God, which within just a few years was able to establish

139 McKelway and A.J. Liebling, "Who is this King," 21–22.

140 Watts, *God, Harlem*, 22–26. For an introduction to New Thought, see Charles S. Braden, *Spirits in Rebellion: The Rise and Development of New Thought* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1963).

141 African Americans in Denver were noted for embracing New Thought in 1890; see "Notes," *Harmony* 3, no. 1 (1890): 14. The abolitionist and possible anti-colorist influences on New Thought primarily came from the Boston scene, and especially through Sarah Stanley Grimké, the white wife of the black lawyer, minister, and editor Archibald Grimké; see Bowen, *HCTIUS*, 1:85–87.

142 McKelway and A.J. Liebling, "Who is this King," 23.

branches in several cities.¹⁴³ Various researchers visited the organization and learned not only that it had become somewhat multiracial and had strongly embraced the ideas of New Thought,¹⁴⁴ Hickerson had blended the human divinity themes with elements apparently derived from William Christian's movement.¹⁴⁵ Hickerson, for example, claimed that he was fluent in Hebrew;¹⁴⁶ he also he had his followers dress in clothing that seems to have been intentionally modeled off of what was believed to have been worn in the oriental Near Eastern world: men wore robes and "yellow turbans, festooned with silver tinsel," and women wore large pink hoods and purple shawls.¹⁴⁷ Members also called their meeting places 'temples,' which was a practice started by Christian, although they also referred to themselves as 'Gods' and 'Temples of Gods,' which was not a Christian-taught practice. Unlike Christian's movement, furthermore, Hickerson's group was highly unstable. According to one report, the organization eventually fell apart primarily due to the incompatibility of its central doctrine with group unity, but it was also because Hickerson was frequently accused of sexually assaulting members' children and, in addition, several conflicts, often violent, had emerged between the Gods and outsiders.¹⁴⁸ In one case, a member was reported as yelling at a passerby "Brute beastie! I going [*sic*] to kill you with fire and brimstone. I going to put out your light"¹⁴⁹—language that suggests that Hickerson's followers saw non-followers as manifestations of the Beast from Revelation and themselves as the divine slayers of the devilish creature. Hickerson had thus apparently institutionalized and pre-

143 Theodore Schroeder, "Living Gods," *Azoth* (October 1918): 202.

144 See the following articles by Theodore Schroeder: "Living Gods"; "A 'Living God' Incarnate," *Psychoanalytic Review*, January 1, 1932, 36–45; "Psychology of One Pantheist," *Psychoanalytic Review*, January 1, 1921, 314–28; "Anarchism and 'The Lord's Farm,'" *Open Court* 33, no. 10 (1919): 589–607.

145 It should be recognized that Holiness's Methodist roots were probably helpful in this process of mixing Christian teachings with esotericism, as Methodism's founder John Wesley had been influenced by the Cambridge Platonists' Neoplatonism, which was also an important influence on modern Western esotericism; see Synan, *Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*, 3.

146 T.R. Poston, "I Taught Father Divine' Says St. Bishop the Vine," *New York Amsterdam News*, November 23, 1932, 1.

147 McKelway and A.J. Liebling, "Who is this King," 26. A photograph of Hickerson in his turban and robe is contained in Poston, "I Taught Father Divine.'"

148 "Minister and Living God Church Bishop Sought," *New York Amsterdam News*, December 21, 1927, 1; Poston, "I Taught Father Divine'"; McKelway and A.J. Liebling, "Who is this King," 26.

149 McKelway and A.J. Liebling, "Who is this King," 26.

sented as very literal the old folk concepts that African Americans were ‘holy’ beings and Devil killers. As we will see, this would not be the last time that the theme of associating both God and the killing of devils with human beings would be institutionalized in black religion.

African Americans came into contact with numerous additional non-mainstream currents during this period. A handful embraced the Baha’i faith, some reportedly joined the New Thought-like Christian Science movement, and we know of at least one man who was well-read enough in Theosophical literature that in 1914 he was able to publish a book with clear Theosophical influences.¹⁵⁰ Still, these individuals, and even the hoodoo and New Thought-like groups, were for the most part isolated. It would not be until after the changes of 1920 that the African American community would see a widespread development of organizations based around non-mainstream religious ideas.

Black religion, however, was also changing outside of organizational territories during this period, and much of this had to do with urbanization. In as late as 1910, around ninety percent of African Americans still lived in the South, and most were in rural communities.¹⁵¹ But during the ensuing decade, tens of thousands of unskilled laborers began traveling to Northern cities where they were drawn by promises of employment and opportunities for black Americans that could never be imagined in the South. 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 filling the many factory positions now opened to them—and their culture soon began to adjust to this change of environment.¹⁵² Life in the urban North exposed African American migrants to a host of new experiences, both negative and positive. 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 less violent than it had been in

150 Robert H. Stockman, *The Baha’i Faith in America Volume 1: Origins 1892–1900* (Wilmette, IL: Baha’i Publishing Trust, 1985); *idem.*, *The Baha’i Faith in America: Early Expansion 1900–1912, Volume 2* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1995); 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), accessed June 6, 2012, available at <http://dspace2.creighton.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/10504/64589/2010-7.pdf?sequence=1>; Robert Fikes, Jr., “The Triumph of Robert T. Browne: The Mystery of Space,” *Negro Educational Review* 49, no. 1/2 (1998): 3–7.

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

152 See Milton Sernett and Carole Marks, *Farewell—We’re Good and Gone: The Great Black Migration* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989).

the South—continued to be a dominant factor in their daily lives. Sometimes migrants also discovered that the Northern black church leaders held paternalistic attitudes about the Southern-born and discouraged their displays of folk religiosity, a tendency that frequently resulted in migrants starting their own churches. On the other hand, urban centers provided many new sources for money. Besides the jobs people could obtain from white employers, 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. The North also offered more opportunities for education and networking. Through their churches, their fraternal lodges, and even their neighborhoods, African American migrants were increasingly coming into contact with educated blacks, immigrants of a variety of races, and liberal whites. Despite continuing to inhabit the lowest rung in the American social order, their worlds were being opened in ways that took them far beyond their old rural limits to the ever-expanding world of modern deterritorialization. As a result, by 1918, as Milton C. Sernett has observed, “a new consciousness” had arisen in African American culture.¹⁵³

We have already seen some of the effects that the city had on black folk religiosity. It was in urban centers where the spiritual churches and hoodoo circles prospered, and it was there, too, where the black badman hero developed as prominent figure in black folklore. Related to this rise in the badman tradition, there seems to have also been an increase in stories about both crime and racial frustrations and struggles.¹⁵⁴ And, in addition to altering the content, the fast pace of city life had the power to transform the very shape of the folk story. Since individuals had less time to communicate and listen to each other, tales and rhymes were often shortened and made more powerful; and it was in the urban North, apparently, where the ritualized insults known as the dozens, and their folk cousin, the short ‘signifying’ poems, began to truly thrive.¹⁵⁵ Long folktales were still being told, but with much less frequency and were not often being learned by the children born in the North who, especially upon the advent of the radio, increasingly lacked the listening skills needed to remember such narratives.¹⁵⁶

153 Sernett, *Bound*, 3.

154 Richard M. Dorson, “Is There a Folk in the City?” in *The Urban Experience and Folk Tradition*, eds. Americo Paredes and Ellen J. Stekert (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1971), 25, 49, 50.

155 Dorson, *Negro Folktales*, 28–29.

156 Dorson, *Negro Folktales*, 10, 17–18, 27, 30.

Furthermore, since it was more likely for those living in cities to receive an education, the written word—another memory-reducing artifact—was increasingly incorporated into the life of the folk. More and more, African Americans were reading and writing newspapers and books, and incorporating these into their perspectives of the world.¹⁵⁷ Some of the more popular genres of African American-authored books were those that discussed great black figures and black history, with an especially popular theme being the ‘true’ history of African Americans. Many writers argued that black people in America were descended from Ham (making African Americans what were called ‘Hamites’), although sometimes it was specified that their descent came through Ham’s son Cush (making African Americans ‘Cushites’).¹⁵⁸ Literacy also gave the folk a greater mastery over the English language, and it was increasingly common to hear new words being playfully invented by black minds; this practice soon became a fixture of ‘jive,’ the new folk language of the streets.¹⁵⁹

Folk—that is, non-organized—hoodoo was being affected by the city as well. Certain ambitious urban entrepreneurs—mostly white, but also some black—began marketing hoodoo and esoteric books and objects through catalogs and magazine advertisements.¹⁶⁰ In particular, the *Sixth and Seventh Books of Moses*, an old German Kabbalah-influenced occult text that had recently been translated into English, became extremely popular among followers of hoodoo, who were undoubtedly interested in its claims of transmitting the “magic of the Israelites.”¹⁶¹ In some cases, black fortune tellers, healers, and astrologists obtained stores and apartments from which they sold both their traditional conjure services as well as the mass-produced hoodoo books and

157 Dorson, “Is There a Folk,” 25, 28, 45–46.

158 See Laurie F. Maffly-Kipp, *Setting Down the Sacred Past: African American Race Histories* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2010).

159 On jive, see Dan Burley, *Dan Burley’s Jive*, ed. Thomas Aiello (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2009). Significantly, as we will see later, one popular way of formulating new words in black folk life was by adding the suffix ‘ology’ to what were normally thought to be non-scientific practices and institutions; the folklorist Richard Dorson recorded the word ‘swimology,’ for example; see Dorson, *Negro Folktales*, 23, 172.

160 See Long, *Spiritual Merchants*.

161 *The Sixth and Seventh Books of Moses or, Moses’ Magical Spirit-Art, Known as the Wonderful Arts of the Old Wise Hebrews, Taken from the Mosaic Books of the Cabala and the Talmud, for the Good of Mankind* (New York, 1880). See also Kevin J. Hayes, *Folklore and Book Culture* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1997), 14–27; Owen Davies, *Grimoires: A History of Magic Books* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), *passim*.

magical objects to black and white clients, and many others took refuge in the anonymity offered by the urban environment's numerous hotels, which allowed them to frequently change locations in order to more easily avoid the police with whom they often clashed.¹⁶² Somewhat surprisingly, the black Masons, who for so long focused not on esotericism but on middle-class respectability, occasionally joined in on the sale and consumption of these products, even occasionally incorporating them into their group's teachings.¹⁶³ In fact, some former followers of the early black Jews, J.B. Thornton (under Crowdy) and Rabbi Wentworth Arthur Matthew (under the William Christian lineage), both started their own Masonic movements that apparently incorporated hoodoo elements.¹⁶⁴ As these examples suggest, then, the folk world was increasingly blending with that of the black elites, and religious lives were thus transforming in many new ways.

Islam and Its Limited Impact

In spite of all the new religious currents emerging in black America in the five decades before 1920, Islam and Islamic themes still were unable to spark a significant wave of conversion to Islam. On the contrary—even as new Muslims and Islam-focused intellectual currents entered into African American culture, Islam seems to have had only a very limited impact. Almost no descendant of a Muslim slave, for instance, was publicly claiming to be a Muslim by the turn of the century,¹⁶⁵ and although there do appear to have been

162 The latter practice was frequently observed by Hyatt in *Hoodoo*.

163 See *A Descriptive Catalog and Price List of Macoy Books on the Subjects of Freemasonry and Occultism* (New York: Prince Hall Masonic Publishing Co., 1930), in Harry A. Williamson Papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library, General Masonic Publications—Miscellaneous, Box 20, Folder 19, Reel 13.

164 Doman, *Chosen People*, 53, 152–53, 167–74; 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), 32; Harry A. Williamson, *Index of Negro Bogus Masonic Bodies*, 3 vols. ([New York]: n.p., [1947]), 1:38, 39; 2:33, 36, 104, 105, 137; 3:39, Harry A. Williamson Papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library, General Masonic Publications—Miscellaneous, Box 21, Folders 8–10, Reel 14; Harry A. Williamson, *A Masonic Digest for Freemasons in the Prince Hall Fraternity*, rev. and enlarged ([New York]: n.p., 1952), 56, Harry A. Williamson Papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library, General Masonic Publications—Miscellaneous, Box 21, Folder 11, Reel 14.

165 Gomez, *Black Crescent*, 144–52; GhaneaBassiri, *A History*, 63–73; Jackson, *Islam*, 39, 123.

small numbers of Islam-adhering descendants of freeborn African Muslims—particularly among the Malagasy people and possibly within some of the black-white-Native triracial communities that had formed since the seventeenth century¹⁶⁶—these individuals remained fairly isolated and were not, as far as is known, converting anyone.

Still, the Jim Crow period did see a minor wave of Muslim immigration from abroad, and, although accounts are rare, there was undoubtedly some contact between African Americans and international Muslims.¹⁶⁷ In 1917, for example, a dark-skinned Palestinian named Ezala M. Percetti claimed that for five years after his 1909 immigration he retained his commitment to Islam while apparently living among American blacks; but in 1914 he embraced Christianity at a black Baptist church in Pittsburgh and would soon attend an African American seminary and promote himself in the black press as a Christian preacher.¹⁶⁸ North African and Egyptian-Sudanese people, meanwhile, represented at least a few hundred of the period's Muslim immigrants, and thus many of them would have similarly found themselves in the segregated social world of African Americans.¹⁶⁹

The latter immigrants would have made especially interesting acquaintances. Evidence suggests that a relatively large number of the North Africans and Egyptians arrived and lived in America for several years as acrobat performers and therefore many brought to the country the Islamic mysticism of the Sufi brotherhoods to which North African acrobats often belonged.¹⁷⁰ Fascinatingly, at least three of the popular acrobat troupe leaders were also involved with American esotericism: Hassan Ben Ali, the most famous, was a member of the Shriners, an Islamic-themed para-Masonic organization; another popular leader, Hadji Cheriff, claimed to be both a 'dervish' and a Freemason; and a third, Hadji Tahar, said he was in the Shriners, Masons, Elks, and

As we have seen, however, at least one contemporary person, Muhammad Ali Salaam, is claiming to be able to trace Islamic transmission in his family back to the antebellum period.

166 See Gomez, *Black Crescent*, 181–96.

167 For an overview of Muslim immigration before World War II, see Ghanea-Bassiri, *A History*, 135–50.

168 "Rev. Ezala M. Percetti," *Richmond Planet*, May 5, 1917, 2; "Black Jew here Next Monday Fifth Street Church," *Richmond Planet*, July 21, 1917, 5.

169 Simour, *Recollecting*, 108.

170 Simour, *Recollecting*, 134–39; Bowen, *HCTIUS*, 1:179–80. In Morocco, acrobats also performed rites for their patron saint Sidi Hamad u Musa; see Edward Westermarck, *Ritual and Belief in Morocco* (New Hyde Park, NY: University Books, [1926] 1968), 1:180–81.

Odd Fellows.¹⁷¹ However, all of these men appear to have joined white—not African American—fraternal orders and, at the same time, news articles from the period reveal that, while a few whites and Native Americans either married some of the troupes' performers or joined up with troupes as actual acrobats—and in the process traveled back to Morocco to receive further training as well as, presumably, induction into the acrobat Sufi brotherhoods—no African Americans were ever noted as being connected in such ways to these groups.¹⁷² Significant contact with African Americans, then, cannot currently be documented.

Still, the chances were good that at least some African Americans had been in direct contact with Muslim performers and other immigrants around the time of the 1893 World's Fair in Chicago.¹⁷³ Although we lack comprehensive data on the subject, probably several hundred Muslims came from abroad to work at the event, and at least a few hundred were from African countries. We know, for instance, that just one ship from Cairo that arrived in New York in April that year brought over 150 Egyptian Muslims.¹⁷⁴ Notable among the travelers were Aly Aly Arab, listed as a 'priest,' and Mohamed Nour, a 'fortune teller.' In addition, according to Hadji Cheriff, one thousand 'dervishes' competed for a medal at the Fair.¹⁷⁵ Although records are incomplete, it appears that many of these Muslims remained in the US after the Fair, often working at various small local fairs and subsequent World's Fairs—but, again, despite their African origin, it is uncertain to what extent these individuals had contact with African Americans.¹⁷⁶

It is also uncertain to what extent these Muslim performers contributed to the turn-of-the-century rise of a different current that carried Islamic themes into African American culture: individuals who claimed to be 'oriental,' and

171 Bowen, *HCTIUS*, 1:180; "Makes Attorney Party to Felony," *San Francisco Call*, July 15, 1908, 4; "A Real Bedouin of the Desert," *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle*, January 5, 1901, 12; "Fischer's," *San Francisco Call*, November 22, 1904, 9.

172 Simour, *Recollecting*, 87–88; Sie Hassan Ben Ali, "The Making of an Acrobat," *Billboard*, December 9, 1911, 17, 110.

173 Nance, *How the Arabian Nights*, 137–63.

174 See the ship manifest for the *Guidhall*, April 11, 1893, available from *Ancestry.com*. See also "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.

175 "A Real Bedouin."

176 Adele Linda Younis, "The Coming of the Arabic-Speaking People to the United States" (PhD diss., Boston University, 1961), 182–215, and see, e.g., see "Poor Mustapha Arjawalli," *New York Times*, July 22, 1894.

sometimes Muslim, 'mystics,' who either performed magic on vaudeville stages or ran independent enterprises through which they charged patrons fees for their fortunetelling and healing services.¹⁷⁷ Starting around the mid-nineteenth century, a number of American stage magicians began taking Muslim, Hindu, and Chinese names and donning pseudo-'oriental' clothing in order to appeal to the common Western belief that the East was still filled with practitioners of ancient magic.¹⁷⁸ Although the majority of the performers' characters emphasized an Indian, and not necessarily Muslim, connection, from the late 1880s and into the early 1900s several of the characters were presented as Muslim Egyptians, capitalizing simultaneously on the association of magic with both the Islamic Middle East and ancient Egypt.¹⁷⁹ It is worth noting here that the success of one white magician who took on a variety of oriental personas, William Robinson, came partly from tying his Muslim-Egyptian character to the popular North African acrobats, which he did by taking the name Achmed Ben Ali, Ben Ali being a common surname among the troupe leaders.¹⁸⁰

We know that African Americans were sometimes patrons of these magicians and mystics, and on a few rare occasions they were the 'oriental' performers themselves. In 1912, for example, the African American Prince Ali Mona, launched with his wife a relatively successful career exploiting Muslim themes as the 'human ouija boards'; they were in fact probably the people who inspired the numerous other Prince Alis that would appear in the 1920s and 1930s vaudeville theaters.¹⁸¹

A few years earlier, between the fall of 1907 and the summer of 1908, a self-described 'Mohammedan Hindu' named 'Professor' K. Abuhama Solomon earned notoriety in Denver and San Francisco as a clairvoyant, palm reader, and prophet who specialized, according to local white officials, in 'insulting'

177 For the connection between these performers and the wave of white American interest in Asian-majority religions, see Bowen, *HCTIUS*, 1:184–212.

178 For a general overview of the Western interest in 'oriental' magicians, see Sidney W. Clarke, *The Annals of Conjuring*, eds. Edwin A. Dawes and Todd Karr (Seattle: Miracle Factory, 2001), 373–400. For descriptions of various oriental/Indian/Muslim magician characters in the nineteenth century, see Jim Steinmeyer, *The Glorious Deception: The Double Life of William Robinson aka Chung Ling Soo the "Marvelous Chinese Conjuror"* (New York: Carroll & Graf, 2005), 68–159 and Fred Siegel, "The Vaudeville Conjuring Act" (PhD diss., New York University, 1993), 128–44.

179 See Steinmeyer, *Glorious*, 78–92.

180 *Ibid.*

181 On Prince Ali Mona's prewar beginnings, see Jim Magus, "A History of Blacks in Magic," *Linking Ring* (December 1983): 38. Also see Prince Ali Mona, "Lee's Creole Belles," *Chicago Defender* (Ntl. ed.), June 12, 1926, 7.

white women.¹⁸² Although it is unclear whether there was any substance to the charges, the evidence does indicate that Solomon tried to associate himself primarily with whites: his clientele was indeed mostly composed of white females and, despite the rumors that he was from either Georgia or Barbados, Solomon once shot a black man who called him a ‘Negro’ and he refused to see black clients on any day except Saturday.¹⁸³ Claiming to be the son of a black Muslim father and East Indian mother, Solomon took advantage of a wide variety of mystical tropes, sometimes emphasizing his identity as a ‘Tiger Mahatma,’ sometimes he was a ‘Mohammedan’ or a ‘Mohammedan Hindu Brahma,’ and sometimes he was even the ‘second Moses’ or a ‘twentieth-century King Solomon.’

More often, however, African American mystics, like their white counterparts, preferred a vaguer ‘Indian’ or ‘Hindu’ identity.¹⁸⁴ One such non-Muslim mystic was Newark’s ‘Dr.’ Thomas Drew, a self-proclaimed ‘East Indian’ from Virginia, who, when he first appeared in the white press in 1916, was labeled as a ‘voodoo’ doctor and claimed to be born with the common hoodoo power of ‘second sight.’¹⁸⁵ Interestingly, Drew revealed to Essex County officials that year that he had further developed his abilities “by correspondent courses” and through reading “a book which contained the wisdom of Indian yogis and men of magic.”¹⁸⁶ Drew, it seems, was a rather typical case during this era, as many of the early twentieth-century ‘oriental’ mystics had been influenced by the period’s numerous Hindu-focused books and pamphlets as well

182 Several advertisements for Solomon appeared in Denver and San Francisco newspapers during this period. For news articles, see the *Denver Post* for September 16 and 17, 1907; the *Denver Daily News* for September 17, 1907; and the *San Francisco Chronicle* for November 19, 1907; January 14, 1908; February 25, 26, and 27, 1908; and July 28, 1908.

183 See his advertisement “A Tiger Mahatma,” *Daily News* (Denver), September 8, 1907, society section.

184 As of yet, no scholar looking at black mystics has focused exclusively on pre-World War I individuals; however some are discussed in Philip Deslippe, “The Hindu in Hoodoo: Fake Yogis, Pseudo-Swamis, and the Manufacture of African American Folk Magic,” *Amerasia Journal* 40, no. 1 (2014): 34–56; Magus, “A History,” 38–43, 56; and Siegel, “Vaudeville Conjuring Act,” 153–57.

185 “Could Bend Bars, Still Sat in Jail,” *Newark Evening News*, June 27, 1916.

186 “Charm of Voodoo Is Drew’s Hoodoo,” *Newark Evening News*, July 17, 1916. Mystical correspondence course advertisements were rarely found in the black press, although one did appear in January 1915 in the black newspaper published in Richmond, Virginia, where Drew sometimes resided during that period. See Prof. H. Tate’s “Study Hypnotism” advertisement in the January 2 issue.

as the trend of using the word ‘Hindu’ as a synonym for ‘South Asian’ or even ‘magician.’¹⁸⁷ Soon, however, after the AAIR commenced, Drew and other mystics would abandon the preference for an Indian identity in favor of a Muslim one.

On occasion, African Americans concerned with racial improvement were also taking an interest in Islam and Muslims. The editors of Chicago’s short-lived *Champion Magazine*—who sought to ‘champion’ their race with the hopes that it would reach its highest potential—saw the black experience as highly similar to that of early Muslims. When, for instance, they argued in 1917 that African American religion needed a religious revival that better linked the black “spiritual self” with uplift goals, they explained that the African American was “crying for a Mohammed, a Prophet to come forth and give him the Koran of economic and intellectual welfare.”¹⁸⁸ As for the Great Migration of African Americans out of the South, the editors regarded this as a modern-day hijra, the famous Islamic migration of the persecuted Muslims from the oppressive Mecca to a welcoming Medina.¹⁸⁹ At the time, the word and concept of Mecca had become a powerful symbol in black uplift discourse; one of the first black-centric bookstores, George Young’s Harlem-based Young’s Book Exchange, embraced its nickname of ‘the Mecca of literature’ and Harlem itself was famously christened ‘the Mecca of the New Negro.’¹⁹⁰ Interestingly, Booker T. Washington—the famous black educator who was honored by uplift thinkers for encouraging African Americans to focus on building up their community through black-led education and entrepreneurship—also briefly commented on things Islamic when he noted in his autobiography that he had once observed a black man avoid a possible lynching after he convincingly claimed to be from Morocco.¹⁹¹ There was also Harry Dean—a black American of non-slave ancestry and the great-grandson of Paul Cuffe, a noted American captain

187 On ‘Hindu’ being used as a synonym for ‘magician,’ see, e.g., “Hindoo Illusionist Man of Mystery,” *Richmond Planet*, May 5, 1917, 5.

188 “What Our Religion Needs,” *Champion Magazine* 1, no. 7 (March 1917): 333–34.

189 “Labor to Organize Negroes,” *Champion Magazine* 1, no. 5 (January 1917): 240; “The Negro Hegira,” *Champion Magazine* 1, no. 6 (February 1917): 324.

190 Richard Benjamin Moore, “Africa Conscious Harlem,” *Freedomways* 3, no. 3 (Summer 1963): 315–34, reprinted in *Harlem. A Community in Transition*, 3rd ed., ed. John Henrik Clarke (New York: Citadel Press, 1964), 77; “The Mecca of Literature” (advertisement), *The Survey*, May 18, 1918, 204. The Harlem epithet was coined and popularized on the cover the March 1925 issue of *Survey Graphic*, edited by Alain Locke.

191 Booker T. Washington, *Up from Slavery: An Autobiography* (New York: A.L. Burt, 1901), 103.

and African nationalist of Ghanese descent¹⁹²—who, like his famous ancestor, became a ship captain and African nationalist whose vigorous efforts to build an empire in southern Africa eventually earned him the epithet of ‘the most dangerous colored man on the face of the earth.’¹⁹³ Dean was reportedly associated with the Muslim Mosque of London and “distributed Islamic literature in Chicago, Los Angeles, Seattle, and Washington State” in the early twentieth century.¹⁹⁴

The black nationalist who showed the greatest interest in Islam during this period was the prominent West Indian emigrationist Edward Wilmot Blyden. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Blyden became 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.¹⁹⁵ Since he ultimately believed that Christianity was still a superior religion, Blyden did not recommend conversion to Islam for African Americans,¹⁹⁶ but his endorsement of the religion, especially in his relatively famous book *Christianity, Islam, and the Negro Race* (1887), would not only leave a lasting mark on uplift-minded African American thinkers, it also made him popular among Muslim audiences in Africa and England.

A few educated immigrant Muslims were also attempting to connect directly with the black American community. One was Mohammad Barakatullah, an

192 Captain Harry Dean with Sterling North, *The Pedro Gorino: The Adventures of a Negro Sea Captain in Africa and on the Seven Seas in his Attempts to Found an Ethiopian Empire* (Boston; New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1929), 3–13.

193 “‘Most Dangerous Colored Man in the World’ Dead at Age 72,” *Afro-American*, August 3, 1935, 12.

194 Amir Nashid Ali Muhammad, *Muslims in America: Seven Centuries of History (1312–2000)* (Beltsville, MD: Amana Publications, 2001), 45. The apparent source of this rumor is Dean’s unpublished diaries, which I have not been able to examine, but are housed at the DuSable Museum of African American History in Chicago.

195 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, [1887] 1967). Blyden’s ideas may have indirectly influenced the conversion to Islam of the famous white Muslim Alexander Russell Webb through his likely reading of Canon Isaac Taylor; see Bowen, *HCTIUS*, 1:111–12 (on Blyden’s influence on Taylor; see Lynch, *Edward Wilmot Blyden*, 76).

196 Blyden believed that African Americans were blessed to have been given Christianity, even though it had been through slavery; see Lynch, *Edward Wilmot Blyden*, 71, 79–80.

Indian scholar and revolutionary writer.¹⁹⁷ While spending several years in England where he was an important member of the Liverpool Muslim mosque, Barakatullah made contact with the white American Muslim movement and in 1899 traveled to New York, apparently hoping to work with the US converts to establish an American mosque.¹⁹⁸ By that point, however, the white Muslim movement had collapsed, so Barakatullah spent his time in the US as a writer, lecturer, and teacher, frequently focusing on the topic of Sufism.¹⁹⁹ Passionately committed to India's independence, Barakatullah also 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,²⁰⁰ and on at least one occasion, he compared the treatment of Indians in British India to slavery.²⁰¹

In addition to these activities, having been influenced by the Muslim convert communities in both Liverpool and New York, both of which were very critical of the US's treatment of black people,²⁰² Barakatullah also attempted to directly

197 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 US. See Shafqat Razvi, "Mawli Barkatullah Bhopali (A Revolutionary Freedom Fighter in the Early 20th 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 Savanah* (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 (accessed August 21, 2012). I also rely on a translated chapter from an Urdu-language biography on Barakatullah.

198 For his connections with white American Muslims, see Bowen, *HCTIUS*, 1:178–81.

199 "Church and Religious News and Notes," *New-York Tribune*, July 4, 1908, 8. It is notable that while in the US, 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.'

200 "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.

201 "Hindoos Treated as Slaves," *Irish World*, December 12, 1903, 2.

202 See copies of, in addition to Brent Singleton, "'That Ye May Know Each Other': Late Victorian Interactions between British and West African Muslims," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 29, no. 3 (2009): 369–85, the late-nineteenth-century newspapers the *Crescent* and *Moslem World*; both consistently ran articles criticizing the US treatment of African Americans. It is noteworthy that Blyden may have been mentioned more times

link his anti-colonial activities with those of African Americans. In 1903, he 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 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.”²⁰³

Unfortunately, the extent of Barakatullah’s impact on pre-1920 African Americans is unknown. So far, the only located evidence is a brief editorial comment made in a Washington, DC African American newspaper: the writer flippantly dismissed Barakatullah’s idea as simply another unreasonable proposal for the uplift of African Americans.²⁰⁴

In 1909, Barakatullah left the US 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 US, which was, notably, in the early years of the AAIR, Barakatullah affiliated himself with Marcus Garvey and various African Amer-

in the *Crescent* than almost any other contemporary figure; only the *Crescent*’s Liverpool Muslim leader, Abdullah Quilliam, and Abdul Hamid II, the Ottoman ruler, were discussed more frequently. Despite the journal being sold in the US, 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 the leading American Muslim and editor of *Moslem World*, Alexander Russell 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.

203 Mohammad Barakatullah Maulavie, “White and Black in the South,” *New-York Tribune*, May 3, 1903, 11.

204 *Colored American*, November 28, 1903, 6.

ican 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 US African American culture had undergone a dramatic transformation that was contributing to the emergence of the AAIR and making American blacks significantly more receptive to men like Barakatullah.

But Barakatullah was not the only educated Muslim who would appear in the black community in the years before and during the First World War. In the Midwest a recently-arrived Sudanese Muslim teacher named Satti Majid may have converted a few African Americans to Islam in Detroit before 1920. However, evidence from this period is weak, whereas his subsequent activities left a significant evidentiary trail and will be discussed in part 2. On the West Coast, meanwhile, another seemingly well-educated Muslim would lead a very different but fairly well-documented career. Lucius Lehman had first made a name for himself in Los Angeles in the 1890s when he successfully served as his own attorney at a trial for a burglary charge.²⁰⁵ Lehman displayed an exceptional mind and claimed at various times to have been born to African parents (at one point he insisted he was the scion of a Sudanese woman and a son of Napoleon) and educated in Europe for diplomatic service. In 1906, after he had begun telling people he was a Muslim who could speak at least a dozen languages, Lehman became involved in the birth of the Pentecostal movement when he was invited to the Pentecostals' famous first church on Azusa Street to translate the messages that were being spoken in tongues. There, Lehman said he heard a language that only he could understand and that the message conveyed converted him to Christianity.²⁰⁶ However, it took just a month for him to leave the group and by the 1910s, while he was serving a sentence in San Quentin Prison after being convicted of a murder charge, he was once again identifying as a Muslim and even claiming to be a Muslim 'priest.' Although we do not know if he was converting anyone at this time, his activities during the AAIR, as we will later see, have ensured his place in the history of African American Islam.

Of those Muslims who appeared both before and during the AAIR, however, it was Rev. P.D. Solomon, DD, LLD (Doctor of Divinity, Doctor of Laws)

205 The following account is based on Patrick D. Bowen, "The Colored Genius: Lucius Lehman and the Californian Roots of Modern African American Islam," *Culture* 8, no. 2 (spring 2013).

206 "Pentecost in Los Angeles, Cal.," *Pentecost Herald*, October 3, 1906, 7; "Baba Bharati Says Not a Language," *Los Angeles Times*, September 19, 1906, sect. 11, 1.

who left the most traces of his pre-1920 activities in America.²⁰⁷ The earliest date that can be confidently tied to Solomon is December 1905, when he traveled to Washington, DC where he was attempting to encourage the US government to establish a program to enable all African Americans to move near the Niger River in West Africa.²⁰⁸ There, he hoped, African Americans “could form a colony of their own, govern themselves, and live together as a tribe or nation.”²⁰⁹ Solomon reportedly had a meeting with Senator John T. Morgan and desired to discuss the issue with President Roosevelt as well.²¹⁰ Apparently impressing the local African American community, soon after his Washington visit, Solomon was appointed to be a representative of Rev. Simon P.W. Drew’s prominent National Negro Baptist Evangelical Convention,²¹¹ and within a short time he was making speeches for various black Christian congregations in the region.²¹² In June 1906 he gave two well-received speeches at Maryland’s annual Colored Baptist Convention, after which he sold several books of unknown content to the Convention’s interested attendees.²¹³ According to newspaper accounts from the period, Solomon, who boasted he could speak

207 In most newspaper accounts from the period, Solomon’s claimed doctorates (the DD, LL.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 6th, 7th, and 8th, 1906* (Baltimore: The ‘Owl’ Print, 1906), 14. For more on Solomon, see Patrick D. Bowen, “Abdul Hamid Suleiman and the Origins of the Moorish Science Temple,” *Journal of Race, Ethnicity, and Religion* 2, no. 10 (September 2011): 1–54 and *idem.*, “Prince D. Solomon and the Birth of African-American Islam,” *Journal of Theta Alpha Kappa* 38, no. 1 (spring 2014): 1–19.

208 “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.

209 “Exodus to Africa.”

210 I should point out, however, that there is no mention of Solomon in the papers of Morgan that have been microfilmed by the Library of Congress.

211 “Knows Many Languages,” *Washington Post*, December 23, 1905, 12. On Rev. Simon P.W. Drew, 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.

212 “Knows Many Languages”; “Sunday Services in the Churches,” *Washington Post*, December 23, 1905, B4; “Items on the Wing,” *Washington Bee*, January 13, 1906, 5.

213 “Colored Baptists,” *The Sun* (Baltimore), June 10, 1906, 7; Colored Baptist Convention of the State of Maryland, *Minutes*, 11, 14.

“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.’”²¹⁴

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 ‘Mandingo’ tribe and was originally from the Sudan, though the last place he had resided in Africa was in Alexandria, Egypt.²¹⁵ ‘Prince Solomon,’ as one newspaper called him, also claimed British ties, saying he was in the US “at the instigation of England [...] [whence he had] a number of letters and credentials.”²¹⁶ 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 before converting to Christianity after discussing religious issues with an American missionary.

After his 1905/1906 appearance, however, 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 that he was a “Black Jew” and that he had 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.²¹⁷ This Prince Solomon, it seems, was, essentially, a hoodoo doctor.

It appears that by 1909/1910, P.D. 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 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.”²¹⁸ In October 1909, ‘Dr.’ Prince De Solomon, along with a Rev. R.R. Mont and a Rev.

214 “Knows Many Languages”; “Exodus to Africa.”

215 While the Malinke (the ethnic group traditionally identified as ‘Mandingo’) have traditionally been primarily located in West Africa, some Malinke have lived in the western regions of today’s Sudan and South Sudan.

216 “Exodus to Africa.”

217 “‘Prince Solomon’ Goes to Jail,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 18, 1908, 5; “‘Black Jew’ Convicted,” *New York Daily Tribune*, September 18, 1908, 7.

218 1910 United States Federal Census, *Ancestry.com*.

Robert Passley, spoke at a New York City political meeting held at a place called the Clubhouse.²¹⁹ Then, on February 3, 1910, 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.²²⁰ On February 20, a news brief indicated that a Henry Ratteray of Long Island City was made the director of the organization.²²¹ There is, unfortunately, almost no information about De Solomon's co-leaders.²²²

The establishment of this Mecca Medina Temple is very important for a number of reasons. First of all, its references to the Islamic world are reflective of P.D. Solomon's claimed religious background. It is also notable that after this point there are few reports about an African 'Reverend' Solomon in the US—from then on the references are mostly to a 'Doctor' and 'Prince' Solomon; P.D. Solomon, it seems, was perhaps slowly shedding his Christian and Jewish identities. But the title of this organization also reflects Masonry's interest in Islam at the time, which was being reflected in the popular Islam-oriented para-Masonic Shriner movement of the Shriners. Officially known as the Ancient Arabic Nobles of the Mystic Shrine, the Shriners had been founded by white New York Masons in the early 1870s perhaps as a club for fraternal relaxation, but by the 1890s and early 1900s, after the movement had established groups throughout the country, several leading members possessed a serious interest in Islam.²²³ Because they were excluded from the white Shriner movement, African Americans had their own version of the Shrine, which had been founded in 1893 by one John G. Jones after he reportedly was inducted into an Islamic esoteric order by a Muslim named Rofelt Pasha who was supposedly

219 "Political Meetings," *Evening Post* (New York), October 28, 1909, 7. Rev. Passley may not have been the most upstanding man of the cloth, as in 1912 it was reported that the reverend, who was the pastor of the Zion Methodist Church at 134th St. and 5th Avenue, 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.

220 "Negro Free Masons," *The Sun* (New York), February 4, 1910, 2; "Negro Free Masons Incorporate," *New Brunswick Times*, February 4, 1910, 2.

221 "Long Island Directors," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, February 20, 1910, 2. In Bowen, "Abdul Hamid Suleiman," Ratteray's name is mistakenly written as "Ratleray."

222 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.

223 See Bowen, *HCTIUS*, 1:119–23, 147–48, 172.

visiting that year's World's Fair.²²⁴ Jones happened to be a frequent creator of break-off Masonic organizations, and the black Shriner community, which borrowed most of its rituals and regalia from its white counterpart,²²⁵ was almost certainly simply another one of his Masonic schemes. But because 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, once it was recognized that the black Shriner orders could be relatively popular, a number of men started their own competing black Shriner groups.²²⁶ Although some scholars have tried to suggest that Islam has long had a special importance for African American Freemasons by pointing to historical connections between African Muslims and Freemasonry,²²⁷ the existence of these connections did not mean that Islam was put to the forefront in a serious way. It is noteworthy, in this regard, that Jones and later black Shriners, like the white Shriners, insisted that African American Shriners were not Muslims, but were simply inspired by Islamic themes.²²⁸

But De Solomon's Mecca Medina Temple may have been different. As we will see in Chapter 3, it is extremely likely that he was promoting a serious appreciation of Islam in this group, and may have even required conversion to the religion. Nevertheless it does not seem that the Mecca Medina Temple was especially successful in the 1910s. After its incorporation, De Solomon appears in newspapers only intermittently for the next ten years, and the Mecca Medina Temple is almost never mentioned. A 1913 news brief, for instance, indicates

224 The most authoritative and complete account of the black Shriners remains Walkes, *History of the Shrine*.

225 For an overview of Shriner history, see Fred Van Deventer, *Parade to Glory: The Story of the Shriners and their Hospitals for Crippled Children* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1959). For discussions about the Shriners' connections with white converts to Islam, see Bowen, *HCTIUS*, 1:119–23, 135–36, 144–59.

226 Walkes, *History of the Shrine*, 49–55.

227 E.g., Dannin, *Black Pilgrimage*, 18–25. It is worth pointing out here that some importance had been placed on the fact that black Masons held at their lodge a public dinner for the freed Muslim slave Abd ar-Rahman—but what is sometimes ignored is that there was also a meeting held for Abd ar-Rahman at a white Masonic lodge; see Alford, *Prince among Slaves*, 139, 161–64.

228 See Jones's *The Secret Ritual of the Secret Work of the Ancient Arabic Order of Nobles of the Mystic Shrine* (Washington, DC: 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.

only that the man was being arraigned on a complaint from his wife, Lulu, who said he had threatened to murder her.²²⁹ 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, but the news article contains no mention of Masonry having been discussed.²³⁰ Then, in 1916, “Rev. Solomon, a prince from Egypt” gave a lecture at a black church in Bridgeton, New Jersey, and again Masonry is not even hinted at.²³¹

The last known appearance of an African Prince Solomon in the US comes in 1920. The census from that year, recorded in January, lists a Dr. Prince D. Solomon, who was reported as being a single, black, fifty-year-old Arabic-speaking Egyptian. His profession is listed as “minister” and he was residing as a boarder in the borough of Mercer, Pennsylvania.²³² That July, in Youngstown, Ohio, just thirty miles from Mercer, a Mecca Medina Temple of A.F. & A.M. filed for incorporation.²³³ 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 very suggestive of a connection. This Mecca Medina Temple was therefore possibly an attempt by Solomon to revive his Islamic Masonry, although it seems to have quickly failed, as there are no later traces of the Pennsylvania group.

Still, 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 esotericist-conjurer from Egyptian-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.

229 “Threatened His Wife,” *Poughkeepsie New York Daily Eagle*, February [25?], 1913, [8?].

230 N.C. Johns, “Spiritualism,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, May 15, 1915, 2.

231 “A.M.E.,” *Bridgeton Evening News*, May 27, 1916, 4.

232 1920 United States Federal Census, *Ancestry.com*, accessed August 6, 2011.

233 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.

For all of De Solomon and others' efforts, however, it seems that prior to 1920, the idea that African Americans should convert to Islam was largely falling on deaf ears. Muslims had been part of the enslaved and freeborn population, but they had converted few and were not major shapers of African American religiosity. The religion of the black folk, which had been so profoundly influenced by slavery and Emancipation, was dominated by a mix of liberationist Christianity with non-Muslim West African and Central West African traditions—if there were Islamic elements present, they had lost their distinctive character. There did exist a growing sense of black nationalism and the desire to embrace Masonic and esoteric knowledge, and all of these currents had some ties to Islam, but Islam itself was still not especially popular in black American life. Islam had not, in other words, found a strong connection with a preexisting religious market. It would therefore take a new institutional change—a new reterritorialization—to put African American religious culture on a path to accept Islam as a legitimate religious identity. And when it did so, African American religiosity would be forever transformed.

PART 2

The Years 1920–1945



A Universal Transformation

From 1920 to 1945 somewhere between 8,000 and 18,000 African Americans converted to Islam.¹ This was an unprecedented event in American religious history. As we have seen, the evidence suggests that during both the slavery and post-Emancipation eras, black conversion to Islam was extremely rare. Whites were not becoming Muslims in large numbers either; probably no more than one or two hundred had accepted the religion between the early nineteenth century and 1920.² When, then, over one thousand African Americans embraced Islam in just the early 1920s it was clear that the United States had entered into a new religious era.

The thousands of African Americans who converted to Islam between 1920 and 1945 were members of the black folk. They were almost always individuals who had been born in the rural South, were of very limited education, and had migrated to the North to escape the extreme poverty and racist violence that were part of the Southern way of life. These individuals, furthermore, were often the children and grandchildren of slaves and in many cases had been raised on the informal culture and hidden transcripts that had been passed on in the black community since slavery began. Most were probably also Christian in some sense, having at least been exposed to the folk Christianity that by the early twentieth century permeated Southern black culture.

For these people, embracing an Islamic identity was for the most part not motivated by a book-informed liberal philosophy, as it had been for many whites. On the contrary, it was regarded as a confirmation of what they already believed. They had become convinced that the folk culture, family stories, and vague feelings about identity with which they were familiar were actually remnants of an Islam that had been practiced by their ancestors in Africa. Despite the fact that most of these individuals were not descendants of Muslim slaves and the 'Islam' that they were being taught was highly unorthodox, containing numerous concepts from white esoteric writings and few references to mainstream Muslim doctrines, Islam did not appear to them to be some

1 This estimate is based on the estimates for the sizes of the individual Muslim groups that will be discussed over the next several chapters in both the main text body and the footnotes.

2 See Bowen, *HCTIUS*, 1: chapter 6, esp. 167–69.

strange, foreign creature. This first generation of Muslim converts genuinely believed that they were returning to the religion of their forefathers.

How can we account for this? And how can we account for the fact that only some of the many Muslim groups that appeared became popular?

Part of the answer to these questions, at least for the first era of Islamic conversion, is that the teachings of the popular African American Islamic movements contained—or at least were believed to have contained—numerous elements from black folk religion, many of which had not previously been institutionalized. The Islamic movements, in other words, were largely reterritorializations of existing religious currents and they appealed to many people precisely because these people were already familiar with them. Yet this is only part of the answer, as it does not fully explain the rapid and diverse spread of Islam in African American culture starting in the 1920s. After all, the hoodoo ‘circles’ and spiritual churches discussed in part 1 obviously contained numerous folk religious elements, but they did not become national movements with thousands of members. For Islam to have been able to spread on a large scale so suddenly there was one other necessary component: a dramatic mass reconfiguration—a reterritorializing institutional change—of African American religious life, one that would make black culture open to the possibility that African Americans could legitimately identify and organize as Muslims.

The principal argument of part 2 is that Islam was able to thrive only after it was legitimized in the black community in the early 1920s by Marcus Garvey’s institution-changing black nationalist movement and, subsequently, leaders knowledgeable of black folk religion successfully blended that religion with black nationalism, symbols of Islam, and high-minded goals to transform their community. Almost as soon as these important events occurred, Islamic organizations and independent figures began springing up left and right and the AAIR was born. What makes the first era of the AAIR especially unique is the fact that although some of the Muslim groups of this era were much larger than others, overall the evidence suggests that diversity—detritorialization—reigned and no one Islamic organization unquestionably dominated the Muslim market. It seems, in fact, that the cultural pole—the gravitational center—of the first era of the AAIR was not any one Islamic organization, but rather Garvey’s black nationalism, as it had a lingering presence in virtually all of the Muslim groups of this period, even when they underwent schisms and ideological transformations.

Because of the great significance of Garvey, part 2 begins, in the present chapter, with a brief introduction to his movement and how it came to achieve the enormous impact that it would have on African American culture. Although some of the early connections between Islam and Garvey’s move-

ment are discussed, the focus of this chapter is not on Islam but on what allowed Garvey to begin to create the reterritorializing institutional change that led to Islam gaining prominence in the black community. Several previous studies of Garvey's movement have theorized about Garvey's rise and influence, but they have generally failed to analyze Garveyism using sociological perspectives related to institutional growth, network theory, and sociology of religion. As we will see over the course of this book, such perspectives, when built on a strong historical foundation, help make clear not only the precise mechanisms that enabled various African American organizations to thrive, but also how exactly Garvey's movement fits into the broader historical and sociological context of African American religious history, and the AAIR in particular. As this chapter argues, the rise and influence of Garvey's movement was largely due to its employing the classic tools of twentieth-century mass movement development: effective use of mass media; offering programs, charismatic leaders, and teachings that appealed to a wide variety of people; and, most importantly, recruiting preexisting social networks.

The Age of Garvey

In the years immediately following World War I, Marcus Garvey's black nationalist movement, the Universal Negro Improvement Association, spread like wildfire in the black community.³ By the early 1920s, worldwide the UNIA had gained perhaps nearly 100,000 official members and at least that same number of non-registered believers.⁴ 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, the UNIA had more New York members than any other local African American organization, making it the most influential African American movement in the city that was fast becoming known as the 'capital of the Black world.'⁵ The UNIA's impact on

3 The title for this section is taken from Adam Ewing, *The Age of Garvey: How a Jamaican Activist Created a Mass Movement and Changed Global Black Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014). This section relies heavily on, in addition to several smaller studies, Robert A. Hill, ed., *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers* [hereafter, *Garvey Papers*], 11 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983–2011).

4 E. David Cronon, *Black Moses: The Story of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), 204–07.

5 Cronon, *Black Moses*, 206; On Harlem's influence over the broader African American culture

the wider African American culture was therefore tremendous. Garvey's movement did not simply 'influence' black life; it gave rise to a new institutional change in African American culture.

Unfortunately, due to a lack of complete records there are still many questions we cannot answer about the UNIA's growth in the US. However, enough research has been produced on both the larger movement and its local branches that we can draw a few somewhat refined conclusions that will help us see things deeper than the broad generalizations that are now widely accepted. It is, for instance, generally understood that the UNIA benefitted from the Great Migration of African Americans out of the South, resentment towards Jim Crow and white racism generally, older black nationalist currents, and the worldwide desire for liberation of all colonized and oppressed peoples that emerged after the First World War.⁶ It has also frequently been observed that a major reason for the movement's growth was that Garvey himself was a gifted orator, organizer, and publicist.⁷ None of these factors, however, satisfactorily explain either why for the first three years of his activities in the US Garvey was unable to gain more than a few thousand followers and why other African American groups—many of which had their own gifted orators, organizers, and publications—did not have anything close to the success of Garvey. It is argued here, then, that something else better explains the UNIA's expansion: the group's ability to both utilize mass media and recruit leaders from preexisting formal and informal African American communities. The reason that Garvey would have such a significant impact on black religious culture in particular is that many of these leaders and communities were church-based, which meant that, because of his gaining a massive following, Garvey possessed the means to influence African American religiosity at a level no one else had at the time.

Initially, growth for the UNIA was slow. The organization had been founded in Jamaica in 1914 when Garvey, then just twenty-six years old, brought together a few friends to form what was originally called the Jamaican Improvement Association.⁸ Garvey, however, had ambitions of expanding the organization's

during this period, see Nathan I. Huggins, *Harlem Renaissance* (New York: Oxford University Press, [1971] 2007), 13–18.

6 On the postwar global desire for self-determination and its impact on Garveyism internationally, see, e.g., Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); Ewing, *Age of Garvey*.

7 Cronon, *Black Moses*, 4.

8 Colin Grant, *Negro with a Hat: The Rise and Fall of Marcus Garvey* (New York: Oxford University

activities. In the spring of 1916, he traveled to the US in order to meet Booker T. Washington and learn about his Tuskegee Institute, which he hoped he could replicate in Jamaica. But Washington died before Garvey had arrived, forcing the ambitious young nationalist to change his plans. Starting from New York where he had first ported, Garvey began a year-long national lecture tour, reportedly visiting thirty-eight states, but, despite turning his Jamaican Improvement Association into the Universal Negro Improvement Association, he apparently failed to organize any North American branches at the time.⁹ After returning to Harlem, in May 1917 Garvey finally created the first official US UNIA division with thirteen members, most of whom were Caribbean immigrants like himself. Over the summer, due to his constant street lecturing and his promotion of various nationalistic and mutual aid ideas and movements, the New York group grew significantly—although it probably did not gain the 600 to 1,000 members that Garvey claimed.¹⁰ Nevertheless, competing interests in the organization led to schisms, and by the end of the year only fifty people remained.¹¹ Still, Garvey would not give up. He continued to work to grow his base in the New York metropolitan area, later claiming to have rebuilt the local group to several thousand members by the summer of 1918.¹² In August of that year, Garvey also added to his movement what would be one of the most important tools for its success: the UNIA's own newspaper, the *Negro World*. Although at first the paper only had around one thousand subscribers, with a large proportion probably coming from New York City, within a year the number had reportedly shot up to fifty thousand.¹³

Press, 2008), 8, 52–62; Theodore G. Vincent, *Black Power and the Garvey Movement* (Berkeley: Ramparts Press, [1971]), 98.

- 9 Although he initially spoke about the social and economic conditions in Jamaica in order to raise funds for projects for his original group, by late 1916 Garvey was promoting the group as the 'Universal Negro Improvement Association of Jamaica,' and was increasingly reframing his message to the urging of all African-descended people to unite. Hill, *Garvey Papers*, 1:194; "Prof. M. Garvey to Speak in St. Louis," *St. Louis Argus*, December 15, 1916, 1; Marcus Garvey, Jr., "West Indies in the Mirror of Truth," *Champion Magazine* 1, no. 5 (January 1917): 267–68.
- 10 Hill, *Garvey Papers*, 1:234n1; Vincent, *Black Power*, 100.
- 11 Cronon, *Black Moses*, 42–43; Vincent, *Black Power*, 100. This seems to be confirmed by the numbers mentioned in Hill, *Garvey Papers*, 1:311–12.
- 12 Cronon, *Black Moses*, 43. There is evidence that the New York membership included people from Newark: when Garvey was calling people to attend a mass meeting in New York in April 1919, he invited people from Newark; and Garvey reportedly visited the city often; Hill, *Garvey Papers*, 1:411; 5:659n11.
- 13 Hill, *Garvey Papers*, 1:495; 2:13.

While the *Negro World* itself was invaluable for stimulating interest in Garvey's message,¹⁴ at the time the UNIA's growth still relied significantly on Garvey's continuing to give lectures across the country—and his ability to do that was helped a great deal by the support of the black church. As was apparently the case during his initial tour in 1916, when Garvey was looking for places to host his lectures in the cities he visited, he was often welcomed by black churches of a variety of denominations.¹⁵ With black nationalism still a strong element within the African American religious community, churches proved to be invaluable recruiting grounds early on in the movement's development; in fact, several of the first US UNIA branches established outside of New York developed in the wake of Garvey's lectures at black churches in the area.¹⁶ By late February 1919, Garvey was claiming to have “thousands” of UNIA members “in nearly every large city situated above the Mason Dixon line,” and in June he was saying there were UNIA divisions in twenty-five states.¹⁷ Although Garvey was almost certainly exaggerating—a government report filed that April showed that there were in fact only five divisions: in New York, Chicago, Baltimore, Washington, DC, and Newport News, Virginia—even government agents were acknowledging the institutional shift that Garvey was creating, saying that his popularity “mark[ed] a transfer of Negro leadership from the more conservative leaders to others of a radical type.”¹⁸ By mid-summer, although Garvey was now declaring that the UNIA was gaining “millions” of converts, the government had confirmed that the movement had in fact grown to 6,000 members, and at least several hundred more joined in the late summer after Garvey held meetings at black churches in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, and the first West Coast division was organized with strong church ties in San Diego.¹⁹

14 For example, in the spring and summer of 1919, whites were reporting that African Americans in Pine Bluff, Arkansas and Jacksonville, Florida were being ‘agitated’ by the paper so much that they were causing ‘unrest’ in their regions; Hill, *Garvey Papers*, 1:386, 479.

15 See, e.g., “Prof. M. Garvey to Speak in St. Louis”; Hill, *Garvey Papers*, 1:202, 203, 222, 328–36, 339–40, 366.

16 See, e.g., Hill, *Garvey Papers*, 1:328–36, 339–40, 366.

17 Hill, *Garvey Papers*, 1:373, 504.

18 Hill, *Garvey Papers*, 1:401–02.

19 In September, Garvey insisted that the New York branch alone had 7,500 members. Hill, *Garvey Papers*, 1:495, 491–93; 2:27–29, 31; 2:28; 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), 53; “San Diego Division Holds Grand Celebration Aug. 31, 1921,” *Negro World*, September 17, 1921, 11.

In the following two years, UNIA growth was nothing short of remarkable. Between the late fall of 1919 and August 1920, when the movement held its large annual convention, the extant evidence suggests that new divisions were founded in at least fourteen states.²⁰ Participants at the convention, who saw

20 Hill, *Garvey Papers*, 2:437, 447, 492–93; 3:165–66; Tolbert, *Black Los Angeles*, 53–54; Mary G. Rolinson, *Grassroots Garveyism: The Universal Negro Improvement Association in the Rural South, 1920–1927* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 202; “Divisions of the UNIA, 1925–1927,” Universal Negro Improvement Association Records of the Central Division (New York), 1918–59, Schomburg Center, New York Public Library, microfilm, Reel 1, Series A, Box 2, Section A16. The states were California, Connecticut, New York, Delaware, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Ohio, New Jersey, Massachusetts, Florida, Mississippi, and Virginia.

To use the latter source (“Divisions of the UNIA, 1925–1927”), which arranges the divisions by state, I listed the divisions by order of their division number, and then attempted to correlate division numbers with the known founding dates of divisions and other important chronological markers (such as the fact that divisions 1 through 95 were all organized and chartered prior to August 1, 1920). This is admittedly an imperfect method since we know that some divisions were not given division numbers until well after they were organized. For example, San Diego’s division 153 was organized around August 1919, but was given a division number that came after some of the divisions that were organized between September and October 1920, such as Detroit’s division 125, Miami’s division 136, and New Orleans’ division 149. It appears that division numbers came with a group’s official charter, which was issued by the Executive Council of the Parent Body in New York; and the order and pattern in which charters were issued sometimes could vary, especially after August 1920 when the Executive Council was apparently flooded with applications for charters. It often appears that geographically close divisions were issued charters and division numbers around the same time, despite those divisions having been established at very different dates. The California divisions are an excellent example of this, since we know that San Francisco group was probably not organized before mid-1920, yet its division number, 148, was issued on October 20, 1920, which was *prior* to those of San Diego (153) and Los Angeles (156), both of which were founded earlier than the San Francisco division. Nevertheless, for the most part, the division number order, particularly for the first one hundred divisions, seems to roughly correspond to the known division founding and activity dates, and thus it can give us a rough estimate of the patterns of division creation. See “Divisions of the UNIA, 1925–1927”; Rolinson, *Grassroots Garveyism*, 202; Tolbert, *Black Los Angeles*, 53; “San Diego Division Holds Grand Celebration Aug. 31, 1921”; Jeannette Smith-Irvin, *Footsoldiers of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (Their Own Words)* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 1989), 46; Kip Vought, “Racial Stirrings in Colored Town: The UNIA in Miami during the 1920s,” *TEQUESTA* 60 (2000): 57, 59; Claudrena N. Harold, *The Rise and Fall of the Garvey Movement in the Urban South, 1918–1942* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 30, 64; W.A.U. Deane, “San Francisco Division Mourns Loss of A Great Leader,” *Negro World*, January 5, 1924, 7.

not only Garvey himself but also the mass support of thousands of Garveyites hailing from a wide variety of locations, felt incredibly inspired, and this led to a number of attendees immediately setting out to form additional divisions across the country.²¹ Judging by the information we have concerning the establishment of divisions in the South—the US region with the highest concentration of UNIA divisions—the rate of organizing increased dramatically between August 1, 1920 and August 1, 1921, with over 100 divisions being created in the South that year (out of the 322 new divisions created worldwide during that time frame).²² Then, an additional 215 Southern divisions (out of 423 new divisions worldwide) were organized and chartered in just the few months around August 1921.²³ With urban divisions often possessing 200–300 members, and bigger ones sometimes with 3,000 or more, it is easy to see how, at its peak in late 1921, a conservative estimate would put the movement, with its nearly 900 divisions at the time, at over 80,000 official members and 100,000 non-registered believers.²⁴ It seems, then, that a Cleveland reporter was indeed justified in stating, in January 1921, that “the masses are with Garvey. It is a fact that cannot be denied.”²⁵

What can explain this phenomenal growth, which was unprecedented and would not be duplicated by any other single movement in African American history? The answer is by no means a simple one, since numerous motivations for joining have been both recorded and theorized. One of Garvey’s early biographers, for instance, argued that it was Garvey himself, that he was able to persuade people to join through his powerful speeches and moving essays that were distributed through the *Negro World*.²⁶ No doubt, few of those who heard Garvey speak, whether white or black, could deny that he had, as one observer described it, a “spell-binding oratory.”²⁷ As a young man, Garvey had studied the speech styles of Jamaican black preachers and later had honed his skills nightly in Harlem’s intensely competitive street corner preaching

21 See, e.g., Smith-Irvin, *Footsoldiers*, 46; Harold, *Rise and Fall*, 64; Hill, *Garvey Papers*, 3:466–70; “Divisions of the UNIA, 1925–1927.”

22 Rolinson, *Grassroots Garveyism*, 202.

23 Ibid.

24 Cronon, *Black Moses*, 204–07.

25 Hill, *Garvey Papers*, 3:133.

26 Cronon, *Black Moses*, 4.

27 Hill, *Garvey Papers*, 3:133. As one government informant noted, Garvey’s speech had the power to transform people: “There will eventually be trouble, not so much from what [Garvey] says, but what the people think about themselves after he talks”; Hill, *Garvey Papers*, 2:401.

scene.²⁸ His talents as a writer and publicist had been cultivated from a young age as well through his work on Jamaican and British journals; by the time he created the *Negro World*, his writing and editorial skills by themselves had the power to spark race pride and debate in locations in which Garvey had never even personally set foot.²⁹

But, according to former Garveyites, there were several other factors beyond Garvey's communication abilities that brought individuals into the movement. It seems, for instance, that some people attended the organization's meetings primarily for their abundance of entertainment: the UNIA attracted numerous talented speakers, divisions frequently held concerts and parades, and, in the days before African Americans had widespread access to radios, discussions of current events at the meetings were a good source of national and world news.³⁰ But there were of course several more serious reasons for joining up with the movement as well. One was camaraderie. Because of the extreme difficulty of life for African Americans at the time, attending UNIA meetings with those who were suffering the same pains could give one the feeling of communal effervescence that the famous sociologist Emile Durkheim had recently identified as the glue in community identity.³¹ Others were undoubtedly interested in Garvey's plans to send African Americans to live in Liberia, the old emigrationist goal that still had many adherents in the 1920s. On the other hand, sometimes Garveyites were motivated by the desire to improve African Americans' lives in the US. For instance, in 1924 many divisions, at the advice of the UNIA headquarters, began registering local African Americans to vote in order to develop voting blocs that they would use to create political influence; it was an attractive project for those who had despaired of African Americans ever having a political voice in the United States.³²

Another practical motivation was the desire to obtain physical protection from racist white violence.³³ It cannot be considered a coincidence that the years of the UNIA's rapid expansion correspond almost perfectly with the burst of racist white terrorism after World War I. In an era when violent debt

28 Hill, *Garvey Papers*, 1:244–45.

29 See, e.g., Hill, *Garvey Papers*, 1:386, 479.

30 Smith-Irvin, *Footsoldiers*, 26–27.

31 See *Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912).

32 E.g., "Four Million Negroes of the Universal Negro Improvement Association to Vote and Work Together in November," *Negro World*, August 9, 1924, 1; "Registrations Total 53,000," *Detroit Free Press*, July 22, 1924, 7; "Blake Sounds Klan Warning," *Detroit Free Press*, October 30, 1924, 3.

33 See, e.g., Hill, *Garvey Papers*, 1:290–91.

slavery was still going strong, the postwar period saw not only a small surge in lynchings, but also rises in both Ku Klux Klan activities and anti-black riots, particularly in 1919.³⁴ It seems, in fact, that the UNIA's 1919 boost in membership was in large part directly due to the desire for protection after that summer's riots in Washington and Chicago.³⁵ In his speeches, Garvey directly addressed the issue, calling for the mobilization of the black masses so that they could organize for self-defense,³⁶ and by the early fall, he had given substance to his rhetoric by reportedly establishing what was described as "a well drilled military organization for the purpose of protection and to prevent anyone from disturbing the meetings."³⁷ Although apparently initially a New York-only operation, the auxiliary was expanded in January 1920 when Garvey had his Newport News division—one of his largest—organize its male members into paramilitary companies of sixty-four men under the leadership of the division's First World War veterans, who used US Army regulations as the bases for the company's rules and structures.³⁸ Within a few months, the 'African Legion' had become a centrally-controlled auxiliary headed by Newport News Garveyites. The Legion established companies in UNIA branches throughout the country and had each run weekly drills, perform marches for both division and national meetings, and patrol outside meeting places, much like the guards of the slave-era brush arbor.³⁹ Veterans, it seems, were especially drawn to the paramilitary group, particularly in Chicago, where half of the city's famed 8th Illinois Infantry Regiment were reportedly members of the local Legion and were, according to one source, "ready for action."⁴⁰

34 See Daniel, *Shadow of Slavery*, 110–48; Tolnay and Beck, *A Festival of Violence*, 30; David M. Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism: The History of the Ku Klux Klan* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1987); Kenneth T. Jackson, *The Ku Klux Klan in the City 1915–1930* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967); Cameron McWhirter, *Red Summer: The Summer of 1919 and the Awakening of Black America* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2011); David F. Krugler, *1919, The Year of Racial Violence: How African Americans Fought Back* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

35 Hill, *Garvey Papers*, 1:491–93; 2:57.

36 Hill, *Garvey Papers*, 1:287, 305–306, 311.

37 Hill, *Garvey Papers*, 2:19.

38 Hill, *Garvey Papers*, 2:201–03.

39 The existence, activities, and character of African Legions varied somewhat from division to division, partly because one of the auxiliary's leaders, Captain E.L. Gaines, was frequently ordered out of towns by the local white authorities. Hill, *Garvey Papers*, 2:492–93; 3:163; 5:568–69; Nathaniel Omar, "Former Garveyite Soldiers for New World Freedom," *Bilalian News*, March 26, 1976, 1, 12.

40 Hill, *Garvey Papers*, 3:165.

Evidence suggests that although at first the African Legion did not permit weapons in its ranks, by early 1923 many members were carrying knives and guns and Garvey himself had endorsed a program to collect arms for the Legion to use in the event of future race riots or police brutality.⁴¹ Surprisingly, however, the majority of the violence perpetrated by UNIA members was against not whites, but African Americans. Multiple reports and rumors attest to assaults on black Garveyites committed by the group's second militarized arm, a secret police force, which, in the few divisions where it existed, attempted to enforce moral behavior and prevent members and former members from speaking against the organization.⁴² Indeed, the only known armed battle between a UNIA group and whites occurred well after the peak of the movement, when in August 1927 a shootout took place after police tried raiding a division meeting in Chattanooga.⁴³

In any case, it seems that economic reasons were actually what dominated the more practical types of motivations for joining with Garvey. One of the biggest draws of the UNIA was the hope that it would lead to improvement of personal and community finances through UNIA-inspired businesses. In early 1919, Garvey began regularly encouraging African Americans to start their own business enterprises, and he set into motion plans for the UNIA to lead the way. In New York, the organization opened a lunch room, the Universal Restaurant, and in various cities throughout the country money was pooled and circulated among Garveyites who established and patronized their own restaurants, laundries, drugstores, groceries, gas stations, theaters, moving companies, and shoe-shine parlors.⁴⁴ Sometimes money was also used to fund non-profit enterprises to help the community, including medical clinics, soup kitchens, and a short-lived elementary school, Liberty University, which was opened in Virginia in

41 Hill, *Garvey Papers*, 3:718–20; 5:199, 264, 299–300, 402–403; Omar, “Former Garveyite.” The New Orleans Garveyite community supposedly became very well-armed; see Cheryl Townsend Gilkes, “Interview with Audley (Queen Mother) Moore June 6 and 8, 1978,” in *The Black Women Oral History Project*, vol. 8, ed. Ruth Edmonds Hill (Westport: Meckler, 1991), 125. By 1924, mail-order guns were often advertised in the *Negro World*; see, e.g., July 5, 1924, 14, 15.

42 Marcus Garvey FBI file, Report, 3/2/1923, Philadelphia file; Hill, *Garvey Papers*, 5:133n1, 141–42, 153, 166, 175–76, 191, 196, 198, 199, 213, 230–31, 242–45, 403, 411n3.

43 Hill, *Garvey Papers*, 6:578–87; “Association of Negro Radicals Has Huge Fund for Propaganda,” *Chattanooga Times*, August 6, 1927, 5; “Chattanooga Case,” *Negro World*, March 3, 1928, 3; “Garvey Meeting Dispersed When Police Break in,” *Light and Heebie Jeebies*, August 13, 1927, 7.

44 See, e.g., Hill, *Garvey Papers*, 1:351–53, 382, 385; Smith-Irvin, *Footsoldiers*, 26, 44–45, 47; Vincent, *Black Power*, 102.

1928.⁴⁵ However, the most famous and inspiring business venture of the movement was the Black Star Line, the UNIA's transatlantic shipping enterprise for which Garvey was able to sell shares to upwards of 40,000 people. But, with the potential for profit in all of these ventures inevitably came greed and corruption; there are a number of complaints about UNIA members exploiting the movement purely for power and personal financial gain—a charge that Garvey himself could not evade, particularly once the federal government began prosecuting him for mail fraud for misleading investors with his Black Star Line promotional efforts.⁴⁶

While there is little doubt that all of the above motives factored into many people's decision to join the ranks of the Garveyites, this still cannot fully explain the enormous membership. UNIA-influenced businesses and voting enrollment activities, for instance, were by no means universal in the movement; it is probably safe to say that the majority of divisions were not tied to such enterprises. The same goes for the African Legion and the secret police, which seem to have been concentrated in a few larger urban divisions. Sources of entertainment, moreover, could be found in a variety of places in the African American community without having to join what was perceived by many to be a radical nationalist movement. Not even Garvey's charisma can satisfactorily explain the creation of the hundreds of divisions, as the majority of members probably only saw Garvey in person once or twice at most, and as a general rule, even when individuals are deeply moved by a charismatic figure, they do not naturally organize themselves and then remain organized for an extended period. Emotions, it seems, can be stirred rather easily sometimes, but the relatively high level of discipline and knowledge required to work in unison, to create a stable governing institution, and to plan and take part in proselytization activities are traits that the typical person does not have. It is partly for this reason in fact that there are several reports of people abandoning the UNIA after Garvey was imprisoned later.⁴⁷

Sociologists, particularly those who study new religious groups and mass movements, have often observed that successful new organizations benefit significantly from recruiting from pre-existing social networks.⁴⁸ Individuals in

45 Smith-Irvin, *Footsoldiers*, 26; "U.N.I.A. Soup Kitchen Closed," *St. Louis Argus*, March 7, 1930, 1; "The New University—Some Additional Pictures," *Negro World*, August 7, 1928, [5?]; "Liberty University to Help Furnish the New Education for The Negro," *Negro World*, September 4, 1928, [3?].

46 E.g., Rolinson, *Grassroots Garveyism*, 63; Smith-Irvin, *Footsoldiers*, 26, 60, 69.

47 E.g., Smith-Irvin, *Footsoldiers*, 61, 69.

48 See, e.g., Rodney Stark and Roger Finke. *Acts of Faith: Explaining the Human Side of Religion*

an established social network possess not only bonds of trust with each other, but also the knowledge and discipline needed for interacting appropriately within the context of the hierarchical relationships that the network fosters. This means members of a network are able to identify and follow the leaders of their community and work together while maintaining group stability—an extremely valuable asset for a movement because it helps prevent organizational disintegration. Besides family and friendship networks, common networks in early twentieth-century black American communities were those of businesses (which included employers, employees, investors, patrons, and receivers of the businesses' charity), minority ethnic groups (for example, West Indian immigrant communities), fraternal orders and other voluntary societies, labor organizations, and churches. The evidence suggests that the core of the UNIA's division membership came from these types of social networks, and that outsiders may have joined, but they were not at the heart of the divisions. Moreover, it seems that the organizers and leaders of local divisions were often already leaders in their pre-existing networks, which meant that they had a significant advantage in leading and recruiting loyal UNIA members in their communities.

Despite this being the general trend, one type of social network stands out as especially important for UNIA growth outside of New York: the black church.⁴⁹ As we saw above, in Garvey's early lecture tours in the country, black churches were frequently his hosts, and it was in meetings held at black churches that some of the first North American divisions were born. Garvey of course rec-

(Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 125; Aldon D. Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change* (New York: Free Press, 1984); Reginald W. Bibby and Merlin B. Brinkerhoff, "When Proselytizing Fails: An Organizational Analysis," *Sociology of Religion* 35 (1974): 189–200; David A. Snow, Louis A. Zurcher, Jr., and Sheldon Eklund-Olson, "Social Networks and Social Movements: A Microstructural Approach to Differential Recruitment," *American Sociological Review* 45 (1980): 787–801; Lorne L. Dawson, "Who Joins New Religions and Why: Twenty Years of Research and What Have We Learned?" in *Cults and New Religious Movements: A Reader*, ed. Lorne L. Dawson (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 63–64. Network theory is also very important in Bowen, *HCTIUS* vol. 1.

49 In New York, Garvey apparently benefitted early on from the large network of West Indian immigrants, many of whom originally wanted the UNIA to be a mutual aid society, as well as ex-members of Hubert Harrison's Liberty League. Masonry was an additional important component for the New York group, as will be discussed in the following chapter. In other cities, particularly those in the coastal regions, previously-organized longshoremen made good recruits (see Rolinson, *Grassroots Garveyism*, 86). Nevertheless, churches remained by far the most important networks, especially outside of New York.

ognized the importance of the church in African American life. In 1935, long after the UNIA's heyday, when he was trying to rebuild the movement Garvey advised his organizers that it was important to approach and interview ministers, as they were among "the most substantial members of the race" in a given community.⁵⁰ Ministers, he continued, should be convinced of the "Christian policy of the organization [and t]he willingness of the organization to support the cause of the Christian religion."⁵¹ "By preaching unity," the organizer was to further argue, "[the UNIA] is assisting the Church by getting Negroes to support their own religion as their own everything else."⁵² In addition to attempting to persuade the minister that the UNIA was beneficial for African Americans, the organizer was to ask the minister to try to raise funds from his congregation, most of which would go to the UNIA, but a portion would also go to the church itself—a proposition that surely appealed to at least the pastor's desire to improve his church's finances.⁵³ This strategy seems to have worked; although there were a number of black ministers who spoke out against Garvey,⁵⁴ hundreds of others were attracted to the UNIA's program and many of them held important positions in the organization at both the national and local levels.⁵⁵ Ministers and churches were thus abundant in the movement, and nearly every academic study of local UNIA divisions has noted the importance of church ties.⁵⁶

50 Marcus Garvey, *Marcus Garvey Life and Lessons: A Centennial Companion to The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers*, eds. Robert A. Hill and Barbara Bair (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 343.

51 *Ibid.*, 344.

52 *Ibid.*, 344–45.

53 *Ibid.*, 344.

54 See for instance, Rolinson, *Grassroots Garveyism*, 53–54; Hill, *Garvey Papers*, 2:399–403.

55 See Randall K. Burkett's *Garveyism as a Religious Movement: The Institutionalization of a Black Civil Religion* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press and The Theological Library Association, 1978) and *Black Redemption: Churchmen Speak for the Garvey Movement* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1978).

56 This theme occurs so frequently in both Hill's *Garvey Papers* and regional studies that it is unnecessary to identify every instance. Nevertheless, I will list several of the regional studies here for the reader's reference: Rolinson, *Grassroots Garveyism*; Tolbert, *Black Los Angeles*; Vought, "Racial Stirrings"; Harold, *Rise and Fall*; Ronald J. Stephens, "Garveyism in Idlewild, 1927 to 1936," *Journal of Black Studies* 34, no. 4 (2004): 162–86; *idem.*, "The Influence of Marcus Mosiah and Amy Jacques Garvey: On the Rise of Garveyism in Colorado," in *Enduring Legacies: Ethnic Histories and Cultures of Colorado*, eds. Arturo Aldama et al. (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2011), 139–58; *idem.*, "Methodological Considerations for Micro Studies of UNIA Divisions: Some Notes Calling on an Ethno-

Part of the attraction of the UNIA for churches was that Garvey's program and message contained strong religious elements that were both flexible and firm enough to embrace a variety of religious leanings.⁵⁷ UNIA meetings, first of all, were replete with religious rituals and themes, including prayers, baptisms, and proclamations about God, and Garvey made sure to institutionalize roles for chaplains in the UNIA. In fact, the group's chaplain-general, Rev. George Alexander McGuire, was a particularly strong advocate for the uniting of the black church and black nationalism, and would later start a new black denomination.⁵⁸ Garvey, for his part, embraced the Christian tendency to identify Africans and African Americans with Ethiopia, repeatedly quoting for his audiences Psalm 68:31: "Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God." He also sometimes identified himself within biblical traditions, such as in 1923, when, after the federal government began attempting to prosecute the leader for mail fraud, Garvey announced that

Marcus Garvey is but a John the Baptist in the wilderness, [...] a greater and more dangerous Marcus Garvey is yet to appear, the Garvey with whom ["the enemy"] will have to reckon for the injustice of the present generation.⁵⁹

As a result of these efforts, former UNIA members have reported that the religious element was so strong in the movement that many Garveyites looked at the divisions' Sunday meetings as a replacement for church or, sometimes, even as a church itself.⁶⁰ This was of course helped by the fact that, as Garvey's 1935 instructions show, he consciously identified his organization with Christianity. However, Garvey was strongly non-denominational, and, having adopted much of the rhetoric of Jamaican preachers, he was able to shape his message in a way that resonated with the folk core of the black Christian community. The UNIA was therefore regarded by many Christians as an ecumenical movement

Historical Analysis," *Journal of Black Studies* 39, no. 2 (2008): 281–315; Ewing, *Age of Garvey*; Erik S. McDuffie, "Garveyism in Cleveland, Ohio and the History of the Diasporic Midwest, 1920–1975," *African Identities* 9, no. 2 (2011): 163–82; *idem.*, "Chicago, Garveyism, and the History of the Diasporic Midwest," *African and Black Diaspora* 8, no. 2 (2015): 129–45.

57 See Burkett, *Garveyism* for a fuller discussion.

58 "Religious Ceremony at Liberty Hall that Corrects Mistake of Centuries and Braces the Negro," *Negro World*, September 6, 1924, 5.

59 Marcus Garvey, "The Fight for Negro Rights and Liberty Begun in Real Earnest," *Negro World*, May 26, 1923, 1.

60 Smith-Irvin, *Footsoldiers*, 54, 59.

that offered a salve for the sectarianism that had prevented the development of widespread black unity in churches in the nineteenth century.

At the same time, Garvey's view of Christianity was not the typical one. Much of this was due to his deep commitment to religious black nationalism. Garvey asserted, for instance, that due to white racism, African Americans were living in hell on Earth, and therefore they could not be moved by whites' insistence that they live in fear of the hell of the afterlife—a notion that, although probably appreciated by many black folk, was not consistent with middle-class theology.⁶¹ Like Henry McNeal Turner, Garvey also rejected the notion that God was white.⁶² The truth, he insisted, was that all human beings possess the right to think about and believe in any conception of God without criticism from others; therefore, since it is generally understood that 'man' was made in the image of God, black people have the right to conceive of God as black, and they should do so in order to generate a dignified and powerful conception of themselves.⁶³ In fact, Garvey proclaimed, Jesus, the angels, and heaven were all black as well.⁶⁴ Furthermore, Garvey insisted that the folk notions about black people being inferior to whites were completely false. In words that would have resonated with the disillusioned slave populations, Garvey claimed that whites had been "fooling" blacks for 300 years by making African Americans believe that they were superior, and the Bible was one of the whites' greatest tools in this giant deception; Garvey asserted that the Bible had been created by white men and filled with lies in order to "carry out their propaganda of white superiority."⁶⁵ These were themes that struck a deep chord with his followers, and the *Negro World* reinforced these views by printing numerous editorials, articles, and letters about African Americans who were rejecting white Christianity's Bible and its "alien gods."⁶⁶

61 "Marcus Garvey, in Classic Utterance, Gives the Point of View of the Aroused Negro," *Negro World*, September 29, 1928, 6.

62 Marcus Garvey, "The Viciousness in Negroes Opposing Each Other," *Negro World*, August 16, 1924, 1; Burkett, *Garveyism*, 111.

63 Burkett, *Garveyism*, 46–47.

64 Hill, *Garvey Papers*, 1:505; Burkett, *Garveyism*, 46–52; *idem.*, *Black Redemption*, 7.

65 Hill, *Garvey Papers*, 1:505, 507; 3:161–62. Garvey here was probably also significantly influenced by the anti-religion talk of the outspoken West Indian socialist Hubert Harrison, whose criticisms of the Bible were based not on folk belief but on his own analysis, which had been significantly influenced by the writings of Thomas Paine; see Jeffrey B. Perry, *Hubert Harrison: The Voice of Harlem Radicalism, 1883–1918* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), esp. 60–63.

66 See, e.g., Campbell McRae [?], "Why Follow after Alien Gods?" *Negro World*, July 2, 1921,

In addition to containing these old folk and black nationalist religious concepts, Garvey's speeches and writings also showed a strong influence of New Thought. This was reflected in several elements of his discourse: the emphasis he placed on the critical analysis of religion—which Garvey, like many New Thought writers, often termed 'science'; his belief in the inner divinity of human beings; his arguing for the freedom to choose religious symbols that help a person tap into his or her divinity; and his notion that a person's thinking has the power to shape his or her surroundings and success.⁶⁷ And like many white New Thought leaders, despite consistently reaffirming his allegiance to Christianity, Garvey, as we will see, made several comments showing sympathy for Hindus and Muslims.⁶⁸ Such views were undoubtedly received uncomfortably by most clergymen in the movement, but it seems that their belief in Garvey and his broader vision was usually strong enough to override their complaints. This feature of Garvey's religious influence would therefore be one of the key reasons Islamophilic themes were able to spread so thoroughly through UNIA channels and, eventually, throughout black America.

As we will see in Chapter 3, the unity of the UNIA would begin to dissolve in the mid-1920s, but despite its relatively short life as a mass movement, Garvey's unique role in African American religious history should not be dismissed as a limited or temporary influence. Not only was Garvey responsible for disseminating a religious black nationalism that would linger in the country for over a generation, in his immediate wake appeared several new non-mainstream black religious movements and writings that were connected to Garveyite black nationalism. For example, as has been mentioned, the UNIA chaplain-general Rev. George Alexander McGuire was able to establish in 1921 a whole

4 and the numerous pieces on this topic that were printed on the following dates in 1924: June 21, 4; July 5, 14; July 26, 5; August 9, 20; September 6, 5, 20; September 13, 15; September 20, 4; December 20, 12.

67 The influence of New Thought (including perhaps even Divine Science in particular) and the related 'religion of success' on Garvey has been discussed in Hill, *Garvey Papers*, 1:xli–l; 7:xxxviii, xlv, 32–33n11, 103, 110, 114n1, 115n8; *idem.*, introduction to *Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey*, ed. Amy Jacques-Garvey (New York: Atheneum, 1992), 1–lv; Hill and Barbara Bair, introduction to *Marcus Garvey Life and Lessons*, xlix–li; Mitch Horowitz, *One Simple Idea: How Positive Thinking Reshaped Modern Life* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2014).

68 New Thought sympathy for non-Christian religions was especially prominent in the last two decades of the nineteenth century and was exemplified in the works and teachings of writers and leaders like Warren Felt Evans and the founders of Divine Science. See Bowen, *HCTIUS*, 1:84–87.

new denomination founded on a black nationalist perspective, the African Orthodox Church, which he hoped to become a universal black church.⁶⁹ Another ambitious clergyman, the Church of God's 'evangelist' Rev. James Morris Webb in 1924 advertised in the *Negro World* his new book, *The Black Man is the Father of Civilization: Proved by Biblical History*, in which he argued that Jesus, King Solomon, and King Tut were all black "by blood."⁷⁰ In New York City, multiple black Jewish/Israelite communities with UNIA connections emerged; most notably the Moorish Zionist Temple and Beth B'nai Abraham, both of which were co-led by Rabbi Arnold J. Ford, the UNIA's choirmaster.⁷¹ Another resident of New York, the famous New Thought-influenced sect leader Father Divine, also appears to have been influenced by Garvey, as was Detroit's black spiritual church leader Father Hurley (see Chapter 8). Over in Newark, in a story covered in the *Negro World*, Robert Athlyi Rogers, the leader of the eclectic Afro-Athlican Constructive Gaathly Church (also known as the Hamitic Church), was in early 1925 releasing his new divinely-inspired book, the *Holy Piby*, in which he called Garvey "an apostle of the Lord God for the redemption of Ethiopia and her suffering posterities."⁷² Rogers's teachings, in addition to promoting black—"Ethiopian"—divinity and "economical power," contained numerous esoteric and New Thought-related themes that would have resonated with both Garveyites and Newark's hoodoo-influenced black migrants.⁷³ Interestingly, the *Holy Piby* went on to become an important

69 Richard Newman, "The Origins of the African Orthodox Church," in *The Negro Churchman: The Official Organ of the African Orthodox Church* (Millwood, NY: Kraus Reprint Co., 1977), iii–xxii.

70 *The Black Man is the Father of Civilization: Proved by Biblical History* (n.p.: n.p., n.d.); the advertisement ran in multiple *Negro World* in the late summer of 1924.

71 See below for further discussion, but also cf. Dorman, *Chosen People*; Landing, *Black Judaism*.

72 "Athlican Religion to Open Its School in Newark," *Negro World*, February 7, 1925, 10; Robert Athlyi Rogers, *The Holy Piby: The Blackman's Bible* (New York: Cosimo Classics, 2007), 55. Rogers apparently claimed that on March 9, 1922 he addressed a Newark UNIA meeting at which Garvey also spoke; see Ras Michael (Miguel) Lorne, introduction to *The Holy Piby*, by Robert Athlyi Rogers (Chicago: Research Associates School Times Publications and Headstart Printing and Publishing, 2000), 7–8. See also Nathaniel Samuel Murrell, "Holy Piby: Blackman's Bible and Garveyite Ethiopianist Epic with Commentary," in *Religion, Culture and Tradition in the Caribbean*, eds. Hemchand Gossai and Nathaniel Samuel Murrell (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 271–306; Eugene V. Gallagher, "The Holy Piby in Comparative Perspective: The Appropriation of the bible in New Religious Movements," *Wadabagei* 7, no. 1 (2004): 85–116.

73 The "economical power" phrase is on a flyer for Rogers' church, reprinted in Robert Hill,

text in the founding of Rastafarianism, one of the most well-known Garvey-inspired religious movements.⁷⁴

Of course, not every new religious change during this period had a direct tie to Garvey. As we have seen, new religious movements had been developing at a relatively fast pace in the black community since Emancipation, and the Great Migration of African Americans out of the South independently fostered even more religious innovation. But Garvey's religious reach was so expansive that there were, in addition to the more directly-connected movements, several new religious currents that were indirectly linked to the black nationalist movement. For example, in Chicago the white Edward Redding—or Grover Cleveland Redding, as he would later insist was his name—in June 1920 was leading a UNIA schism group called the Star Order of Ethiopia, which taught that African Americans had a divine religious connection with Ethiopians and printed pamphlets that described "Egyptian secrets."⁷⁵ Redding at the time, along with another white man, a one-time UNIA associate R.D. Jonas, was leading a parade encouraging African Americans to move to "Abyssinia," but when a riot broke out and two people died, Redding was blamed and then later sentenced to death for the event. This was followed in July that year by Atlanta's Rev. Dr. Henry H. Proctor further reinforcing a religious view of emigrationism when he proclaimed that the African American return to Africa would be a "divine" project.⁷⁶ Another figure indirectly tied to Garveyism was Rev. Fitz Balintine Pettersburgh, whose book *The Royal Parchment Scroll of Black Supremacy* (1926) served as an additional source for Rastafarianism and explicitly commented on the pro-Garvey Robert Athlyi Rogers and his church, with which Pettersburgh shared esoteric and New Thought influences.⁷⁷ Other black authors at the time were writing books supposedly containing additional secret reli-

"Leonard P. Howell and Millenarian Visions in Early Rastafari," *Jamaica Journal* 16, no. 1 (1983): 29.

74 Robert A. Hill, "Dread History: Leonard P. Howell and Millenarian Visions in Early Rastafari Religions in Jamaica," *Epoche* 9 (1981): 34–35. The only differences between this article and Hill's previously-cited "Leonard P. Howell" article are that they have different accompanying images and the former contains endnotes.

75 Landing, *Black Judaism*, 99–107; "Chicago Police Continue Search for 'Abyssinian,'" *Newark Evening News*, June 22, 1920, 2; "Abyssinian Sentenced to Gallows," *St. Louis Argus*, January 21, 1921, 1.

76 "Declares Negroes Here Will Help Redeem Lost Continent," *Newark Evening News*, July 2, 1920, 21.

77 *The Royal Parchment Scroll of Black Supremacy* (n.p.: Kobek.com, 2011), 18, 25; Hill, "Dread History," 35.

gious knowledge about African nations—such as Rev. S.C. Blackledge, with his *An Open Book on Hidden Mysteries*, and ‘Prince’ J.E. Blayechettai, with his *The Hidden Mystery of Ethiopia* and *The Pen of an African*.⁷⁸ Although these individuals do not seem to have been in the UNIA, they were certainly taking advantage of the market that the organization was opening.

In a few instances, religious currents that were very explicitly occult- or conjure-based were also tied with black nationalism in some way. Searches of black newspapers from the era produce stories about individuals like the ‘occult teacher’ who visited the New Orleans UNIA division in 1929 and the California ‘Doctor of Metaphysics’ who was investigated for his militant anti-white views.⁷⁹ The *Negro World* itself regularly ran advertisements for mail-order occult and ‘oriental’ books as well as for hoodoo paraphernalia, such as lodestones and magic rings, and it occasionally printed announcements for individuals, usually garbed in robes and turbans, who offered their ‘oriental’ spiritual services for a fee, often at their ‘studios’ in Harlem.⁸⁰ Sometimes whole organizations were being promoted, as was the case with the Ethiopian School of Astrology based at 620 St. Nicholas Avenue in New York, which was advertised in the *Negro World* in 1925.⁸¹ Similar institutions appeared in other locations as well. Gary, Indiana, for instance, was where, in the early 1930s, Marcus Garvey himself supposedly founded a ‘voodoo organization’ at 21st and Washington Street.⁸² St. Louis, meanwhile, was the home of the DeYoga Institute and Lamasary Shop and Spiritual Mission, which was run and promoted by William Manuel Patton,⁸³ who would soon join with a Garveyite Muslim leader

78 Rev. S.C. Blackledge, *An Open Book on Hidden Mysteries* (n.p.: n.p., 1925); J.E. Blayechettai, *The Hidden Mystery of Ethiopia* (n.p.: n.p., [1926?]); *idem.*, *The Pen of an African* (n.p.: n.p., 1922).

79 “Occult Teacher Tells of Visit in the South,” *St. Louis Argus*, April 26, 1929, 3; “Would Overthrow The White Race,” *St. Louis Argus*, August 15, 1941, 9; Robert A. Hill, ed., *The FBI’s RACON: Racial Conditions in the United States during World War II* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1995), 387–88. Upon my request to the FBI for files related to the latter individual (John K. Larremore), I was told that “Records which may have been responsive to your request were destroyed on various dates.” The National Archives did find a single file related to Larremore, but as of this book’s writing, I have not yet received it.

80 Many of these, as we will see, claimed Islamic ties. In fact, non-Muslim figures, like ‘Dhassi’ who had a “Tara [Tarot?] Studio” at 1133 Broadway, were relatively rare; see *Negro World*, June 7, 1924, 5.

81 February 28, 1925, 10. This organization had also been advertised in the black communist magazine *The Crusader* in the early 1920s.

82 DOO FBI file, Report, 8/20/42, Indianapolis file 100–4087, 3.

83 For early appearances of Patton’s businesses, see the following dates in the *St. Louis Argus*:

named Paul Nathaniel Johnson.⁸⁴ Another occult figure with black nationalist and St. Louis ties was a man who in the 1930s went by the name of Frederick Douglass Starck.⁸⁵ Starck's New Thought and esotericism-connected black nationalism could be seen in the advertisement for his manuscript "African History[,] Divine Science and Egyptian Mystery," a text that reportedly "expose[d] the myth of White Supremacy," and, he claimed, upon its release in 1925 "upset the whole religious world."⁸⁶ Interestingly, in the 1930s when Starck was leading in St. Louis what was called the Aquarian School of Higher Thought and Church of Divine Science, he insisted that he had originally founded this group, possibly with a slightly different name, in 1922 in Chicago, where he supposedly lived until 1932.⁸⁷ If this is true, this is one of the earliest known examples of an African American religious organization utilizing the white Levi Dowling's moderately popular New Thought and esoteric book *The Aquarian Gospel of Jesus the Christ* (1908). In any case, as Starck and the existence of various other non-Christian black nationalist religious figures of the period demonstrate, although there had been some African American interest in non-Christian religious ideas prior to 1920, especially among conjurers, it was in the wake of Garvey that such religious themes were starting to receive wide promotion in the black community.

'Glorifiers of Mohammedanism'

It would be in large part due to both Garvey's influence over African American culture generally and his legitimizing new and non-Christian religions in particular that Islamic elements would have the means to spread to a significant

October 6, 1922, 6; January 5 and 12, 1923, 5; January 19 and 26, 1923, 3; April 20, 1923, 3; May 25, 1923, 2; June 8, 1923, 6.

84 Turner, *Islam in the African American*, 126.

85 In his early appearances in the *St. Louis Argus*, Starck spelled his name 'Stark.'

86 "African History" (advertisement), *Pittsburgh Courier*, July 6, 1935, 7. 'Divine Science' was a term associated with New Thought.

87 "Aquarians Ordain," *St. Louis Argus*, December 4, 1936, 2; letter, Frederick D. Stark to Department of Justice, August 21, 1934, RG 165, 10218-261/109, *Correspondence of the Military Intelligence Division Relating to "Negro Subversion," 1917-1941* (Washington, DC: National Archives, 1986), microfilm project number M1440. This letter also appears in the Takahashi/DOO FBI file. If Starck had indeed been in Chicago in the early 1920s, one wonders if his manuscript discussing "Egyptian Mystery" had been influenced by Redding's pamphlets on "Egyptian secrets."

number of African Americans. However, such spreading would never have happened had it not been for the fact that the UNIA and its members possessed several ties to Islam. Indeed, in the early 1920s, among the several thousand New Yorker Garveyites were reportedly a number of what one researcher has called “glorifiers of Mohammedanism.”⁸⁸ Little is known about whom exactly these individuals were, although the evidence suggests they were most likely a very mixed group. There is reason to think that some of these glorifiers were, for instance, Caribbean immigrants; the UNIA disproportionately attracted Caribbean émigrés and the Caribbean, compared to the US, appears to have maintained a slightly stronger Islamic religious presence among the descendants of the enslaved.⁸⁹ It is possible, too, that a portion of these glorifiers were not born into Muslim families but rather appropriated the symbols of Islam to take advantage of the fact that Garvey welcomed as members black, or at least dark-skinned, people who could lend his movement an exotic flare; these individuals may have exploited this bias by claiming to be Muslims and wearing turbans, fezzes, and robes, as a number of mystics and stage performers had been doing since the late nineteenth century—and some of the glorifiers may have in fact been claiming to be mystics themselves.

One possible Muslim mystic glorifier was ‘Professor’ Thomas Drew. The occult-influenced hoodoo doctor who in 1916 claimed to be an ‘East Indian’ had changed his brand; although spiritual healing was still his main practice, he was now attracting his numerous clients in the New York-New Jersey area by claiming not only that he possessed several purchasable copies of a book that discussed the undocumented years of Jesus’s life—Dowling’s *Aquarian Gospel*—but also that he was a ‘Moslem.’⁹⁰ Drew, however, was no typical Muslim. In the summer of 1920 a white man working for the police visited the healer’s headquarters at 181 Warren Steet in Newark where he discovered that Drew’s powers were being manifested in a ceremony held in what he described as an enclosed “inner sanctum” of the building. There, the healer chanted a prayer that became increasingly loud: “Allah! Allah! Dis-

88 Edward Wolf, “Negro ‘Jews’: A Social Study,” *Jewish Social Service Quarterly* 9 (June 1933): 317.

89 Gomez, *Black Crescent*, 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.

90 “Stern Faced White Men Answer ‘Call to Allah,’” *Newark Evening News*, August 24, 1920; “‘Egyptian Adept’ Fails to Win Trust of Jury,” *Newark Evening News*, November 16, 1920. The following descriptions are based on these sources.

perse these ailments.” According to others who employed the services of the self-described “Egyptian Adept Student,” water, oil, and the laying of hands were also involved, as were bottles filled with salts and liquids. Drew insisted, furthermore, that for people to be cured they had to “trust in their God and believe in me”—after all, he boasted, he had performed many miracles, including the raising of the dead. Although there is currently no direct evidence that Thomas Drew had contact with the UNIA during this period, various clues, as we will later see, suggest he ran in Garveyite circles; in fact, by the second half of the decade, he was claiming multiple direct connections with Garvey himself.

But mystics and Caribbean immigrants were not the only potential links between Garveyites and Islam. Since the UNIA headquarters was based in New York, at least some of its members were undoubtedly encountering the city’s numerous Muslims who had been born in Muslim-majority countries. We know that the organization had, for example, ties to a few Muslim diplomats from the Middle East and South Asia.⁹¹ As for links with common Muslim immigrants, although we lack strong evidence for direct contact, there is good reason to think that such connections were being made, since, by the early 1920s, the city was home to probably one or two thousand such individuals.⁹² Like the Muslim immigrants throughout the rest of the US, although most were Sunni, New York Muslims represented very diverse backgrounds in terms of both ethnicity and the religious beliefs and practices that were specific to their homelands. A few mosques had been established by this point, but New

91 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, DC: National Archives, 1986], microfilm project number M1440).

92 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 US Moslem Mosque Planned,” *Binghamton Press* (New York), June 6, 1933, 17; “Arab-World in New York,” *Moslem World* 37 (1947): 81; “US Tour Shows Ties of 2 Faiths,” *New York Times*, April 5, 1956, 34.

York's Muslims had not completely settled into ethnic and sectarian enclaves, and intermingling with each other and outsiders was still common.⁹³ In fact, non-Muslims were not only welcomed into the community, but were, in some cases, proselytized to.⁹⁴ 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?"⁹⁵ 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."⁹⁶

Despite the latter missionary's failure, however, New York's African Americans were definitely becoming more familiar with immigrants from Muslim-majority regions, particularly African ones. In one case, a Tunisian named Mohammed Ali, who claimed to have been promoting Islam in the US since the 1890s, in 1924 married Fanny Wise, an African American actress from New York.⁹⁷ Another North African was teaching Arabic and possibly transmitting Islamic practices in Harlem for the black Israelite community led by UNIA member Arnold J. Ford, who, as we will see in the following chapter, was himself taking an interest in things Islamic.⁹⁸ Probably the most famous black Muslim in the period, however, was the Senegalese 'Battling' Siki, an international boxing star who was living in New York City at the time.⁹⁹ 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 *Negro World* and *New York Times*. Though a heavy drinker and somewhat disillusioned with religion, Siki's Muslim roots were mentioned in the press and he maintained contact with New York's small Senegalese Muslim community. Upon his death in 1925, newspapers reported that six Senegalese Muslims conducted an Islamic

93 See, e.g., "Moslems Observe"; Katibah, "Moslems of City."

94 E.g., see Samuel Zwemer, "Mohammedan Missionary Methods" *Methodist Review* 114 (1931): 370.

95 Katibah, "Moslems of City"; "Islam in New York City," *Moslem World* 17 (1927): 199.

96 Holmes, "Islam in America," 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.

97 "Actress Returns as Moslem Wife," *New York Amsterdam News*, March 19, 1930, 9.

98 Sidney Kobre, "Rabbi Ford," *Reflex* 4, no. 1 (January 1929): 28. Ford's use of Islamic elements will be discussed in the following chapter.

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

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.¹⁰⁰

The African Muslim immigrant community in New York City was in fact growing at the time, and its existence made it likely that at least some African Americans would have contact with these Muslims. Claude McKay, a well-known Harlem Renaissance writer, at one point met a Senegalese man who had, in the years following World War I, run a boarding house for New York's various black Muslims.¹⁰¹ Somalis also probably had significant contact with American blacks, who reportedly admired the East Africans for their lack of sense of racial inferiority.¹⁰² 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 Satti Majid, the Sudanese Muslim missionary mentioned in Chapter 1. Majid was most likely beginning to meet some New Yorker African Americans at the time as well, though this cannot yet be said with certainty for the early 1920s.

In addition to ties with African Muslims, it is very likely that there were also connections with an important South Asia-based Islamic sectarian movement. In 1920 a dark-skinned Indian named Mufti Muhammad Sadiq, a missionary for the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam, after arriving from London set up an office on Madison Avenue. Soon he was regularly walking along the city's streets while wearing a black robe and green turban and handing out large cards containing, on one side, his photograph and, on the other, a condensed lesson in basic Islamic principles.¹⁰³ Although Sadiq was at first focusing his proselytization efforts on whites, after both frequently experiencing religious rejection from the white community and enduring much racism himself, the missionary began to direct his efforts towards African Americans.¹⁰⁴ Within a

100 "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.

101 Claude McKay, *A Long Way from Home* (Piscataway: Rutgers University Press, 2007), 213–14.

102 Ras Makkonnen, *Pan-Africanism from within*, ed. Kenneth King (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 75–76.

103 This description is given in M[uhammad] Yusof [sic] Khan, "Some of our Missionaries," *Muslim Sunrise* 42, no. 4 (1975): 14. Sadiq had initially arrived in the country in the spring, 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 US had officially outlawed—does not require polygamy.

104 Turner, *Islam in the African American*, 116–18.

few months he had established in the city a small and apparently racially-mixed group of converts. Then, in October, Sadiq left for Chicago, staying briefly before traveling to Detroit, where he attempted to serve as a religious leader for the city's large immigrant Muslim population. Upon the immigrants' discovery of his sectarian affiliation, however, Sadiq was forced to leave the community and return to Chicago where he had a small group of loyal black converts.¹⁰⁵ It was in Chicago, then, that Sadiq would set up the American Ahmadi headquarters and from there he quickly gained a significant following.

Although the reasons for Sadiq's success are somewhat uncertain, a few clues do exist. First of all, despite the fact that the Ahmadi movement was committed to the notions that there was no racism in Islam and that all people were equal under god, what apparently drew many African Americans to Sadiq's group was their belief that Islam was exclusively the religion of the dark-skinned persons of the world; reportedly, Sadiq sometimes even lost followers when he insisted that whites could also be accepted as Muslims.¹⁰⁶ It seems, in fact, that for many of the converts Islam was an extension of their folk religion. According to a second-generation American Ahmadi, the early African American converts saw their new religious identity as so deeply connected to their Christian beliefs that their discussions of Islam were interspersed with Christian spirituals, and they insisted that Islam "was the fulfillment of the prophecy of Jesus that the Prophet Muhammad would come with new instructions from God."¹⁰⁷ Although this belief is a well-known Muslim doctrine it is almost certain that for the converts this expectation was also grounded in the Revelation-based millennial expectations that had been popular since Emancipation—and, as we will see later, at least one other AAIR group very explicitly linked Revelation with its own Muslim prophet. In any case, this mixing of Islam with folk religion was, it turns out, a point of controversy. The Tunisian immigrant Mohammed Ali reported that the Ahmadi converts had received a negative backlash from the immigrant Muslim community when they—the converts—"insisted upon bringing in some of their ritual."¹⁰⁸ And even if Sadiq had not explicitly encouraged this practice, some of the things he did would have inevitably been viewed as confirming their folk beliefs. For example, because the sect had been influenced by the Islamic mystical tradi-

105 Khan, "Some of our Missionaries," 14.

106 Abbie G. Whyte, "Christian Elements in American Negro Muslim Cults" (MA thesis, Wayne State University, 1963), 20–21.

107 Nasira Razaa, "Life in these United States," *Ayesha* (fall 1991): 22.

108 "Actress Returns as Moslem Wife."

tion, Sufism,¹⁰⁹ Sadiq highlighted mystical religious views—and in the process obtained various certificates from occult ‘universities’ that were selling their cheap diplomas to people of all races¹¹⁰—and this aspect of his teachings undoubtedly resonated with black converts who were familiar with the esoteric and hoodoo elements of black folk religion. We know too that Sadiq bestowed upon his new converts Arabic-Muslim names, which they readily embraced, suggesting that these individuals were continuing the black folk practice of changing one’s name to represent a new stage in one’s life. Sadiq also taught his followers Islamic principles and the Arabic language and he encouraged the growing of beards and the wearing of Islamic-style clothing—all things that would help give the converts new identities that were not associated with mainstream African American culture, and were possibly interpreted as practices in line with the tradition of name changing.¹¹¹

Fascinatingly, it seems that Garveyites were disproportionately attracted to Islam. During the early 1960s, multiple Ahmadi converts revealed to a graduate student researching African American Muslims that back in the 1920s, at the end of nearly every meeting Sadiq led in Chicago, a Garveyite would stand up and proclaim that he was “glad that somebody was finally teaching the black man’s religion in America.”¹¹² Although we do not have documented evidence of a connection between the Ahmadis and the UNIA before 1922, it seems very likely that such events were occurring by 1921, when Sadiq made Chicago his headquarters. In any case, as a result of these factors, as well as Sadiq’s numerous efforts to promote Islam through lectures, correspondence, and a magazine that he began to publish, the missionary would soon become the most successful Muslim proselytizer in the US before 1925, converting around 700 people before returning to India in late 1923.¹¹³

Despite the importance of the Ahmadis, however, it seems that the most influential ‘glorifiers of Mohammedanism’ in the UNIA during the the first two

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

110 One of these institutions, Oriental University, in 1924 was investigated after a black ‘professor’ who had been invited to speak at the school was made to sign diplomas instead, and then given five dollars; see “Colored ‘Professor’ on Faculty of ‘Diploma Mill,’” *St. Louis Argus*, January 4, 1924, 1.

111 Early Ahmadis reportedly lost jobs because of these external changes; see Razaa, “Life in these United States.”

112 Whyte, “Christian Elements,” 22.

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

years of the 1920s were not Muslims at all—they were instead leading figures in Garvey’s movement. Garvey himself, for example, had been impressed with Edward Blyden’s *Christianity, Islam, and the Negro Race*, and referenced Islam and Muslims in his speeches and writings on several occasions.¹¹⁴ Nevertheless, as he desired to keep the UNIA non-sectarian, like Blyden, Garvey did not endorse Islam as a religion that African Americans should embrace. Although, later, some Nation of Islam members would assert that Garvey was secretly a Muslim, there are no known non-Muslim sources that provide clear evidence in support of the claim, and, as we will see, in his public statements Garvey clearly favored Christianity.¹¹⁵

114 Hill, *Garvey Papers, passim*; Curtis, *Islam in Black America*, 51.

115 One of the earliest documented claims that Garvey was a Muslim comes from Malcolm X, in a fascinating letter written to another Muslim in 1950; see Charles Ezra Ferrell, “Malcolm X’s Pre-Nation of Islam (NOI) Discourses: Sourced from Detroit’s Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History Archives,” in *Malcolm X’s Michigan Worldview: An Exemplar for Contemporary Black Studies*, ed. Rita Kiki Edozie and Curtis Stokes (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2015), 132. Later in his career, Malcolm (and Elijah Muhammad) would occasionally repeat this claim, which has generally been interpreted as metaphorical; however, sometimes Malcolm would only mention that Garvey had been *influenced* by a Muslim: Dusé Mohamed Ali. In addition to these claims, in the 1960s a Nation of Islam member who had formerly been a Garveyite asserted that in 1919, when asked what type of government he would start after African-descended people returned to Africa, Garvey responded “An Islamic Government,” and added that he would use “The Holy Koran,” apparently as the philosophical and legal basis of that government. However, the story went on, when someone asked Garvey why he did not teach Islam himself, Garvey exclaimed, “Oh! no! I am not the man for that. There is one coming behind me. He will give you everything. That’s the man to follow.” Although this story is almost certainly apocryphal, it probably builds on Garvey’s 1923 claim that a “greater and more dangerous Marcus Garvey” would come after him. The story also suggests that there may be more information about Garvey’s interest in Islam that has yet to be discovered; and perhaps, too, this story was conveyed by members of the early NOI. Not surprisingly, members of the MSTA have similar traditions. Not only did Noble Drew Ali state in his *Holy Koran of the Moorish Science Temple of America* that Garvey “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,” the Moor J. Pearsall Bey claimed to have personally heard Garvey at a UNIA meeting say the following quote in reference to Drew Ali: “There is one coming, whose shoes I am not worthy to tie. When he comes, don’t turn him away like a sift, but except [*sic*] his teachings and you will be all right.” See Hubert X, “Marcus Garvey Said: ‘A Messenger Will Follow Me!’” *Muhammad Speaks*, June 5, 1964, 7; Noble Drew Ali, *Holy Koran of the Moorish Science Temple of America* ([Chicago]: n.p., 1927), chapter XLVIII; Claudas M. El, *Biography of the Moors* (n.p.: R.V. Bey, n.d.), 15.

Garvey's interest in Islam may have been influenced by other black nationalists with whom he had contact in New York. For instance, one of the city's most prominent black socialists, Hubert Harrison—with whom Garvey was affiliated through both Harrison's Liberty League and later the *Negro World*, which Harrison briefly edited—was not only a fan of Blyden, but, like other socialist- and communist-leaning black New Yorkers during the period, was interested in Islam, and had even attempted to contact Muslim organizations in the US.¹¹⁶ Another important influence for Garvey was John E. Bruce, who had helped with Garvey's early efforts in New York City and later became one of the leading members of the UNIA.¹¹⁷ Bruce was in fact a long-time close friend of Blyden; an ambitious race-conscious journalist and historian, Bruce had met Blyden in 1880 when both were working for the American Colonization Society, an organization devoted to assisting black emigration to Africa. 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 instead to insert pragmatism into their religious lives. Indeed neither Bruce nor Blyden regarded Islam as the 'original' religion of African Americans; they respected it purely because of the benefits it had brought to Africans and because they believed that it lacked racism. Still, like Blyden and Garvey, Bruce does not appear to have endorsed African American conversion to the religion.¹¹⁸

Towards the end of 1921, however, another figure connected to the UNIA would more thoroughly unite an Islamic identity with American black nationalism. Dusé Mohamed Ali,¹¹⁹ a British Muslim who claimed to be of Egyptian-Sudanese descent (the Sudan at that time was part of Egypt), arrived in the US in October with the intention of establishing Pan-African banking and trading companies, and within a month began lecturing both on the African American intellectuals' circuit and to UNIA audiences.¹²⁰ Dusé had originally made

116 On Harrison, see Perry, *Hubert*, 292–96, 372. The other socialist-leaning African Americans were the contributors to Cyril Briggs' *Crusader* magazine, who on a number of occasions praised and regarded Islam as superior to whites' Christianity, and revealed an influence from Blyden; see, e.g. the January, August, and November 1921 issues.

117 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).

118 Curtis, *Islam in Black America*, 51; Crowder, *John Edward Bruce*, 13–15.

119 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).

120 "Arrived on the Steamship Celtic," *Afro-American*, October 21, 1921, 1; "Duse Mohammed

a name for himself as a Pan-Africanist with his *In the Land of the Pharaohs* (1911), a nationalist history of Egypt,¹²¹ which he followed by creating the Pan-Africanist periodical *African Times and Orient Review*, to which Bruce, a close friend, contributed articles and for which Garvey worked while he briefly lived in London in 1913. The magazine was regarded with respect by uplift-oriented African-descended people throughout the Atlantic world, and even received mention in Chicago's African American-owned, Islam-sympathizing *Champion Magazine*.¹²² Through his writings, editing, and interactions with with Muslim organizations in London, Dusé, who had probably long been familiar with Blyden's writings, 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.¹²³ Because of his reputation and international connections, as well as his publishing and activist experience, by early 1922 Garvey had made him both a regular contributor to the *Negro World* and the head of the UNIA's African Affairs department.¹²⁴ With Garvey having already established a massive network of African Americans over which he had significant religious influence, Dusé's joining the UNIA was therefore a key moment in the history of Islam in African American culture, and Islamic currents now had a real promoter and a real channel through which they could reach a large portion of black America.

Dusé's appointment in Garvey's movement was in many ways a sign of the larger transformation that the African American community had undergone in the years following World War I. Prior to 1919, only one Muslim had ever attained such a prominent position in an American cultural or political institution: Alexander Russell Webb, a white convert to Islam who, by linking Islam with esotericism, New Thought, and liberal religiosity, briefly led a

Ali," *The Times* (Batavia, NY), November 5, 1921, 9. See also Duffield, "Dusé Mohamed Ali," 650n1.

121 *In the Land of the Pharaohs* was largely, though not entirely, a paraphrased plagiarism of three other books; cf. Duffield, "Dusé Mohamed Ali," 120–35.

122 "The African Times and Orient Review," *Champion Magazine* 1, no. 8 (April 1917): 411.

123 Duffield, "Dusé Mohamed Ali," 422–426, 516–528.

124 Duffield, "Dusé Mohamed Ali," 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.

nationally-publicized Islamic movement in the 1890s.¹²⁵ Webb's movement, however, was not mass-based, and it did not attempt to bring in followers from the African American community. For a black Muslim to rise in a mass-based African American institution, that community had to have been profoundly remolded—and it was Marcus Garvey who effected much of this remolding through his remarkable discursive skills, media use, and recruitment of preexisting social networks. Given his major role in this transformation, it is little wonder that for the next twenty years Garvey stood as a cultural pole around which African American Islam would develop.

125 See Bowen, *HCTIUS*, 1:88–199.

Allah across America

Few, if any, major cultural transformations occur in a 'natural' way. Perhaps with the benefit of hindsight one might be able to claim that, given a certain set of historical circumstances, some key events were virtually inevitable; however, it is much harder to do this for mass cultural shifts, which generally involve numerous parties and multiple complex forces all interacting with each other and with outside factors. Much can be gained, then, by taking a very close look at the many individual events and characters that played roles, sometimes small and sometimes large, in a mass cultural change.

With Garvey having obtained an institution-shaping presence in black culture and the 'glorifiers of Mohammedanism' having become influential within the ranks of the UNIA, it may have seemed inevitable that Islam was going to be promoted to African Americans on a mass scale for the first time through Garvey's movement. Yet, the historical record reveals that the actual cultural transformation involved numerous additional actors, decisions, and circumstances that shaped the particular direction this transformation would take, and they did so in sometimes unforeseen and unique ways. This is true even despite the fact that, in the end, it was indeed Garvey's movement that drove the expansion of the African American religious market, which ultimately allowed for Islam to take hold as a legitimate religious identity in black America. The present chapter is therefore an examination of how Garvey's movement and all of the many additional actors and currents interacted to produce this cultural transformation in the key period of 1922 through 1925.

1922

The first wave of Islamic currents hit the African American community starting 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 experiencing many vicissitudes, 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.”¹

Then, 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 piece, 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 other 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 sporadically printing photographs of Muslims from around the world.² Of course, not every reader was fond of Dusé’s pro-Muslim influence. Islam received some criticism in the *Negro World* during this period,³ 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.⁴ Nevertheless, it was due largely to Dusé that information about Islam and Muslims was for the first time in history being regularly disseminated to a large number of African Americans.

The other important piece in the March 25 issue was a letter written by “Luco C. Lenaryi,” a self-proclaimed “Mullah, Imam of Islam, Egyptian Soudan.”⁵ Luco—who revealed that he also went by the name Lucius C. Lenan-Lehman— informed the UNIA of his belief that the organization was “Allah’s answer” to colonialism in Africa. At the time of his writing this letter, though, Lucius was living several thousand miles away from Africa—in California’s San Quentin Prison. Indeed, this was the same Lucius who, as we saw in Chapter 1, was serving a life sentence for first degree murder and who only started claiming to be a Muslim authority in the 1910s. The significance of Lucius’s pro-Garvey Muslim presence in San Quentin will be taken up again below, 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 clearly combining a commitment to Islam with a commitment to the UNIA. Not even Dusé had yet explicitly men-

1 Hill, *Garvey Papers*, 4:467.

2 E.g., “Newly Elected President of the Jähuriyeh Republic of the Riff,” *Negro World*, April 29, 1922, 3; “The Second Indian Muslim Deputation,” *Negro World*, May 20, 1922, 5.

3 E.g., Thomas H. Spencer, “Defense of Christianity and Christendom,” *Negro World*, October 21, 1922, 5.

4 See, Hill, *Garvey Papers*, 4: *passim.*, esp. 630.

5 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.

tioned in the *Negro World* his identity as a Muslim, even if his name implied it. Furthermore, by Lucius claiming to be from the Sudan, his letter represented the connection between not just the UNIA and foreign Muslims in general, but one between Garveyism and a *black* Islamic identity specifically, a point that would have stood out to black nationalist-minded readers. The letter is also significant because 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 its own letter from a Sudanese Egyptian who praised the organization's work and desired to become a member.⁶ While there is not enough evidence to determine whether the author of the NAACP missive was Lucius, it is interesting that, like a number of the Muslim figures who had appeared in the post-World War I African American community, both of the correspondence's authors claimed a Sudanese-Egyptian background.⁷ Together, then, these letters and their being publicized represented a growing sense of alignment between black Muslims and African American empowerment organizations in 1922.

Perhaps not coincidentally, just two weeks after Lucius's missive was printed another self-proclaimed 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 and a "96 degree Mason and a Shriner."⁸ Accompanied by his private secretary, one Clarence Kane, Hamid was the guest of honor at a gathering of prominent black Freemasons on April 7. 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.

6 "Egyptians in Sudan Line up with N.A.A.C.P.," *Chicago Whip*, April 15, 1922, 2.

7 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.

8 "Dr. Abdul Hamid of Egypt Guest of Harlem Masons," *Negro World*, April 8, 1922, 2. It should be pointed out that Turner (in *Islam in the African American*, 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 whom Dr. Abdul Hamid is and the role he would play in the development of African American 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 both gave his movement an additional recruitment network and added to the UNIA an exotic and a prestigious flare. Historian Nathan I. Huggins has observed that Garvey employed Masonic-like regalia, organization, and performances because they offered African Americans tangible and visible evidence that they were truly part of an exiled nation, which helped convince African Americans of their own dignity.⁹ Garvey also utilized Freemasonry as a model for the various UNIA honorary orders, such as the Knights of the Nile. One of the men 'knighted' into this society was in fact the same man responsible for Garvey becoming a Mason: John E. Bruce,¹⁰ 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 he 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 bibliophile originally from Puerto Rico.¹¹ Schomburg was a longtime member of New York City's Freemasonic El Sol de Cuba Lodge, Number 38, which had been established by Cuban and Puerto Rican exiles.¹² 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.¹³ Sharing many interests, Bruce and Schomburg were soon close friends who participated in many of the same activities. Schomburg, for instance, in the 1910s established the Negro Society for Historical Research and Bruce became a member, bringing his friend Dusé with him; and, like Dusé and Bruce, Schomburg was familiar with Blyden's work. Bruce and Schomburg were also very active in Freemasonry outside of their El Sol de Cuba Lodge. In 1918 Schomburg became the grand secretary

9 Huggins, *Harlem Renaissance*, 42–43.

10 Cronon, *Black Moses*, 69.

11 Crowder, *John Edward Bruce*, 115.

12 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.

13 *Ibid.*

of the Grand Lodge of the state of New York and both men edited Masonic journals.¹⁴ In fact, it was Bruce and Schomburg together who convinced Garvey to become a Freemason.¹⁵

Bruce and Schomburg were also staunch defenders of African American Freemasonry against white accusations of illegitimacy—and it was this issue 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, welfare, civil society, and race pride. Because of this, individuals and organizations offering authentication of the legitimacy of the Masonic and Shriner orders were sometimes brought forth to help defend them. Nineteen twenty-two, in fact, was a period during which black Masons and Shriners were particularly motivated to find outside backing. 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 to help fight off white encroachment. And, interestingly, that spring, Caesar R. Blake, Jr., the leader of the main black Shriner organization, 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 movement.¹⁶

With this background in mind, Bruce, Dusé, and Schomburg may have thus believed that an African Muslim Mason like Dr. Abdul Hamid could potentially be a useful resource.¹⁷ Though the outcome of their meeting is not known, it

14 Ibid., 26–27. Bruce was the editor of *Masonic Quarterly Review*.

15 Crowder, *John Edward Bruce*, 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, *Arthur*, 124.

16 See Bowen, “Abdul Hamid Suleiman,” 16–17. The Ahmadis, in fact, had probably initiated contact. In the autumn of 1921, Muhammad Sadiq 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 Patrick D. Bowen, “Quilliam and the Rise of International Esoteric-Masonic Islamophilia,” in *Victorian Muslim: Abdullah Quilliam and Islam in the West*, eds. Jamie Gilham and Ron Geaves (London: Hurst, 2017).

17 Dusé may have also been brought to authenticate Dr. Abdul Hamid's claimed Sudanese-Egyptian background.

seems likely—because Dr. Abdul Hamid is not, in any available documents, ever again mentioned by the three Garvey affiliates¹⁸—that he ultimately had little influence on these particular men. But his failure in April did not mean that he would abandon his efforts at reaching out to black American Masons. Likely motivated by his ability to arrange such a meeting, by the following August, Dr. Abdul Hamid—now going alternatively as Dr. Abdul Hamid Suleiman and Prince Abdul Hamid Suleiman, and leading a movement that he explicitly identified as both Islamic and Masonic¹⁹—was negotiating with Caesar R. Blake, Jr. about bringing the black Shriners into what was called in the press his ‘Mohammedan Masonry.’²⁰

It is highly probable that Dr. Abdul Hamid/Dr. Abdul Hamid Suleiman and Dr. Prince De Solomon/Rev. P.D. Solomon—the man discussed in Chapter 1—were one and the same. Not only did they share similar surnames (Suleiman/Solomon), 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’).²¹ Later, Suleiman even took credit for having at one point incorporated in New York a Mecca Medina Temple of Ancient Free and Operative Masons—an organization with the exact same name as the group Dr. De Solomon had incorporated in New York in 1910. If 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, govern themselves, and live together as a tribe or nation.”²² Suleiman therefore may have used this opportunity to exploit his similarities with the UNIA in order to boost his own credibility.

18 However, I would encourage researchers who have access to private collections of letters written by Bruce, Schomburg, or Dusé to see if they can find any remarks about their meeting with Suleiman.

19 There should be little doubt that ‘Dr. Abdul Hamid’ was the same person as ‘Abdul Hamid Suleiman.’ Both claimed to be ninety-six-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.’

20 See Bowen, “Abdul Hamid Suleiman.” Suleiman also 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, however, there is no mention of any African Freemason or Shriner who had come to testify for either side; see Bowen, “Abdul Hamid Suleiman,” 19.

21 See Bowen, “Abdul Hamid Suleiman” and *idem.*, “Prince D. Solomon.”

22 “Exodus to Africa.”

Although the April meeting and the other events of the spring of 1922 were important for the Islam-UNIA connections, the events of August 1922 were even more significant. That month it was reported that in Chicago half-a-dozen UNIA members had converted to Islam under the Ahmadi proselytizer Muhammad Sadiq.²³ In Washington, DC, meanwhile, 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 August 6 to 12.²⁴ And in Harlem, the UNIA was hosting its month-long third international convention, which featured on August 10, Duse speaking in front of a large convention audience and making the inspiring but incredibly inaccurate claim that ninety-five per cent of African natives were Muslims.²⁵

Then, on August 25, 'The Future of Religious Faith and Belief of the Negro' was announced as the UNIA convention's topic of the day.²⁶ The goal of that 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, according to the convention report, 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, some delegates endorsed humanistic ideals such as free-thinking and love, and a number of others suggested that the UNIA should adopt as its religion its own motto: 'One Aim, One God, One Destiny.' However, "several" others, as the report 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]."²⁷ If there was any one incident that marked the significant degree to which Islam was associated with Garvey's movement in 1922, this was it.

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 denom-

23 Roger Didier, "Those Who're Missionaries to Christians," *Chicago Defender* (Ntl. ed.), August 19, 1922, 5.

24 "The Sheriff of Mecca," *Chicago Defender* (Ntl. ed.), August 26, 1922, 9.

25 "Knotty Point for Garvey in African Move," *The Gleaner* (Kingston, Jamaica), August 21, 1922, 17.

26 This section builds off of the research of Tony Martin in his *Race First: The Ideological and Organizational Struggles of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1976), 74–77.

27 "Eason Expelled for Disloyalty," *Negro World*, September 2, 1922, 12.

inational 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.²⁸

‘Scientific,’ here, was used primarily in the sense of having a critically analytical mind that rejects illogical ideas, but it also resonated with those interested in hoodoo, who often described their knowledge as ‘science,’ and with the New Thought and racial uplift currents that Garvey and many of his followers endorsed. A motion was made to form the committee and five men were appointed: three Christian reverends, an attorney, and Arnold J. Ford, the black Israelite rabbi who worked as the UNIA’s choirmaster and bandmaster.

The inclusion of Ford in this committee is significant because of the connections he made between Islam and the UNIA. By 1922, Ford, who may have been exposed to Islam from the Algerian teacher in his religious organization, had also been influenced by the UNIA’s ‘glorifiers,’ including Dusé and Bruce, with whom he had been in correspondence since at least 1917.²⁹ 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.³⁰ He also incorporated these hymns, as well as other Islamic elements (such as partaking in Ramadan) into two black Israelite groups that he led during that decade: the Moorish Zionist Temple and Beth B’nai Abraham, both of which had strong Pan-Africanist/black nationalist identities.³¹ In addition, Ford was a member of a number of black Freemasonic lodges that incorporated ‘oriental’ themes during the 1920s, including one in front of which Suleiman would lecture.³²

28 Ibid.

29 Wolf, “Jews,” 317; Burkett, *Garveyism*, 178.

30 See Burkett, *Garveyism*, 36–37, 178; Arnold J. Ford, *The Universal Ethiopian Hymnal* ([New York]: Beth B’nai Abraham Publishing Co., [1922]).

31 Landing, *Black Judaism*, 119–157.

32 Bowen, “Abdul Hamid Suleiman,” 22.

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 Suleiman was making headlines in New York newspapers for his attempt to convert black Freemasons and Shriners to Islam, and while African American reporters were spreading the news about an international Islamic convention in which Muslims were considering coordinating their anti-colonial activities with those of black people in the Americas,³³ the UNIA's own newspaper was dealing 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 ninth, that month also saw an increase in articles dealing with independence and revolutionary movements in Muslim-majority countries, especially Turkey, and *Negro World* writers were revealing a growing sense that a 'holy war' between Christians and Muslims was on the horizon.³⁴ 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."³⁵

In the September 30 issue 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."³⁶ Although a committed Christian, he understood the grievances of Muslims and the Turks' antipathy towards the "arrogant European." Another editorial writer argued that a holy war between Muslims and Christians might lead to greater justice in the world—and therefore was to be supported.³⁷ A few pages later, one of Arnold J. Ford's Islam-tinged hymns appeared: "May he our rights proclaim,/ In Yah-

33 "Musselmen to Hold World Convention," *Chicago Whip*, October 14, 1922, 3.

34 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?].

35 "Marcus Garvey Sends Message to Negro Peoples of the World on War Crisis," *Negro World*, September 23, 1922, 1.

36 Robert L. Poston, "The Cross or the Crescent—Which?" *Negro World*, September 30, 1922, 4.

37 "What a Holy War Might Mean," *Negro World*, September 30, 1922, 4.

veh's [*sic*] sacred Name,/ 'Allah'—One God, One Aim, One Destiny."³⁸ Then, in November, the newspaper ran a story containing basic information about Islam's holy Kaaba in Mecca; foreshadowing the Nation of Islam's teaching, 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.³⁹

1923

The connections between Islam and the UNIA would continue to grow through most of 1923. Garvey and the *Negro World* started off the year by taking the position that Moroccans and Algerians were in fact "Negroes."⁴⁰ By singling out a group of Muslims as black, the UNIA greatly strengthened the likelihood that its followers would identify with Muslims, or at least this particular group of black Muslims. That same January, Muhammad Sadiq announced that between the previous October and December he had given five speeches at UNIA meetings in Detroit and through these had made about forty new converts, including a former Christian minister who was appointed leader of the Detroit Ahmadi congregation.⁴¹

Meanwhile, Abdul Hamid Suleiman had abandoned his efforts to convert black Freemasons and Shriners and had begun focusing on promoting Islam to apparently non-Masonic African Americans in the greater New York area.⁴² Although he primarily resided in Harlem, where he reportedly led a branch of his Islamic group, Newark served as the headquarters of Suleiman's 'Caananites Temple.'⁴³ How exactly Suleiman started his organization is uncertain. Given

38 Arnold J. Ford, "Potentate's Hymn," *Negro World*, September 30, 1922, 7.

39 "Black Stone of Mecca' Held in Great Veneration," *Negro World*, November 25, 1922, 6. The NOI's views on the Kaaba will be taken up in Chapter 12.

40 "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.

41 "Brief Report of the World in America," *Moslem Sunrise* 2, no. 1 (1923): 167.

42 See Bowen, "Abdul Hamid Suleiman" for a longer discussion and citations of most of the relevant primary sources.

43 The only known contemporary reference to the group's name uses this spelling, though it is not clear whether the group itself used it; see "Converts Sought by Mohammedans," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, July 15, 1923, A13.

that he had previously achieved prominence as a religious authority, healer, and Masonic leader, it does not seem beyond the realm of possibility that he had brought together strangers who were simply attracted to his wisdom and claimed powers. However, it is very likely that Suleiman, like so many organizers before him, benefitted from winning the allegiance of a pre-existing social network. In 1956, an article written by an African American Muslim claimed that in the early 1920s “a man came to Newark from Sudan, Egypt teaching languages” and siphoned off followers of the previously-mentioned Newark-based Muslim healer Professor Drew, and that it was in fact Drew who first created the ‘Canaanite Temple,’ having done so in 1913.⁴⁴ In other versions of this story, this mysterious man is said to have been Professor Drew’s former teacher, and, according to some sources, the man’s name was indeed ‘Dr. Suliman.’⁴⁵ Given all of this, it seems extremely likely that there is some truth to these rumors, even if there is still currently no solid contemporary evidence of the connection between the Suleiman and Drew’s following, or evidence that Drew had been the person responsible for starting the Canaanite Temple.⁴⁶

Other evidence, meanwhile, points to additional factors that would have further contributed to Suleiman’s success in 1923. For example, the presence of the Ahmadis and other ‘glorifiers’ of Islam in New York may have laid the groundwork for a figure like Suleiman to come in and be successful among African Americans. At the same time, Newark’s African American community, which, evidence suggests, had been strongly influenced by Garvey, was already home to another Garvey-linked new black religion: Robert Athlyi Rogers’ Afro-Athlican Constructive Gaathly Church. Both Suleiman and Rogers’ groups mixed African American folk religion with esotericism and a black nationalist leaning and, interestingly, both groups even appear to have used the same building for many of their activities—Essex Hall, at the corner of Bank Street and Rutgers Street.⁴⁷

More important for Suleiman’s success, however, was the fact that in 1923 the black section of Newark was a community under great stress. The city’s African American population had recently exploded with Southern migrants, going from 6,694 to over 30,000 between 1900 and 1920.⁴⁸ Although they were living

44 “Prophet Noble Drew Ali,” *Moorish Review* (November 1956): 1, Schomburg Center MSTA collection. My thanks to Fathie Ali Abdat for bringing this article to my attention.

45 Bowen, “Abdul Hamid Suleiman,” 29–35, 53–54.

46 For more on this topic, see Chapter 4.

47 Hill, “Leonard P. Howell,” 29; Bowen, “Abdul Hamid Suleiman,” 25.

48 Lee Hagan, Larry A. Greene, Leonard Harris, and Clement A. Price, “Blacks,” in *The New*

among masses of people from similar backgrounds, life could be very hard for the migrants, as they were packed into substandard housing and dealing with the city's pollution and health problems—especially tuberculosis, which was rampant in the community—as well as constant racism.⁴⁹ Despite, for instance, Newark passing a law in 1921 prohibiting racial segregation in public places, the practice continued informally for years;⁵⁰ and African Americans were undoubtedly frequently victims of the area's policemen, who, in the early 1920s, were repeatedly found to be violent, corrupt, undisciplined, and racist.⁵¹

Jersey Ethnic Experience, ed. Barbara Cunningham (Union City, NJ: Wm. H. Wise & Co., 1977), 77–79; John T. Cunningham, *Newark* (Newark: New Jersey Historical Society, 1966), 252; “More People Here from South, Few from West, Census Shows,” *Newark Evening News*, February 9, 1923, 4.

- 49 Ibid.; “Negro Health Week Observance to Start at Meeting in Church,” *Newark Evening News*, May 22, 1920, 6; “Hospitals of Newark Are Now Filled to Capacity,” *Newark Evening News*, February 23, 1923, 1; “Darkness as of Night Comes in Daylight Hours,” *Newark Evening News*, February 28, 1923, 1. For accounts of African American life in 1920s Newark, see Hill, *Garvey Papers*, 2:522–23, 533; 5:659n11; Audrey Olsen Faulkner et al., *When I Was Comin’ Up: An Oral History of Aged Blacks* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1982); Clement Alexander Price, “The Afro-American Community of Newark, 1917–1947: A Social History” (PhD diss., Rutgers University, 1975).
- 50 “Theater Official Held in Move to Enforce Civil Rights Law,” *Newark Evening News*, April 13, 1923, 2.
- 51 Due to this topic having never been seriously studied before, I have collected the below citations to establish my claim. See, e.g., Bureau of Municipal Research, *Police Problems in Newark* (Newark: Bureau of Municipal Research, 1943), 49–53, reprinted in *Urban Police: Selected Surveys* (New York: Arno Press and the New York Times, 1971) and the following articles in the *Newark Evening News* from a) 1920: “Views Differ as to Orange Police Quiz,” April 21, 6; “Negro with Seven Hats Held,” June 18, 11; “Negroes Seek Representation,” June 26, 1; “Policeman Arrested in Daylight Joy Ride Case,” June 29; “Policeman Held in Whisky Sale,” July 10, 1; “Seven Patrolmen, Under Charges, Now on Trial,” July 20, 7; “Special Police Accused after Olympic Park Row,” August 5, 5; “Policeman Dropped Three Others Fined,” August 5, 6; “Ousted Policeman Is Held as Robber,” August 10, 10; b) 1922: “I’m Drunk, Policeman Phones to Headquarters,” January 3, 1; “Two Policemen Are Suspended from Duty,” January 4, 7; “Officer Is Held on Extortion Charge,” January 9, 9; and c) 1923: “Theater Official Held in Move to Enforce Civil Rights Law,” April 13, 2; “Special Policeman Suspended on Charge of Blackjacking Man,” February 8, 1; “Letter Signed K.K.K. Takes Judge to Task for Sentencing Battle,” February 9, 1; “Reinstates Policeman for Welfare of Family,” February 10, 2; “Requested to Resign, Bosset Suspends Work,” February 10, 3; “Patrolman Suspended after Being Pronounced Intoxicated,” February 14, 2; “Elizabeth Policeman Accused of Shooting Man in Fare Row,” February 23, 6; “Policeman and Woman Sued on Charges of False Arrest,” March 29, [8?]; “Ten Days’ Pay Heaviest Fine at Police Trials,” April 11, 2; “Pronounced Intoxicated, Patrolman Is Suspended,” April 13, 4; “Find

Yet in 1923 the police were not the only source of violence and intimidation against African Americans in Newark. That year, the Ku Klux Klan was bullying its way into New Jersey's public sphere, burning crosses, writing threatening letters, and walking into both white and black church services in full regalia.⁵² Although many white voluntary associations, pastors, and politicians spoke out against the group; some helped try to pass anti-Klan laws; and other whites led anti-Klan riots, the New Jersey 'Kluxers' seemed only to grow bolder.⁵³

Mark on Prisoner Who Says Detective Kicked Him," April 14, 2; "Hounded by Police, Says Negro in Assault Case," April 19, 17; "Patrolman Suspended after He Says He Got Drink at 'the Brother's,'" May 2, 4; "'Murder! Don't Shoot,' Cries Fugitive, Halting as Bullet Flies Aloft," May 4, 11; "Police Chief Gets Report about Suspended Patrolman," May 7, 4; "Shot Fired by Police Wounds Fugitive in Hip," May 7, 6; "Bad Morale Reflected in Disgrace of Police," May 15, 13.

- 52 See, in addition to Kenneth T. Jackson, *The Ku Klux Klan in the City 1915-1930* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), 178-79, the following articles from the *Newark Evening News* (all are from 1923 except where otherwise noted): "Klan Planning Branches in Warren County, Is Report," January 18, 2; "Gets 'κ.κ.κ.' Note, Now Bears Brickbat by Permit," February 5, 6; "Hooded Figures in Field Surround Flaming Cross," February 13, 15; "Two in Klan Regalia Deposit Wreath on Statue of Washington," February 22, 1; "Klan Protests Removal of Washington Wreath, Promises 'Virile' Action," February 24, 1; "Police Get More Protests in Klan Wreath Removal," February 26, 6; "Klansmen Visit Church, Minister Yields Pulpit," March 12, 8; "Fiery Crosses Light Mountains to the East and West of Dover," March 16, 1; "To Tell Why He Welcomed Ku Klux Klan to Service," March 17, 5; "Why He Let Klansman Address Congregation Explained by Pastor," March 19, 5; "More Blazing Klan Crosses Lead to Arrest of Man," April 10, 5; "Klan Leader Removes Mask, Talks in Paterson Church," April 16, 5; "Pastor Gets 'κ.κ.κ.' Letter," April 18, 17; "Seek Girl's Body after Letter Signed 'κ.κ.κ.,'" April 19, 1; "Bergen Pastor Not Frightened by Order from 'κ.κ.κ.' to Leave," April 19, 4; "Ku Klux Speaker in Kearny Pulpit," April 23, 5; "Veiled Klanswomen at Church Service," April 30, 5; "Fiery Cross Appears in Front of Como Church," April 30, 9; "Bayonne Pastor Says Klan Is Heavenly Benediction to Nation," April 30, 11; "More than 3,000 in White Regalia at Klan Ceremony," May 3, 9; "Story of Klan Visitors to Church Increases Ten-Fold on Retelling," May 5, 13; "Ku Klux Rumor Sends Curiosity Seekers to Bloomfield Public Green," May 7, 4; "Pillar of Fire Temple Service Held Under Guard of Police," May 7, 10; "Klan Kidnapping Story Investigated at Belmar," May 10, 15; "Klan at Negro Church in Belmar Gives Gift, Denies Unfriendliness," December 24, 5; "Junior Klan Initiates 175 Boys at Meeting in West Belmar Field," December 27, 22; "Burning of Klan Cross Witnessed by Residents of Hackettstown," January 2, 1924, 18.
- 53 Jackson, *The Ku Klux Klan*, 179 and see the following *Newark Evening News* articles from 1923: "Governor Assails Ku Klux Klan in Talk to Knights of Columbus," January 24, 9; "Ku Klux is Condemned by Veterans' Alliance," January 25, 14; "Two Anti-Ku Klux Klan Measures before House," February 6, [6?]; "Anti-Mask Ordinance, Aimed at Ku Kluxers, Introduced in Harsion," February 7, 15; "Ignore Ku Klux Klan, Holy Name Is Advised,"

This situation must have been particularly unnerving for the black immigrants, since fear of the Klan had been precisely what had driven many to New Jersey in the first place.⁵⁴ To address the situation, in early 1923 several leading black residents attempted to help the refugees through an aid society called the Committee of One Hundred; however, this and other similar black-led welfare activities do not seem to have sufficiently addressed the newcomers' needs and fears.⁵⁵

It appears that the place where black migrants most sought refuge from the stresses and dangers of the North was the church, the one institution with which they were familiar. In Newark, though, religion was not the same as what they had known in the South. Early on, the migrants were attending the city's existing black houses of worship, but despite the churches making attempts to better address the needs of the new converts, the Southern-born found the middle-class orientation of these communities to be alien and preferred to worship separately.⁵⁶ As a result, from 1914 to 1932 the number of Newark's formally-established black churches more than doubled, and several additional, more transient storefront churches began springing up as well.⁵⁷ The influx of so many people in such a short time inevitably led to tensions too, and church schisms and infighting—sometimes the result of pastoral misconduct—abounded.⁵⁸ Conjure, meanwhile, was of course also being practiced, both among those who performed in their homes traditions they had learned in the South and among those who sought out conjure-influenced mystics like Prof. Drew.⁵⁹ Hoodoo-minded migrants may have also encountered

February 9, 17; "Klan Protests Removal"; "Klan Attacked by Judges [*sic*], Who Calls It un-American," March 5, 6; William J. Murphy, "If Klan Is 100, He Is Content to Be Half of One Per Cent. American," April 27, 13; "Priest Warns of Impostor Asking Funds to Fight Klan," April 27, 1; "Broader Charity Needed, Not Klan, Pastor Holds," April 30, 5; "Bound Brook Riot over Klan Talk," May 2, 2; "Quizzed on Anti-Klan Fund, Freed," May 3, 8.

54 "Organizes to Care for Colored Folk Who Flee South in Fear of Klan," *Newark Evening News*, January 27, 1923, 3.

55 Ibid; Price, "The Afro-American Community," 83–84, 89–96. Interestingly, one man seems to have attempted to use *white* fear of the Klan to attack institutional racism in the state; see "Letter Signed K.K.K."

56 Price, "The Afro-American Community," 74–83.

57 Price, "The Afro-American Community," 76–88; "Following Colored Flock North, Minister Plans Newark Church," *Newark Evening News*, May 15, 1923, 7.

58 Price, "The Afro-American Community," 76–88; "Church Meeting Broken Up by Police as Two Women Are Hysterical, One Faints," *Newark Evening News*, January 8, 1924, 1.

59 For Dr. Thomas Drew, see Chapter 1. For other examples of hoodoo in Newark, see "Calls

some of the city's more established alternative religious currents—such as the spiritualist, New Thought, Higher Thought, Baha'i, Theosophical, and Divine Science congregations and the spiritual and occult bookstores that were advertised in local newspapers—which, although white-dominated, tended to be fairly liberal and were relatively numerous in Newark.⁶⁰ Connections may have even been made with the city's small immigrant Muslim population,⁶¹ although for the most part, besides for those who had heard of Prof. Drew, contact with things Islamic was probably limited to 'oriental'-themed silent movies, popular songs about 'sheik' lovers, and the various Muslim-like mystical figures, such as the 'crystal gazer' and 'man of mystery' Alla (Allah) Axiom, who were performing on the city's vaudeville stages.⁶²

His Wife a 'Voodoo,'" *New York Times*, October 14, 1896, 9; "Voodoo Charms Sold as Fire Extinguisher," *New York Times*, February 28, 1923, 11; "Hales Husband to Court because of Voodoo Prayers," *New York Times*, March 11, 1923, E1; Hyatt, *Hoodoo*, 127. Some African American believers in hoodoo were even visiting a white 'witch' palm reader; see "Claims Alibi to Defend Charge of Witchcraft," *Newark Evening News*, May 20, 1920, 2; "Acquitted on Witchcraft Charge," *Newark Evening News*, June 1, 1920, 9. One of the most interesting examples of hoodoo in Newark at that time is the 'voodoo cult' that Newark police raided in the early morning of March 5, 1930. The group reportedly chanted and swayed, used incense, and invoked an African god, and one member was said to have said "There's no such thing as laws. God makes all the laws and tells a man what he must do." Articles about the group ran in both Newark and national newspapers from March 5 to March 8.

60 All of these organizations' advertisements ran frequently in the *Newark Evening News* in the early 1920s.

61 Although I have found news reports of Muslims in other New Jersey cities before 1930, I have not found any yet for those in Newark (other than the possible immigrants who were affiliated with Suleiman). Nevertheless, in the early 1920s, the *Newark Evening News* ran several advertisements for businesses—often clothing and oriental rug retailers—run by Arabs, some of whom may have been Muslim. See also Philip M. Kayal, "Arabic-Speaking People," in *The New Jersey Ethnic Experience*, ed. Barbara Cunningham (Union City, NJ: Wm. H. Wise & Co., 1977), 22–35.

62 On the 'oriental film' genre of the period, see Abdelmajid Hajji, "The Arab in American Silent Cinema: A Study of a Film Genre" (PhD diss., University of Kansas, 1994). Because of the influence of this genre, Newark, like many American cities at the time, had some movie theaters with 'oriental' names, like the city's 1920s Mosque Theatre. Carl Mahoney's song "The Sheik" was, notably, popular in Newark's black community in 1922; see "Snap Shots," *Chat*, March 15, 1922, [16]. On Alla Axiom, see "'Man of Mystery' Sues Theater, Claiming Contract Was Broken," *Newark Evening News*, March 14, 1923, 8. Interestingly, the name of one part of the black section of town was a Muslim-themed reference: the 'Barbary Coast'; see "Three Negroes Rob and Beat Man, Leave Him Unconscious," *Newark Evening News*, August 12, 1920, 14; "Colored Preacher Held in Slaying," *Newark Evening*

The little evidence we have about Suleiman's Caananites Temple suggests that he appealed to Newark's recently-migrated African Americans largely through hoodoo and a mix of biblically- and Masonically-based black history themes. The earliest confirmed date associated with Suleiman's Islamic group is April 1923, when 'Doctor' Suleiman reportedly told his new followers that he would spend nine nights alone with their children.⁶³ As we have seen, performing activities in nine night or nine day increments was extremely common in hoodoo and was almost non-existent in other mystical practices present in twentieth-century America; migrants who were already familiar with hoodoo would have thus found this time frame to have been perfectly in line with what they had known, even if the practice of a conjurer staying the night with children was not itself common.⁶⁴ Other possible hoodoo-related elements of Suleiman's activities were his penchants for fortune telling and selling curative plant root concoctions,⁶⁵ and some of his personal characteristics could have been interpreted as signs of special magical status, such as claiming to be seventy-seven years old and having blue eyes.⁶⁶ And if it is the case that Suleiman started his organization in the spring of 1923, he probably also appealed to the folk and hoodoo interest in notable celestial events by claiming that the lunar eclipse on March 2—which was visible and publicized in Newark—was a sign of his movement's emergence.⁶⁷

News, March 6, 1923, 6. Perhaps this was a play on the word 'barber' since one of the references I found to this section was discussing a black barber who led a church in that section. It is worth noting, however, that there was also a 'Barbary Coast' black section in Baltimore.

- 63 Bowen, "Abdul Hamid Suleiman," 26–27. On his using the title 'doctor,' see *ibid.*, 37–38.
- 64 Hyatt, *Hoodoo*, 3215, 3387, 3839, 3632, 3842, 3960; Bell, "Pattern, Structure," 463, 470n73; Zora Neale Hurston, "Hoodoo in America," *Journal of American Folklore* 44, no. 174 (1931): 358. The number nine itself was generally popular in hoodoo thought; see Bell, "Pattern, Structure," 355, 368n96, 449, 452, 454, 455, 458, 461–63. It is worth at least adding here, too, that this accusation against Suleiman was similar to one against John Hickerson, the leader of one of the black Jew Church of the Living God sects.
- 65 Bowen, "Prince D. Solomon," 7; Bowen, "Abdul Hamid Suleiman," 20.
- 66 Bowen, "Abdul Hamid Suleiman," 6, 2. The number seven, as we have seen, was frequently emphasized in hoodoo as a mystical number, and it occurs throughout Hyatt's *Hoodoo*. On the significance sometimes given to black people with blue eyes, see Hyatt, *Hoodoo*, 295.
- 67 "Lunar Eclipse Visible in This Section Tonight," *Newark Evening News*, March 2, 1923, [6?]; "Man in Moon Looked as If One of Eyes Was Bandaged during Last Night's Eclipse," *Newark Evening News*, March 3, 1923, 1.

On the black history end of things, if it was Suleiman who first came up with the notion of proposing the Canaanite Muslim identity for African Americans, this leaves open the possibility that this claim fit together in some way with Suleiman's other rare assertions. Suleiman's identification as a ninety-sixth degree Mason is perhaps the most relevant clue for this issue.⁶⁸ Only one Masonic group claimed to have ninety-six degrees, the Ancient and Primitive Rite of Memphis and Misraim (APR).⁶⁹ As the order's name indicates, this group traced its origins to Misraim, a Hebrew word that refers to both the ancient country of Egypt and the similarly-named son of Ham who was traditionally understood as the progenitor of Egyptians—in other words, the rite claimed to follow the true and original religion of the Egyptians, as understood within a biblical context. As we have seen, African Americans had long identified with Ham and his son Cush, and black Masons had emphasized African Americans' connections with the ancient Egyptians who were said to be the first Freemasons, so it is easy to understand how Suleiman might have appealed to his various listeners by saying that the esoteric rites of the order were the true practices of Ham's children, including Ham's cursed son Canaan and his descendants.

But why not simply insist on descent from Misraim or Ham? Why focus on Canaan? One answer may lie in the fact that the leading members of the APR—who were white—were interested in Islam, and even claimed that Islam had influenced their order. The popular version of the Rite in the English-speaking world was led in the late 1800s and early 1900s by John Yarker, a prominent British esotericist Mason.⁷⁰ Early on, Yarker, like several other Masons of his day, had not only theorized that Muslims had been responsible for bringing Freemasonry to Europe, but had also become Masonically-affiliated with the prominent white Muslim convert from Liverpool, William Quilliam, who similarly endorsed the Masonic transmission thesis.⁷¹ By 1902, Yarker had developed

68 Bowen, "Prince D. Solomon," 9; Bowen, "Abdul Hamid Suleiman," 5.

69 For more on this group and its connections to Islam, see Ellic Howe, "The Rite of Memphis in France and England 1838–70," *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum* 92 (1979): 1–14; Ellic Howe, "Fringe Masonry in England 1870–85," *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum* 85 (1972): 242–95; Bowen, "Quilliam and the Rise."

70 On Yarker and the esotericist Masonic community with which he was involved, see Kaczynski, *Forgotten Templars: The Untold Origins of Ordo Templi Orientis* (n.p.: Richard Kaczynski, 2012); Howe, "Fringe Masonry"; Bowen, "Quilliam and the Rise"; *idem.*, *HCTIUS*, 1:66–74. Note that the latter source generally refers to Yarker's group simply as the 'Ancient and Primitive Rite.'

71 For more on this topic, see Bowen, *HCTIUS*, 1:115–38 and *idem.*, "Quilliam and the Rise."

a great reverence for Islam, writing in one of Quilliam's Islamic periodicals that the religion, unlike any other religion or culture, encompassed universal liberties suitable for the entire world.⁷² The year before, Quilliam had also printed an article probably written by Yarker wherein it was asserted that, beyond influencing Masonry generally, Islam had been an especially important influence for the APR.⁷³ There is as yet no uncovered evidence that these Masons attributed Islam's influence to Canaan, but such a connection might have been drawn by individuals at the time who sought to fit Islam into ancient biblical history. Islam claims to be the original religion of God, so Islamophilic Masons may have identified Islam with the religion of Melchizedek, whom the Bible presents as the earliest high priest of God (Genesis 14:8); and since Melchizedek is traditionally recognized as being from the land of Canaan, his religion, and thus Islam and therefore the APR, could be regarded as the Canaanite religion, and the APR as the Canaanite Temple.

In regards to Suleiman's claim of belonging to the Ancient and Primitive Rite, three additional issues should be pointed out here. First of all, over the years, Suleiman repeatedly asserted that he had ties with England, and with British Masons in particular, which does not connect him directly to Yarker's group, but at least implies a context in which they might have encountered each other.⁷⁴ Second, when Yarker died in 1913, the white Muslim Quilliam, along with famed occultist Aleister Crowley, was still a leading member of the APR, and by that time he had moved to London where he was coming into contact with a number of black Muslims, including Dusé Mohamed Ali.⁷⁵ In fact, Quilliam and Dusé were members of several of the same organizations, such as the Central Islamic Society;⁷⁶ the Anglo-Ottoman Society; the International College of Chromatics; the Société Internationale de Philologie, Sciences, et Beaux-arts; the Cerole d' Etudes Ethnographiques; and—perhaps most importantly, for our purposes—the League of Justice, which aimed to “secure for the

72 Amjad Muhsen S. Dajani (al-Daoudi), “*The Islamic World, 1893–1908*,” *Victorian Periodicals Review* 47, no. 3 (2014): 456.

73 “Freemasonry and Islam,” *Islamic World* 6, no. 68 (1901): 208–11.

74 Bowen, “Prince D. Solomon,” 12; Bowen, “Abdul Hamid Suleiman,” 20.

75 Bowen, *HCTIUS*, 1137. On Quilliam's life, see Ron Geaves, *Islam in Victorian Britain: The Life and Times of Abdullah Quilliam* (Leicestershire, England: Kube Publishing, 2010); Jamie Gilham, *Loyal Enemies: British Converts to Islam, 1850–1950* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014); and Gilham and Geaves, eds., *Victorian Muslim: Abdullah Quilliam and Islam in the West* (London: Hurst, 2017).

76 This group, notably, had a member named M.D. Suleiman who claimed to be from the Sudan; see Duffield, “Dusé Mohamed Ali,” 515.

coloured races throughout the world justice at the hands of the democracies of Europe, Asia, America, Australasia and South Africa.”⁷⁷ As a Muslim Mason with black nationalist leanings, if Suleiman had visited England at some point in the 1910s, chances are good that he would have run in some of the same circles as Quilliam. We know, in fact, that he would not have even been the only non-white Muslim Freemason welcomed into the white British Masonic community that decade.⁷⁸

Finally, although Suleiman more than likely was not from Egypt or the Sudan, we cannot fully rule out this possibility; it is therefore also significant that in the early twentieth century the APR had a lodge in Alexandria, Egypt—one of the places where Suleiman claimed to have once lived—and that branch was verifiably connected with the European APR.⁷⁹ Interestingly, the APR was not alone in having a fraternal lodge in Egypt. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, there were reportedly several Muslim-majority secret societies in Egypt, Mecca, and throughout the rest of the Islamic world, many of which were created to work towards Pan-Islamic and anti-colonial goals; and at least some of these were explicitly Masonic.⁸⁰ As far as is known, Suleiman was the only public figure in African American culture during the early 1920s claiming ties to any of these various international orders. While it is true that we cannot confirm direct links between Suleiman and any such organization, he certainly endorsed views that many of their members would have held. For example, Suleiman told reporters that he was “bringing into

77 By 1914, due to government persecution, Quilliam had begun using the name Prof. Henri de Leon, and it was with this name that the links with Dusé can be seen. Cf. Duffield, “Dusé Mohamed Ali,” 453, 469–70, 523–25, 557–58; “The Study of Ethnography,” *African Times and Orient Review* (March 1917): 49; Gilham, *Loyal Enemies*, 217. Dusé’s journal, the *African Times and Orient Review*, frequently mentioned these and other organizations in which Quilliam was a member.

78 See, e.g., “Among the Masons,” *Savannah Tribune*, January 26, 1918, 3, which discusses the Masonic initiation in London of ‘King Oudh,’ a Muslim from India.

79 Bowen, “Prince D. Solomon,” 6; Kaczynski, *Forgotten Templars*, 221; Joseph Sakakini, *Incident avec la Grande Loge d’Egypte: Rapport: Dénonciation de l’irrégularité de la Grande Loge d’Egypte* (Constantinople: n.p., 1910); Joseph Sakakini, *Rapport concernant l’irrégularité de la Gr.: L.: d’Egypte* (Constantinople: n.p., 1910).

80 Martin Kramer, *Islam Assembled: The Advent of the Muslim Congresses* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 13–42; and see especially British Foreign Office files HO 45/9753, 7/9/1898; 407/177/26809, [7/10/1911]; 141/704/21, [1933]. There was also a Hebrew-speaking lodge in Egypt, which is noteworthy because Suleiman sometimes claimed to have at one time also been a Jew; see Leon Zeldis, “A Hitherto Unknown Hebrew-Speaking Lodge in Egypt,” *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum* 107 (1994): 228–29.

closer religious harmony the Negro, Turkish and Syrian Moslems” in the US and he 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.”⁸¹ Suleiman was, in other words, promoting both Pan-Islamic unity as well as the idea, shared by these many Muslims, that Islam had no color line.

There were, however, other possible sources for Suleiman's teachings, especially for what seems to have been his connecting Masonry and the Canaanites. For example, as was noted in Chapter 1, some black folktales identified African Americans as the original people and even as the Canaanites specifically. Given that Masonry had also entered the black folk tradition, it is possible that a person could have simply mixed these tales and come up with Suleiman's ideas. However, a more likely possibility is that Suleiman was borrowing from William Christian, the earliest known American proponent of the ‘black Jew’ thesis, who, notably, besides calling his own groups ‘temples,’ emphasized Melchizedek as a key figure in his ‘Free Mason Religion.’⁸² According to Christian, Melchizedek was both the first man and a Freemason; so when he “blessed” Abraham in Genesis 4:19, what he was really doing was making Abraham a Mason—an event that, because for Christian Masonry represented God's Law, was responsible for making Abraham's descendants (who were black) Jews. This connection between Melchizedek's Masonry and black people was undoubtedly reinforced for Christian by Hebrews 5:10 and 6:20, which identify Jesus—whom the black Jews assert is also black—as being appointed by God to be the new high priest of the order of Melchizedek. Given that Christian believed his followers were practicing the same religion as Jesus, Abraham, and Melchizedek, then the religion followed in his ‘temples’ could legitimately be called a Canaanite religion, and the temples Canaanite temples.

The importance given to these claims in Christian's group may explain why it is that Rabbi Wentworth Arthur Matthew, who led a black Jew movement in 1920s Harlem probably after coming out of a Christian-lineage organization, also explicitly argued that African Americans were indeed the original Canaanites.⁸³ In fact, several black churches in the twentieth-century US and South Africa similarly emphasized a connection with the Canaanites: Newark's Gaathly Church had several references to the Canaanites in its leader's *Holy Piby*; a ‘Church of the Canaanites’ was started in Durban, South Africa in 1916;

81 Bowen, “Abdul Hamid Suleiman,” 25, 2.

82 Christian, “Notice to All” and also see Christian, *Poor Pilgrim's Work*, 1.

83 Dorman, *Chosen People*, 175; Landing, *Black Judaism*, 137.

the 1922 catechism for an AME Zion Church in North Carolina discussed the ancient ‘Church of the Canaanites’ and made sure to mention the facts that Melchizedek was a Canaanite and that Christ was a high priest in his order; and later, in the 1960s, a Washington, DC storefront church was called the ‘Cannanite Temple of the Church of God.’⁸⁴ Going even further than these groups, however, was Rev. Fitz Balintine Pettersburgh, the author of the *Holy Piby*-influenced *Royal Parchment Scroll of Black Supremacy* (1926), who publicly and explicitly asserted that the true religion of Ethiopia, and thus the religion of all African-descended people, was in fact the order of the Canaanite Melchizedek.⁸⁵

By blending this somewhat popular tradition with his hoodoo and Masonic knowledge, Suleiman would have been able to recruit members and sympathizers of the black Jews and these other related movements—a move that seems to be consistent with his old claims of having been a ‘Black Jew’ himself. It is likely, too, that the connection between Masonry, Islam, and Melchizedek served as Suleiman’s ideological basis for saying to the press in 1922 that the Qur’an had been written over 400 years before the birth of Jesus Christ, and that “Christ was a Shriner.”⁸⁶ If the Shriners were really following Islam, if Islam was the order of the Canaanite Melchizedek, and if Christ was also in the order of Melchizedek, then Christ was indeed a Canaanite Shriner and Suleiman might have identified as the Qur’an any of the ancient writings thought to have been composed by Hebrews, Canaanites, Egyptians, or Masons.

The combination of the various themes he promoted seems to have given Suleiman some success; by the early summer he had gained perhaps a few hundred followers in Newark and Harlem, and in July several periodicals ran stories about the Caananites Temple.⁸⁷ The idea that African Americans might

84 Gaathly Church: Rogers, *Holy Piby*, 58, 59, 61, 64, 68; South African church: Landing, *Black Judaism*, 169 (it should be pointed out that many South African whites reportedly still referred to blacks as ‘Canaanites’ into the 1930s; see Adolf Grabowski, “In Time of War,” *Living Age* [November 1935]: 208); A.M.E. Zion church: C.R. Harris, *Historical Catechism of the A.M.E. Zion Church for Use in Families and Sunday Schools* (Charlotte, NC: A.M.E. Zion Publication House, 1922), 2–4; J.L. Dillard, “On the Grammar of Afro-American Naming Practices,” in *Mother Wit from the Laughing Barrel: Readings in the Interpretation of Afro-American Folklore*, ed. Alan Dundes (New York: Garland Publishing, 1981), 178. There was also a ‘Knights of Canaan’ fraternal lodge in late-nineteenth-century Vicksburg, Mississippi; see Giggie, “For God and Lodge,” 202.

85 Pettersburgh, *Royal Parchment*, 10, 31–32.

86 Bowen, “Abdul Hamid Suleiman,” 13.

87 See Bowen, “Abdul Hamid Suleiman,” *passim*.

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 blacks so that they could defend themselves against the Ku Klux Klan in the South, whereas a writer for the *Chicago Defender*, a black newspaper, argued against African Americans embracing Islam because, he felt, they were not the group that needed to change their religion and morals—whites were.⁸⁸

In mid-August 1923 Suleiman was arrested, and then later convicted, for the rape of an underage daughter of two members of this group—a charge he consistently denied.⁸⁹ The arrest and conviction, nevertheless, further confirm the identification of Suleiman with the mysterious man from the Sudan who supposedly took followers from Thomas Drew. The previously-mentioned 1956 article about Prof. Drew explicitly states that the Sudanese figure was arrested and jailed, implying that this was around the early 1920s, and that soon after this Drew would travel to Chicago where he took on the name Noble Drew Ali and started what was called the Moorish Science Temple of America.⁹⁰ What happened to Suleiman's movement afterwards remains unclear. Today, historians belonging to the MSTa possess what is said to be a copy of an incorporation form dated May 31, 1924 for "The Canaanite Temple, No. 1, Inc."⁹¹ However, though this document contains important information about this particular Canaanite Temple, it sheds little light on this group's possible connection to Suleiman or other figures in the AAIR. This Canaanite Temple, while located in Newark—the same city as Suleiman's largest following—listed its principal offices as being at a different address than Suleiman's group. Also, none of the identified incorporator names have ever been shown to have a connection with Suleiman, whereas at least one of them may have indeed been connected with Thomas Drew (see Chapter 4). 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 Temple or in most other early African American Islamic organizations.

88 See Bowen, "Abdul Hamid Suleiman," for the citations and a longer discussion.

89 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.

90 "Prophet Noble Drew Ali," 1.

91 ALI'S MEN PAPERS (hereafter, AMP). While this document appears to be legitimate, I have not been able to obtain another version on file with the State of New Jersey.

Another possible trace of Suleiman's influence comes from 1927 and may shed some light on some of the specific contents of Suleiman's teachings. Either that year, or possibly in 1926, a white Christian missionary encountered a black Muslim in Newark who, the missionary recounted, greeted him "very gruffly." The missionary relayed the events that followed:

When I told him I was the Bible man, he grew very indignant and growled at me like an animal, saying that I and all who were distributing Christian literature are doing so to keep the people in ignorance; and especially is this true, he said, among those that are trying to bring religion to his—the colored race. He said the white people are commercializing the negro, and to do this successfully, they kept them in superstitious ignorance, and by these means keep them in slavery.⁹²

This Muslim's attitude and several of the ideas he endorsed reflected the critiques of Christianity used by both Garvey and many slaves before him, and which, as we will see, would later be found in Drew Ali's movement and in the Nation of Islam. The fact that this person does not seem to have identified himself as a 'Moor,' but rather as a Muslim, and that neither Drew Ali's Moorish Science Temple of America nor Muhammad Sadiq's Ahmadi movement had a formally-organized community in Newark at that time raises the possibility that this man was a former follower of Suleiman, and that Suleiman had been teaching such ideas prior to the creation of Drew Ali's group.

It is not known if and when Suleiman went to prison after his appeal was denied in 1924. His disappearance from the press between that year and 1926, however, suggests that he was not—at least under the name Abdul Hamid Suleiman—active in Newark or New York. But by late 1927 he had returned to presenting himself as a prominent Freemason and hoodoo fortune teller in New York City;⁹³ he would not, it appears, form another successful Islamic organization. On July 30, 1934, Suleiman died in Harlem from urinary retention and was given a Masonic burial by the Atma Lodge.⁹⁴ His death certificate lists his age at death as being sixty-nine, and the names for his parents—who are

92 *One Hundred Years and Eleventh Annual Report of the American Bible Society* (New York: American Bible Society, 1927), 102.

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

94 Abdul Hamid Suleiman Death Certificate, Department of Health of the City of New York.

both listed as having been born in Egypt—are given as Abdul Sulieman and Sarah Nisa Harara, but it is not known if these were their real names.⁹⁵ Even in death, then, Suleiman continued to leave mysteries in his wake.

However, Suleiman's August 1923 arrest left more than a mystery; it left a political question of who would take Suleiman's place as the main Muslim leader on the East Coast if he were to be imprisoned long-term. The question of leadership was all the more pressing because the person who was perhaps the individual most responsible for Islamophilia spreading among African Americans in the early 1920s was himself incarcerated at that time. After being convicted of mail fraud in June and having his appeal denied, Marcus Garvey was arrested in July and not released on bail until September 10. This event had a direct impact on the AAIR since, with its leader behind bars and, as a result, internecine conflict in the UNIA increasing, the organization felt that it should not hold its annual August international conference. 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 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. On August 4, the *Negro World* ran an article again asking readers to consider the choice of "crescent or cross."⁹⁶ In the essay "El Islam," Jamaican UNIA leader J.A. O'Meally argued that, because it lacked racial discrimination and taught the values of self-respect and unwavering brotherhood, Islam "would be a wonderful spiritual force in the life of the colored races, uniting [them] in a bond of common sympathy[, ...] interest," and language—which he specified as being Arabic.⁹⁷ Interestingly, the later claim about Arabic may have influenced the larger Garveyite movement, as later that year,

95 Ibid. Unfortunately, the handwriting on the certificate is not entirely clear, so the mother's surname may be a little off.

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

97 On O'Meally's background, see Hill, *Garvey Papers*, 4:950–5111.

the *Negro World's* editors called for blacks to share an “African language.”⁹⁸ O’Meally, in any case, went on to explicitly encourage making Islam the religion of the UNIA, and pointed out that the religion was currently attracting numerous American blacks.⁹⁹

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-colonialism in Africa¹⁰⁰—printed yet another piece contrasting the “crescent or cross” in the headline.¹⁰¹ 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.¹⁰² The fact that the *Negro World* editors noted that they had first come across the transcription of this speech in an Ahmadi periodical reveals that the UNIA was still, at its highest levels, interested in Islam and the Ahmadis were strongly tied to the group.¹⁰³ In fact, in late August, when each UNIA division was holding its own convention in lieu of the international one, Muhammad Sadiq appeared as a guest at the Harlem UNIA conference.¹⁰⁴

Sadiq, at the time, was preparing to return to India. After almost four years of missionary work in the US, he was leaving the Ahmadi mission in the hands of 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 US, Muhammad Din, reprinted O’Meally’s “crescent or cross” article in the US Ahmadi magazine and announced—having possibly been influenced by O’Meally—that Arabic and Islam were the language and religion of African Americans’ “forefathers.”¹⁰⁵ That same month, Paul Nathaniel Johnson (Sheik

98 “African Language and Literature Make for African Nationality,” *Negro World*, December 22, 1923, 4.

99 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.

100 Burkett, *Black Redemption*, 152–56.

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

102 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.

103 As explained in the first paragraph of the article.

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

105 J.A. O’Meally, “Crescent or Cross? A Negro May Aspire to any Position under Islam without Discrimination,” *Moslem Sunrise* [2], no. 4 (1923): 263–64; “True Salvation of the American

Ahmad Din), the most prominent and influential African American Ahmadi at the time, took out an advertisement in the *Negro World* promoting both Islam and an Ahmadi “Expose Book” that promised to “wake up” readers to the truth about the world’s religions.¹⁰⁶ 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, in fact, would go on to turn Din’s claim into a popular expression that quickly spread across the Ahmadi-Garveyite channels: “Get back your language and your religion, and you won’t be a Negro anymore.”¹⁰⁷ Johnson’s plans for black emancipation, however, were not limited to the symbolic. Having become highly 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.”¹⁰⁸

In addition to all of this, a Bureau of Information report from that year reveals another interesting connection between the Ahmadis and the UNIA.¹⁰⁹ While conducting an investigation of Garvey, the Bureau learned that one Rev. James Walker Hood Eason possibly died at the hands of a Garveyite named Esau Ramus. Thomas L. Jefferson, the African American reporting agent, pursued this investigation in Chicago, interviewing several UNIA members in the city, including one who was a personal acquaintance of his, a Mrs. Robertson. What is notable here is that the agent explained in his report that he knew Mrs. Robertson because both were members of the local Ahmadi mosque. Due to the fact that records released through the Freedom of Information Act do not show evidence of an investigation of the Ahmadis in the 1920s,¹¹⁰ it cannot be said with certainty whether or not Jefferson had joined the group at the

Negroes,” *Moslem Sunrise* 2, no. 2 & 3 (1923):184; “True Salvation of the American Negroes,” *Moslem Sunrise* [2], no. 4 (1923): 266.

106 “Don’t Worry About the Bible,” *Negro World*, October 20, 1923, 7.

107 Dannin, *Black Pilgrimage*, 37; Noshir P. Kaikobad, “The Colored Muslims of Pittsburgh” (MA thesis, University of Pittsburgh, 1948), 30.

108 “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.

109 Marcus Garvey Bureau of Investigation (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.

110 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*.

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. The chances are very good, then, that the Bureau did indeed have him join the mosque—and that would make it the earliest known instance of the FBI investigating and infiltrating an African American Islamic group. While its impact was barely felt in these early years, this phenomenon of government investigation of black Muslims would later play an important role in transforming African American Islam into a genuine mass movement that would eventually gain tens of thousands of believers.

As far as non-Ahmadi Islamic activities were concerned, there are few other known events to have taken place in 1923. In fact, it seems that the year ended on a low note. In early December, the ‘Moslem’ Prof. Drew was arrested in New York on a charge of practicing medicine without a license. The brief news article describing the event makes no mention of a religious organization that he might have been leading, although it does indicate that his current residence was still at 181 Warren Street in Newark.¹¹¹ In any case, the most significant factor about the arrest was its timing. With Drew’s arrest, Suleiman’s arrest and court case, and Garvey’s legal troubles, the spread of Islam had been significantly disrupted by the close of the year.

1924

Despite the efforts of the Ahmadis to continue to connect their group with Garvey’s movement, the UNIA leadership’s interest in Islam seems to have dropped off precipitously by the end of 1923 and stayed low through 1924. In fact, in 1924 the *Negro World* carried only one pro-Islam commentary,¹¹² whereas pro-Christian commentaries increased significantly and several of the news articles that the newspaper did run about Muslims focused on Muslim disunity.¹¹³ The only consistent positive references to Islam in 1924 came from the pen of Ethel Trew Dunlap, a poet who had several of her works published in the *Negro World* between 1921 and 1925.¹¹⁴ Beginning in December 1923 and

111 “Newark ‘Healer’ Accused of Doctoring without a License,” *Newark Evening News*, December 5, 1923.

112 “The Sauce of Islam,” *Negro World*, December 27, 1924, 4.

113 In the November 1st issue, in fact, there were three articles on the subject.

114 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

continuing for the next two years, a number of Dunlap's poems contained Islamic themes,¹¹⁵ a phenomenon that was likely primarily the result of the influence of the black Ahmadi leader Paul Nathaniel Johnson, to whom she dedicated her first Islam-tinged poem.¹¹⁶

In August 1924, the UNIA finally held its fourth international convention. While 'religion' was announced as a 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."¹¹⁷ 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.¹¹⁸

After Ford made his statement, however, 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.

During this year, no single person was able to win as many African American converts to Islam as Sadiq had from 1920 to 1923.¹¹⁹ This was probably due to a

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.

115 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.

116 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*.

117 "Proceedings of Fourth International Convention," *Negro World*, August 16, 1924, 2.

118 "Proceedings of Fourth International Convention," 3.

119 Although the Ahmadis under Din reportedly recruited around 700 people (see Hoffert,

number of factors. First, Sadiq was unquestionably an exceptional missionary whose accomplishments could not be—and were not—easily replicated by Muhammad Din. Significantly, Din had apparently failed to further develop the Ahmadi relationship with the UNIA; he reportedly approached Garvey himself to see about speaking at a UNIA meeting, but Garvey would not allow this as he desired to avoid religious controversy, and this event seems to have very much weakened the groups' ties.¹²⁰ 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 UNIA community in 1922–23. Finally, with Suleiman and Thomas Drew probably languishing in their respective jails; the Canaanite Temple, No. 1, Inc. apparently failing to firmly take the reins of the movement; and Paul Nathaniel Johnson living in St. Louis, far from the main center of African American Islamic activity, no other obvious leader of an African American Islamic movement remained.

It is interesting, then, that 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 the more intellectual and artistic elements of the black community. In January of that year, George Ivanovich Gurdjieff, an Armenian-born mystic who incorporated a wide variety of Central Asian religious traditions in his teachings, arrived in New York after spending the previous eleven years becoming famous in Europe.¹²¹ During the December before his arrival, A.R. Orage, a British editor who had previously worked with Dusé,¹²² had been building American anticipation for Gurdjieff by contacting

“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 US Ahmadi periodical, the *Moslem Sunrise*, whose existence represented both a large interested 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 US Ahmadi missionary activities seriously declined starting in 1924. More on the Ahmadi growth after 1923 will be discussed in Chapter 4.

120 Whyte, “Christian Elements,” 23.

121 See Bowen, *HCTIUS*, 1:211–12.

122 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 Orage knew that Dusé was in the US at the time, and, even if he did, it is very unlikely that Orage would have contacted him. See Duffield, “Dusé Mohamed Ali,” chapter 3, esp. 109.

many influential figures in New York's literary scene. A prospectus advertising Gurdjieff-directed dance performances indicated that his work was inspired by Sufism—Islamic mysticism—which had recently gained attention in America due to the efforts of the Sufi leader Inayat Khan.¹²³ By the time of his ship's mooring, then, Gurdjieff had waiting for him an intrigued group of writers and artists.

We know that prior to Gurdjieff's arrival, Orage had contacted and won the interest of at least one African American writer: Jean Toomer. Born in 1894 into a middle-class mulatto family in Washington, DC, Toomer was race-conscious with a thirst for exploring and experimenting with philosophy, literary styles, and racial ideas.¹²⁴ In 1923, he published *Cane*, a stylistically innovative novel that delved into multiple topics surrounding African American life in the South. The book received immediate and wide praise by white and black critics alike, leading to Toomer becoming regarded as among the elite writers of any race during the period. Drawn to cutting-edge intellectual concepts, Toomer found Gurdjieff and his message fascinating and decided to join the religious leader when the latter returned to his home in France in the summer. Then, after studying with Gurdjieff, Toomer returned to Harlem where, in early 1925, he established 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.¹²⁵ Though this black Gurdjieffian community, which soon also had another small group in Chicago, only lasted a few years, it may have had a significant, if still little understood, impact on Harlem's

123 Anna Terri Challenger, "An Introduction to Gurdjieff's *Beelzebub*: A Modern Sufi Teaching Tale" (PhD diss., Kent State University, 1990), 13. On Inayat Khan, see Bowen, *HCTIUS*, 1:213–24.

124 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): 436–62; 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).

125 Bontemps only attended one meeting.

artistic thought.¹²⁶ Whatever the degree of influence of Gurdjieff on the artists' work truly was, though, what is particularly notable about the Harlem Gurdjieffians is that they addressed issues that no other Gurdjieffians were 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 stories about his pre-Europe days, but they did not paint a full, clear picture and instead left many questions. Although a number of his followers have attempted to reconstruct his past in order to understand it better, 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 [...]."¹²⁷ While Bennett's assertion has been questioned by more orthodox followers of Gurdjieff—largely because of their antipathy for the Sufi-influenced teacher Idries Shah with whom Bennett was aligned at the time he made the assertion—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.¹²⁸ Another writer, Anna Challenger, identified other references to Islam and Sufism, especially with the Sufi figure Nasreddin, and saw a Sufi influence in Gurdjieff's storytelling style.¹²⁹ Indeed, the Sufi ele-

126 Jon Woodson, who has written on this community, 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." See his *To Make*, 36.

127 John G. Bennett, *Gurdjieff: Making a New World* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 278.

128 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.

129 Challenger, "An Introduction," 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.

ments in Gurdjieff's writing are so prevalent that some scholars have included Gurdjieff in their overviews of Sufism in the West and the US.¹³⁰

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.' The latter term refers to possessing true understanding of the universe, which entails knowing that the universe operates according to cosmic laws, or 'mathematics,' as Gurdjieff sometimes referred to them.¹³¹ The most important of these are the law of three (which states that all 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). All phenomena, furthermore, have vibrations, similar to sounds in an octave, and all phenomena and processes in the universe are connected, but only certain activities will contribute to the universe's perpetuation; 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.

130 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; William Rory Dickson, *Living Sufism in North America: Between Tradition and Transformation* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2015), 83–88.

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

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 all people should access their potentials to unselfishly help others and the world more generally—indeed, Gurdjieff's teachings resonated with some of the other popular New Thought, esoteric, and folk 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, along with the Ahmadis, perhaps among the first organized Sufi-influenced African Americans to deal with questions about race.

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 communities in New York and Chicago floundered after a few years and, as Jon Woodson has argued, 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.¹³² Nevertheless, there would soon appear a new doctrine that shared some characteristics with those of Gurdjieff, such as references to Mecca and Muslim figures, discussions of 'mathematics,' knowledge of people's sleeping and enslaved condition, the calling of the doctrinal study program as 'work'/'labor,'¹³³ neologisms, tales of extraterrestrial beings and advanced technology, and various seemingly absurd phenomena and stories. Interestingly, as will be shown, this doctrine may have been influenced by the same general storytelling tradition of Central Asia that influenced Gurdjieff. Still, despite these similarities, in the end this doctrine, which would be promoted by one W.D. Fard in Detroit in the early 1930s, was very different. It was overtly Islamic and black nationalist, and it would go on to be one of the most influential teachings in African American Islam.

But in 1924, Fard's ideas were still six 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 they could be well-received, and, perhaps, even created.

132 See Woodson, *To Make a New Race*.

133 Gurdjieff's program was called 'the Work,' whereas Fard referred his teachings as the 'Labor Course' and his students as 'Laborers.'

1925

After a year-and-a-half of court battles, on February 8, 1925, Marcus Garvey began serving a prison sentence for his mail fraud conviction. Garvey would stay behind bars until late 1927 when President Coolidge commuted his sentence on the condition that the black nationalist be deported to his home country. In the meantime, lacking both the physical presence of its leader as well as an abundance of 'local movement centers'—local umbrella organizations that help keep mass movements from collapsing by formally uniting various smaller groups in order to better coordinate activities and consolidate leadership within a mass movement—the UNIA struggled to maintain a unified membership.¹³⁴ Its internal conflicts would culminate in 1929 when the organization underwent a major schism that resulted in the emergence of two groups using the title of UNIA. It was perhaps not a coincidence that it was in the early stages of this growing identity and leadership crisis that Islam was able to make one final resurgence within the central powers of Garvey's movement.

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, who had already, in 1923, been identified by the UNIA as 'negroes'—*black* Muslims were thus now one of the UNIA's main sources of inspiration for black liberation. The UNIA's interest in Moroccans was concentrated on the Muslim Berbers of the Rif (northern Morocco) who, since 1920, had been fighting Spanish and French forces to regain Moroccan territory controlled by Spain.¹³⁵ Led by Abd el-Krim, the poorly-armed Muslims were able to inflict serious damage on their European enemies, and thus led one of the most successful anti-colonial military campaigns in the early twentieth century. Though they were ultimately overcome by the Europeans' superior armaments and manpower in 1926, the Rifis' victories in the previous years had significantly inspired anti-colonialists and black nationalists throughout the world.

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

134 Aldon Morris has shown that these centers were essential for the establishment of the civil rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s; see his *Origins*, 40–41, 283–85.

135 On the Rif War, see David S. Woolman, *Rebels in the Rif: Abd el Krim and the Rif Rebellion* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1968); C.R. Pennell, *A Country with a Government and a Flag: The Rif War in Morocco 1921–1926* (Boulder: Middle East and North African Studies Press, 1986).

articles on the subject. From May through December that year, almost every issue of the *Negro World* had at least one article dealing with the war in some way; several issues ran three articles touching on the topic; and a handful of issues had six or more—and the war was frequently the subject of the newspaper's major headlines. 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 battle in Morocco 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 Muslims' progress were read at UNIA meetings and speeches were made in support of Abd el-Krim and his efforts.¹³⁶ Commentaries in the *Negro World*, like the speeches at UNIA meetings, invariably supported the 'gallant' Moroccans, who were frequently called 'Moors.' They also compared the Moors' white European enemies to white oppressors throughout the rest of the world; criticized all US aid to the European side of the war; encouraged African American soldiers to refuse to fight against the Moroccans; and interpreted their military success as a sign of an imminent world-wide anti-colonial revolution, particularly for 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."¹³⁷ The Moors of the Rif War had thus earned the admiration and allegiance of the UNIA to a degree far surpassing that ever given by the UNIA to any other Muslim group, and perhaps any other modern group at all. Largely through the UNIA's influence, then, in 1925, the Moors became a powerful symbol of black liberation for African Americans. Even Dusé Mohamed Ali—despite no longer being affiliated with the UNIA by that time—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."¹³⁸

Fascinatingly, however, the UNIA was not the only organized group attempting to promote support for Moroccans among African Americans in 1925. In May that year, two men, Ahmed El Wazani, who claimed to be from Wazan,

136 See, e.g., the division news briefs in the *Negro World* on September 5 and September 26, 1925.

137 James A. Fray, "He Wants to Go and Help the Riffs," *Negro World*, July 18, 1925, 10.

138 "Comments by the Age Editors on Sayings of Other Editors," *New York Age*, March 21, 1925, 4.

Morocco, and Hazea A. Rahim, who claimed to be from Egypt, gave multiple lectures for African Americans in St. Louis and presumably other cities across the US as part of what they touted as a world tour that was intended to inform people about the events taking place in Morocco, Egypt, and the rest of Africa.¹³⁹ Unfortunately, we currently know next to nothing about these two men's supposed world tour. There is so far no additional trace of Wazani, and Rahim seems to have soon abandoned the project. That October, while in Pine Bluff, Arkansas, Rahim married a sixteen-year-old African American with whom he soon moved to Detroit before separating and moving first to Chicago and then California.¹⁴⁰ Although their world tour claim may have simply been a device used to enable the pair to earn money through lecturing, it is possible that these men were acting as representatives for a North African religious or nationalist movement of the period or perhaps one of the several Pan-Islamic or Pan-African societies that were active at that time.¹⁴¹ As mentioned above, in 1922 there was an international Muslim convention wherein members were considering coordinating their anti-colonial activities with those of black Americans, and in the early 1930s a story was circulating about a secret African-based international Islamic movement among black people—so the notion that a non-Ahmadi foreign Muslim movement was actively trying to recruit African Americans at the time is not entirely out of the realm of possibility.¹⁴² It may also be significant that in the late 1920s there was a rumor, transmitted through a story published by a white Theosophist, that there was a diasporic community of North African Berbers—people who could legitimately be called Moors—who were scattered throughout Africa and were members of a secret, Theosophy-like, Egypt-connected esoteric order,

139 "Egypt and Morocco Speakers on Program," *St. Louis Argus*, May 15, 1925, 2; "Egyptian Speaker at Lane," *St. Louis Argus*, May 22, 1925, 10.

140 Many of Rahim's movements are recorded in documents on *Ancestry.com*. Jennifer Hodgkin, a descendant of Rahim's wife (who, interestingly, after moving to California began identifying as 'Spanish'), provided me with additional details as well as copies of relevant marriage and death records. Rahim would later claim, it seems, that he was from Persia.

141 For a list of over two dozen early twentieth-century Islamic nationalist and Pan-Islamic secret societies from the period, see British Foreign Office, "Further Correspondence Respecting the Affairs of Egypt and Soudan," February 1912, "Report Respecting Secret Societies." New Moroccan nationalist secret societies were started in the mid-1920s as well; see John P. Halstead, *Rebirth of a Nation: The Origins and Rise of Moroccan Nationalism, 1912-1944* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 165-72.

142 "Musselmen to Hold World Convention" and Frederico Philos, "The Black Peril," *Magazine Digest* 11 (November 1935): 80-83.

the Brotherhood of the Higher Ones of Egypt.¹⁴³ Although it is likely that this particular Brotherhood was merely a figment of the Theosophist's imagination,¹⁴⁴ the story still serves to remind us that there were possibly various exponents of little-known Muslim and North African organizations and teachings scattered throughout America's black communities during the mid-to-late 1920s.

In addition to the nationalist hopes that Wazani, Rahim, and the UNIA's pro-Moroccan propaganda were cultivating, their efforts probably also helped revive and consolidate older African American feelings of identification with the Moors. 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 US 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 US as an independent nation; enslaved black Muslims, who were sometimes called 'Moors' even if they, like the freed slave Abd ar-Rahman, 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 sometimes morally) strong, free blacks who—as we have seen—Booker T. Washington observed moved with relative ease in Jim Crow America.¹⁴⁵ Unsurprisingly, the name and image of the Moor was sometimes even utilized by the African American Shriners.¹⁴⁶

Perhaps this tradition was in the minds, or even in the subconsciousnesses, of many 1920s African Americans, and of the *Negro World* editors specifically.

143 Patrick G. Bowen, "The Ancient Wisdom of Africa," *Studies in Comparative Religion* 3, no. 2 (1969): 113–21. This story was originally published in 1927, and in 1935 Bowen published what he claimed were "translations and chapters or lessons from a volume of mystic writings" by one Mehlo Moya, a supposed Berber philosopher and teacher belonging to this occult order; see his *The Sayings of the Ancient One* ([London]: Rider, [1935]).

144 This is the assessment of David Chidester in *Wild Religion: Tracking the Sacred in South Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 159 ff.

145 W.G.M., "Art. I.—The Laws of Virginia Relative to Slavery," *American Jurist and Law Magazine* 7, no. 13 (1832): 5, 9; Gomez, *Black Crescent*, 173–83; Timothy Marr, *The Cultural Roots of American Islamicism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 27–33, 293–94.

146 On the use of the Moor image by African American Shriners, see Walkes, *History of the Shrine*, 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.

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 Moors, as well as the Ahmadi's related concept 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 and other individuals, but the UNIA itself was not responsible for merging these traditions with the current interest. Still, the endorsement of the Moors by the UNIA and Wazani and Rahim 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 it was precisely in 1925 when the most well-known African American religious movement to explicitly use the Moorish identity was organized: Noble Drew Ali's Moorish Science Temple of America. As will be discussed in Chapter 4, Drew Ali, it seems, harnessed or at least benefitted from the UNIA-created popularity and symbolic value given to the Moors and merged these with the American Moor tradition, folk religion, esotericism, Muhammad Din's assertion, and possibly old traditions from North Africa.

But despite the UNIA not being directly responsible for bringing together these older traditions with the group's current interest in Morocco, during this period there was still a 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.¹⁴⁷ 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 monogamy as practiced in Christian lands.¹⁴⁸ This exchange was

147 "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.

148 "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.

followed by two more comments on the subject.¹⁴⁹ Finally, there was a revival of interest in news stories about revolutionary movements in other Muslim-majority lands, particularly in Turkey and Arabia, and one story described Islamic “mystic orders” aiding these Muslim movements.¹⁵⁰

This black nationalist Islamophilia was so pervasive that it even reached California. During the AAIR, some black Californians were coming into contact with a variety of Muslim immigrants (see Chapter 9), and of these, one of the more intriguing was a 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, Dr. Soliman. Passenger records confirm Abd Ellatif Soliman’s story that he was Egyptian and had come to the US in the 1920s after living for some unspecified period in Germany.¹⁵¹ Soliman claimed, in addition, that he had “spent several years studying in the various European institutions, graduating with honors from the best German colleges of medicine.”¹⁵² Although no external evidence has appeared to support this particular claim, 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 conjurer or root doctor, selling to African Americans

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

150 “Mystic Orders Are Seen as Aiding Islam’s Fight,” *Negro World*, October 3, 1925, 2.

151 See *Ancestry.com*.

152 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 US—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.

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 local African American newspaper, the *California Eagle*.¹⁵³ 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 nationalism and black nationalism.

It may have been through placing his advertisements in the *California Eagle* that Soliman first met the newspaper's Garveyite editors, Charlotta Bass and her husband, a Shriner, Joseph.¹⁵⁴ The Basses, who were undoubtedly aware of the *Negro World's* interest in the North Africans that year, were probably the individuals responsible for inviting Soliman to give "a short and interesting talk" to the Los Angeles UNIA division in April 1925.¹⁵⁵ A relationship with the Basses soon developed, and by late 1925, the couple had decided to publish and promote a book Soliman had recently written concerning African Americans.¹⁵⁶ However, despite the UNIA's popularity and Soliman and the *Eagle's* numerous promotional efforts,¹⁵⁷ Soliman's *The Past, Present and Future of the Negro*

153 "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.

154 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).

155 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.

156 "Newest Literary Contribution," *California Eagle*, March 12, 1926, 6.

157 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, and who encouraged the colonization of Africa by black Americans. Both Powell and his wife were interested in Soliman's work. See the letters—dated March 19 and 30, 1926 and December 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 Ethel Wolfskill

was largely ignored after its release in February 1926, and it seems to have been relatively inconsequential in the history of African American culture.¹⁵⁸ Still, because Soliman's book presents a number of ideas that were consistent with some of the major themes in the AAIR, particularly in the 1920s, it may have had a greater impact than can currently be documented. It is therefore worth spending a moment discussing the work.

Soliman's book is composed of three main parts. First is a section giving histories of Africa, Africans, and modern slavery, in which 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 US 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 efforts of Garvey and the UNIA are explicitly supported because only this group, Soliman says, is working to create a strong enough community—a nation—to support and protect African Americans.¹⁵⁹ 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 US government should support because it would permit the US to become exclusively white, which is, he says, the desire of most white Americans.¹⁶⁰ Soliman's ideas, then, were very consistent with Garvey's.

Because Soliman's solution is almost exclusively about emigration, he does not argue that African Americans need to convert to Islam to improve their condition in the United States. He does, however, in his introduction, argue that if the US does not resolve the “Negro problem,” there is a good possibility that, because, in his view, Islam lacks racism, all oppressed people—but particularly black people—will begin converting to Islam, creating an immense religious cultural shift.¹⁶¹

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.

Hedlin, “Earnest Cox and Colonization: A White Racist's Response to Black Repatriation, 1923–1966” (PhD diss., Duke University, 1974).

158 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*.

159 Soliman, *Past, Present*, 276–281.

160 *Ibid.*, 303–315.

161 *Ibid.*, 26–27.

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.¹⁶²

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 in the 1920s is not known; by late 1927 he was apparently living in Germany and was planning on staying in Europe for the next year,¹⁶³ and he possibly was dead by 1930.¹⁶⁴

However, Soliman was not the only Egyptian black 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 in March 1922, may have left his mark on the black inmates at San Quentin Prison, where he was incarcerated until 1924. In January 1925, a San Quentin inmate wrote to the *Negro World* claiming that by the first of the year the black inmate population had become “100 per cent Garvey-ized in spirit.”¹⁶⁵ It is likely that Lucius, whose Sudanese-Egyptian Islamic identity and

162 Ibid., 27.

163 Letter, A.E. Soliman to John Powell, December 27, 1927.

164 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.

165 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.

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. It is also possible, though, that some of the imprisoned Garveyites were learning 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 herself living in California at that time, and some of these prisoners, like Dunlap, may have been corresponding with the Ahmadis, who were still relatively popular with UNIA members. At the very least, it is probable that, given the UNIA's Islamophilia in the 1920s, and the fact that the closest UNIA division to San Quentin—the Oakland division—was especially interested in promoting connections with North African Muslims in 1925,¹⁶⁶ there was more than likely *some* Islamophilia circulating in San Quentin's black population in the 1920s.

A final interesting Islam-related trend that saw significant growth in 1925 was the advertising for black Muslim mystics, who claimed titles like 'Arabian Mystic' and 'Mohammedan Scientist,' in New York newspapers and the *Negro World*.¹⁶⁷ As we have seen, prior to the 1920s, though there had been several black mystics who took on vague 'oriental' personas, those who, like Suleiman and Prof. Drew, claimed a specifically Muslim identity were relatively rare. In 1923, however, probably due to the influence of the first wave of the UNIA's 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 hoodoo use of the term 'science' to describe magic as well as with Garvey's call for a 'scientific understanding of religion.'¹⁶⁸

166 The Oakland division, the state's most influential branch, showed an especially strong interest in the Muslim Moors; 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 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 an Arabic name, Abdullah Gali; see the division report on July 5, 1924.

167 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.

168 The 'Mohammedan Scientists' included Prof. Effiong, Prof. J. Du Jaja, Prof. K. Eyo, E. Udo-

Interestingly, though, none of these mystics employed a Moorish identity—their Islamic image was generally framed in a vague African-‘oriental’/‘Muslim’ style. Typically, they 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.”¹⁶⁹ The light-skinned, fez-wearing Prof. Hassan Bey depicted in the advertisement sketch was a clearly presenting the image of what was meant to be seen as ‘white’ Muslim from the Arab-Egyptian world—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 and therefore did not mention Islam specifically. In 1925, however, a ‘Mohammedan Scientist,’ undeniably of African stock, appeared in the *Negro World*’s pages: Prof. J. Du JaJa, who ran his Asia and Africa Remedy Company out of Harlem. Du JaJa (who may have in fact been Suleiman using an alias)¹⁷⁰ was probably the most famous Muslim mystic in the

bio, and Amadu. In addition, there was Holy Moses who taught ‘Christian and Mohammedan Science,’ Dr. Abd-el 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 aliases.

169 “Prof. Hassan Bey,” *Negro World*, August 30, 1924, 19.

170 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. 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 129th Street, was only one block away from the address Suleiman used in 1922 and 1923, 143 West 130th 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

period; his advertisement ran dozens of times in some of the most well-known black newspapers, including the *New York Amsterdam News* and the *Pittsburgh Courier*, in 1925. In the UNIA's newspaper, his advertisements appeared almost every week that year and in many issues in the next; and he seems 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' generally.¹⁷¹

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, the newspaper reported on a lecture that was to be given in New York by Inayat Khan, an Indian Sufi teacher who had initially come to America in 1910.¹⁷² Khan had gained New Yorker followers during his first tour in the US 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 *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 Garveyites were therefore being exposed to a diverse array of Islamic practices, concepts, and identities.

A Dream Deferred

In 1926, after four years of promoting Islam to African Americans on a mass scale and, in the process, dramatically changing the black religious market, the UNIA's Islamophilia significantly decreased. As the Moors' success in the Rif

a Masonic gesture; Suleiman, as I have shown, identified as 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.

171 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 Obobo Herbo Company), Prof. K. Eyo, and Amadu.

172 "Indian Philosopher here with Message," *Negro World*, December 19, 1925, 5. On Khan and his American Sufi following in America, see Bowen, *HCTIUS*, 1:213–24.

War, which would end with the Moors' surrender that year, began to look less and less likely, news articles and commentaries about the war and other Muslims were significantly 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. DuJaJa's advertisements appeared much less frequently. Islam had failed to take hold as a viable faith *within* the UNIA community. In 1926, furthermore, Garvey and (possibly) Abdul Hamid Suleiman were still imprisoned,¹⁷³ and Muhammad Din, the second Ahmadi missionary, had returned to India the year before without having left an official missionary to replace him. The Ahmadi movement, then, which had been up to this point the most successful African American-majority Islamic organization, had entered a period of serious decline (see Chapter 8).

Of course, a few vestiges of the UNIA's Islamophilia remained. Barakatullah, the South Asian Muslim who had encouraged African Americans to embrace Islam in 1908, reappeared briefly in 1927 as an affiliate of the UNIA. In Cleveland the president of a local UNIA division known as the Ethiopian Club, Dr. Steinbant Dyer Mohammond, whose name indicates that he was probably Muslim, sponsored an annual 'Mohammed Day.'¹⁷⁴ In New York, the Universal African Nationalist Movement (UANM), a group that splintered from the UNIA in 1946, possessed Muslim influences almost from its inception. One of its early members, an old Garveyite named S.A. 'Manosi' Suffar, was a fez-wearing Muslim and in February 1947 the organization hosted the South Asian reformist Sufi Muslim scholar Maulana Azad Subhani Rabbani, who was at that time influential among New York's various African American-majority Sunni Muslim communities.¹⁷⁵ In 1950, Benjamin W. Jones, the group's executive secretary, seems to have promoted the Shriner-Islam connection in a letter addressed to

173 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.

174 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'). "The Ethiopian Club, Cleveland, Ohio," *Negro World*, August 8, 1931, 3. It is also notable, as will be mentioned later, 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.

175 Bowen, *HCTIUS*, 1:297–98; "African Group Airs 'Freedom of the Common Man,'" *New York Amsterdam News*, February 22, 1947, 4. Also see Chapter 9.

'Noble' J. Edgar Hoover, which began with the salutation "Dear Brother Noble: Greetings in the Name of Allah [...]." ¹⁷⁶ And during the mid-to-late 1950s, James Lawson, who had become the head of the UANM, sought to form relationships with Muslim diplomats from Algeria and Egypt and with various African American Muslim organizations. ¹⁷⁷

Still, the impact of these various efforts was minimal; the hopes of Islam's success among African Americans through Garvey's movement had mostly petered out by 1926. For many at that time, it probably seemed as if, in the famous words of the Harlem Renaissance poet Langston Hughes, the dream of mass conversion of African Americans to Islam had been deferred.

But this was not the case. As we will now see, one new leader was to ensure that the reterritorialization of Islam led by the Garvey movement—particularly its stress on black nationalism, its connections with Masonry, and its identification with the Moors—would not be in vain.

176 UNIA 1943–1957 FBI file, Letter, Benjamin W. Jones to J. Edgar Hoover, September 27, 1950.

177 African Nationalist Pioneer Movement FBI file, Report, 7/30/1956, New York file 105–16110. See also Chapter 11.

Noble Drew Ali

For all its endorsements of and links to Islam, the Garvey movement was too big and far too Christian-leaning for Islam to become its primary religious identity. Nevertheless, the movement had indeed opened up market space for those who sought to promote the religion, and just a few months before Islam had faded from the UNIA's central channels, a man going by the name of Noble Drew Ali began establishing a new Islamic movement in this changing religious market. Armed with a mastery of folk religion, esotericism, and showmanship, from his Chicago base Drew Ali built what was the largest and most influential African American Islamic movement of the first era of the AAIR: the Moorish Science Temple of America. The story of the AAIR after 1925 should therefore begin with the MSTA's founder and his teachings.

The Prophet

After decades 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. For close to ninety years, the almost universally-accepted narrative was that Drew Ali, who was said to have been born Timothy Drew on January 8, 1886 in North Carolina,¹ started his Islamic movement—which was, according to some accounts, originally known as the Canaanite Temple—in Newark, New Jersey in 1913.² A handful of small,

1 In a July 1929 circular released after the death of Drew Ali, the MSTA author claims that the prophet spent his “early training and boyhood days” in the “Hills of North Carolina”; see MSTA history circular, late July 1929, 1, AMP.

2 A few issues need to be made clear here. First of all, the 1913 date was definitely part of MSTA doctrine in the 1920s: it is mentioned in question number nine of the MSTA 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 MSTA writings today, the earliest MSTA mention of it that I know of only comes in 1943. That year, the FBI interviewed the leader of the Kirkman Bey-affiliated Newark MSTA 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

additional rumors have added further hints about his past. For instance, one rumor, recorded by a graduate student in the 1960s, was that Drew Ali had been arrested for ‘fortune telling’ in Newark on July 26, 1916, and another placed his Newark residence at Warren Street.³ However, other rumors, recorded in the late 1930s, indicated that his group’s ‘great seal’ contained on it the claim that the group was founded not in 1913, but on May 1, 1916, and despite the fact that Drew Ali was routinely said to have been raised in North Carolina, only his relatives from Virginia were reported as having sent him money into the 1920s.⁴ These and several other stories remained fragmented and unverified for dozens of years.⁵

In 2014, however, researcher Fathie Ali Abdat, by using digital genealogical archives, located relevant census and draft records and city directories and in doing so completely transformed the field’s knowledge of the MSTA founder. Abdat convincingly demonstrated that, although he was indeed born on January 8, 1886, Drew Ali’s birth name was Thomas—not Timothy—Drew and that he spent the majority of his childhood and much of his early adulthood in Virginia—not North Carolina.⁶ Thomas Drew was raised by his adoptive parents, most likely an uncle and aunt, James Washington Drew and Lucy Drew,

Holy Science Temple of the World about 1925” (MSTA FBI file, Report, 2/17/1943, Newark file 100–18348, 3). While this account, which has been a popular one in the MSTA, may hold more weight because it comes from a Newark temple (which, presumably, would have better knowledge of MSTA history in Newark), the chronology in it is at best an oversimplification and at worst cause for suspicion about its veracity because it does not address the fact that in the late 1920s Drew Ali explicitly stated that the MSTA 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.”

3 Whyte, “Christian Elements,” 6; Michael Nash, *Islam among Urban Blacks: Muslims in Newark, New Jersey: A Social History* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2008), 41.

4 [Frank] Yerby, “Moors,” 2/19/39 and Herbert H. Nelson, “Negro Cult. Moorish American,” 4/25/40, in Federal Writers Project Records, 1935–1944, Box 188, Folder Moorish Science Temple, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library.

5 For more rumors, see Bowen, “Abdul Hamid Suleiman,” 29–35.

6 Fathie Ali Abdat, “Before the Fez: The Life and Times of Drew Ali, 1886–1924,” *Journal of Race, Ethnicity, and Religion* 5, no. 8 (2014): 1–39.

in Norfolk.⁷ Although he primarily worked as a longshoreman, James Washington Drew was probably also a pastor at Norfolk's Mount Zion Baptist Church, and it thus may have been from him that Thomas initially developed his taste for organized religion.⁸ The records uncovered by Abdat, however, cannot place Thomas in Newark in 1913 where he supposedly established his temple; instead, the extant documents tell us that in 1910 his was working as a longshoreman in Norfolk and in 1916 he was employed as a porter in Richmond.⁹ The earliest Abdat could document Thomas's presence in Newark was 1917, at which time he was a 'laborer' for the Submarine Boat Corporation, a subsidiary of the Electric Boat Company. But by the following year Thomas had moved into a home at 181 Warren Street, from where he began working, according to the 1920 census, as a street preacher.¹⁰

The 1918–1920 data is extremely important in tracing Drew Ali's past, as certain key elements of it are consistent with not only some of the old rumors, but also information found on copies of an undated business card or advertisement containing a picture of a man who looks very much like the Noble Drew Ali of Chicago, which numerous Moorish Americans and certain federal agents had obtained by the 1940s. 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 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

7 A recently discovered ship passenger record from January 25, 1928 reflects that Drew Ali was indeed born in Norfolk; see *Ancestry.com*. My thanks to Sharif Anael-Bey for bringing this document to my attention.

8 Abdat, "Before the Fez," 32.

9 *Ibid.*, 11.

10 *Ibid.*, 3, 11–12, 27.

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.¹¹

One can see here that this man used the name Drew, that he worked out of 181 Warren Street in Newark, and that he claimed to possess spiritual or mystical knowledge—all characteristics that are consistent with what we know about Thomas Drew through Abdat's research, and are generally consistent with what we know about Drew Ali. The fact that on this card the man claims to be a Muslim—although not a Moor—only helps solidify its connection to the leader of the MSTA.

The story of Drew Ali's pre-MSTA life can be fleshed out even more by bringing into the picture the rumor that he had been arrested for 'fortune telling' in Newark in the summer of 1916. A check of Newark's newspapers for 1916 reveals that Thomas Drew—or rather 'Dr. Thomas Drew,' the Newark-based mystic who, as mentioned earlier, claimed at that time to be an 'East Indian' born in Virginia and who mixed black folk traditions with modern occult knowledge—was indeed arrested in Newark that year, but on June 26, not July 26 as the rumor had indicated.¹² Despite the difference between the rumor date and the historical record of Newark's Dr. Thomas Drew, two sets of evidence suggest to a degree of near certainty that Noble Drew Ali was identical with the 'East Indian' mystic. The first set is the Newark newspaper references to Dr. Thomas Drew in 1916 and 1917.¹³ The single most important fact taken from this collection of newspaper articles is the fact that Dr. Thomas Drew's arrest in 1916 occurred when undercover detectives observed him telling their fortunes—officially, the charges were 'practicing medicine without a license' and 'using witchcraft'—for which it can legitimately be said, as the rumor did, that Dr. Thomas Drew was arrested for 'fortune telling.' Dr. Thomas Drew, the

11 The card in the MSTA 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.

12 "Could Bend Bars"; "Charm of Voodoo"; "Mindful of Heat, Court is Merciful," *Newark Evening News*, July 19, 1916.

13 In addition to the previously-cited articles, see also "Judge Osborne Is Santa to Four Men He Paroles," *Newark Evening News*, December 24, 1917, 4.

reports further reveal, claimed to specialize in healing and being able to escape from any type of capture, both of which were similar to claims that were used by Noble Drew Ali, and the power to heal was also claimed by the Prof. Drew of the undated business card. One newspaper article even noted that Dr. Thomas Drew's business hours were ten in the morning to noon and six to eight in the evening, and it referred to him explicitly both as "Professor Drew" and as an "Egyptian Adept Student"—the precise hours and terms used on the Prof. Drew card.¹⁴ Finally, it should be taken into account that the *Newark Evening News* contains no reference to any other man named Drew who was arrested for similar charges in 1916 or 1917, and there is currently no evidence that there were any other fortune tellers or mystics named Drew in Newark during the 1910s or early 1920s. Therefore, there is little chance that the rumor about Drew Ali could have been referring to a different person.

The second set of evidence is a second collection of Newark newspaper articles.¹⁵ These articles, which appeared in 1920 and 1923, discuss the same Dr. Thomas Drew who was arrested in Newark in 1916; in fact, that earlier arrest and Drew's subsequent sentence were repeatedly brought up in the 1920 articles. The identification of the 1916 Dr. Thomas Drew with the 1920 Dr. Thomas Drew is crucially important because the 1916 Dr. Thomas Drew apparently neither claimed to be a Muslim nor resided at 181 Warren Street, whereas the Dr. Thomas Drew of 1920 did, as these articles show. In fact, in 1920 Dr. Thomas Drew, who reportedly had a following in Newark and several other East Coast cities, was consistently using the title 'Professor Drew' and was producing business cards that were virtually identical to the one that came into the possession of Moorish Americans and FBI agents. These articles reveal, furthermore, that Dr. Thomas Drew claimed to have been born on January 8—the very same day that Drew Ali claimed for his birth. Given this information, as well as later MSTA assertions that Noble Drew Ali had indeed gone as 'Prof. Drew' in Newark while living on Warren Street during the 1910s and early 1920s,¹⁶ there should now be no doubt that the Dr./Prof. Thomas Drew of

14 "Could Bend Bars."

15 In addition to the three articles that have already been cited ("Stern Faced White," "Egyptian Adept," and "Newark 'Healer'"), we also have "Thomas Drew, Mohammedan, Held on Charge of Illegal Practicing," *Newark Evening News*, June 15, 1920; "Colored 'Healer,' Arraigned. Is Unable to Give \$1,500 Bail," *Newark Evening News*, August 25, 1920; and "Patient Accuses 'Professor' of Hypnotic \$325 Theft," *Newark Evening News*, October 8, 1920.

16 See "Prophet Noble Drew Ali"; Bowen, "Abdul Hamid Suleiman," 29–34, 53; Nash, *Islam among*, 18.

the Newark newspaper articles, Abdat's Thomas Drew, the Prof. Drew of the business card, and Noble Drew Ali were all one and the same.

With this established, we can treat the Newark newspaper descriptions about and claims of Thomas Drew as some of the earliest known such artifacts concerning Noble Drew Ali, and therefore as crucial pieces of information for understanding his pre-MSTA life. According to the news reports, in June 1916 Drew Ali had been operating what he called his "occult office" at 22 School Street for at least "several weeks," during which time he had demonstrated magical powers and had given mystical advice to "hundreds." Although the business cards he handed out during this period stated that he would read a person's future for free, once visitors arrived, he typically charged them at least one dollar to perform his various services. Fortune telling, which he did using a crystal ball placed upon a piece of black velvet, was one of his cheapest powers; another was the eating of several nails in one sitting. For those who were interested in seeing live performances of some of the amazing escape acts recently popularized by Harry Houdini, Drew Ali also broke locks, escaped from handcuffs, and bent iron bars—items he supplied himself for the performance in the manner typical of magicians who performed similar escape acts.¹⁷ His most expensive feats, however, were those dealing with healing. Drew Ali claimed he could cure, according to the *Evening News*, "aches, pains, fevers, consumption, dyspepsia, convulsions, lumbago, heart disease, indigestion, neuralgia, paralysis, traumatism, nervousness, bronchitis, asthma, fits, deafness and blindness," and he especially emphasized his ability to heal infantile paralysis. He was able to perform such feats, Drew Ali insisted, by either breathing on the afflicted or passing to them "the magnetic influences in his blood [...], thereby killing the germs." The mystic's single most expensive cure was "the ejection of all evil spirits and influences" from an individual, giving them the ability sleep "a night" in peace.

The available evidence suggests that in 1916 Drew Ali was not claiming any connection to Islam but rather identifying with folk religion, occultism, and non-Islamic oriental themes. In addition to stating that he was an 'East Indian' from Virginia and an 'Egyptian Adept Student,' as noted in Chapter 1, reports from the period indicate that Drew Ali said that he was born with 'second sight' and that he later cultivated his skills through a combination of

17 Such acts had become relatively common due to Houdini having explained how to perform some of them in his 1907 book *Handcuff Secrets*. In 1920, Houdini published a book on *Magical Rope Ties and Escapes*, and it may have been from this that Drew Ali gained his ability to escape from a bound rope, a performance he gave in the early years of the MSTA.

travel to India, correspondence courses, and obtaining a book containing “the wisdom of Indian yogis and men of magic”—none of which are claims that suggest a distinctly Islamic identity. Furthermore, instead of wearing a fez or turban as he was known to always do while in public in the late 1920s, at that time Drew Ali was garbed in what was described as a “loosely fitting multi-colored gown and [...] a brilliant purple hood covering his head”; again, nothing indicating an overtly Islamic identity. However, it is possible that Drew Ali was undergoing an identity change at the time. After failing to use his powers to free himself from the local jail while awaiting trial for his recent charges, Drew Ali indicated that, “several years” before, he had been “attacked” by what he called a “brainstorm” while he was in Basking Ridge, roughly twenty-five miles west of Newark. Prior to the brainstorm, Drew Ali had been an “untamed spirit that jails, straightjackets or handcuffs could not hold,” but the incident apparently left him sapped of his abilities, even forcing him to use a crystal ball to “straighten his eyes.” If nothing else, the arrest was forcing Drew Ali to temper his claims of mystical power.

A month after his June 1916 arrest Drew Ali was convicted for practicing medicine without a license and was sentenced to eighteen months in prison, although it is not entirely clear how much of that sentence he actually served.¹⁸ In any case, when he reappeared in Newark in 1920 it was learned by police that the healer had been very active over the past few years and had accumulated patients “in every big city in the East.”¹⁹ As described in Chapter 2, by this time Drew Ali, although he was still focused on healing people and was apparently still wearing a robe and hood and not the suit and fez that he would later typically wear, now was claiming to be a Muslim, not an East Indian.²⁰ Drew Ali’s teachings may have changed by this point as well. This is suggested by the fact that it was only in 1920 that he was recorded as making references

18 The news articles’ comments about his sentence and possible incarceration at Essex County Penitentiary in Caldwell, New Jersey seem to differ on the facts. In a December 24, 1917 article about a local judge paroling prisoners just in time for Christmas, it is reported that Drew Ali “was allowed to go on his promise to settle with cash the costs in his case, which he has been working out” (“Judge Osborne”). However, a June 1920 report indicates that for his 1916 case “an error was made in the indictment” (“Thomas Drew”), and an August 1920 article says that the 1916 sentence “was suspended” (“Stern Faced White”). Bringing further confusion is the fact that Abdat showed that Drew was possibly free and and living in Newark during 1917. In order to try to clear up this seemingly conflicting information, I requested that the Essex County Court attempt to locate Drew Ali’s trial records; the court, however, was unable to do so due to the age of the case.

19 “Stern Faced White.”

20 One article described Drew Ali as have an “attitude and attire similar to movie inter-

to horoscopes, saying he had raised the dead, refusing to take oaths, insisting that healing comes for African Americans only through belief in both him and “their God,” and attempting to sell a book—a book he would continue to use through the MSTA period—that he described as containing the “eighteen years of Christ life that is silent to your Holy Bible,” which was undoubtedly Dowling’s *Aquarian Gospel*.²¹ His practices seem to have shifted too; whereas in 1916 he healed people by breathing on them and “passing” magnetic influences into their blood, in 1920 he repeatedly employed water, oil, the laying of hands, and the previously-described chanting in an inner chamber. Despite these changes, however, Drew Ali was brought to court yet again, this time for two false pretense charges, a set of larceny charges, and collecting fees for health services charges. It was perhaps due to these legal troubles and the healer’s almost inevitable incarceration in 1921 that Suleiman was possibly able to snatch up several of Drew Ali’s believers in the following years. The only currently-available additional piece of contemporary evidence we have for Drew Ali’s activities before the MSTA was established in Chicago is a single newspaper article from early December 1923.²² Here it is indicated, as mentioned in the previous chapter, that at the time Drew Ali was still going as Thomas Drew and was still regarded primarily as a healer—not as a formal religious leader—whose residence was still at 181 Warren Street, although he also performed his services in New York City.

Despite the fact that these many new pieces of evidence help flesh out some of Drew Ali’s backstory, they do not tell us much about his pre-1916 life, and they provide virtually no new clues about any formal religious organization that he may have established in 1913—that is, other than suggesting that even if Drew Ali had actually started an organization in 1913, it almost certainly was not centered on teaching African Americans that they were descendants from Muslim Moors. In fact, the absence of a mention of an organized group, combined with Abdat’s biographical evidence that places him in Virginia in 1910 and early 1916, might cause one to question the veracity of Drew Ali’s later claim about founding an organization in Newark in 1913. Indeed, the fact that the ‘great seal’ of the MSTA contained as the founding date May 1, 1916—which is extremely close to the date that Drew Ali had set up his Newark

pretations of Egyptians” (“Egyptian Adept”). At the time, American films that depicted Egyptians almost never showed modern Egyptian men in their current fashion of suits and fezzes, but rather as generic ‘Middle Eastern’ people, usually in long cloth garments with hoods, head scarves, or nemes.

21 “Egyptian Adept.”

22 “Newark ‘Healer.’”

office from which, as far as we currently know, he only vended his healing services—suggests that the MSTA ‘founding’ date may only refer to the formal establishment of Drew Ali’s healing business. Furthermore, considering that none of the other evidence from 1920 and 1923 persuasively proves that Drew Ali was truly leading a formal religious organization, one might be inclined to question whether he had ever led a true religious organization prior to 1925.

Still, lack of evidence is not itself sufficient for fully disproving an assertion, and there does exist some evidence that supports the claim that Drew Ali did indeed start a true religious organization in Newark prior to coming to Chicago. Several contemporary Moorish Americans possess an undated document, entitled “Last of the Canaanite Temple Members,”²³ which describes an early 1981 meeting between an unnamed Moorish American and an old man named Robert Walker who claimed to have known Drew Ali in Newark. Walker explains that he had met the man he knew simply as “Drew,” who was a Mason and an Odd Fellow, at what he called the “Dixion Barbershop” on Warren Street in Newark in 1913. At the time, Drew, like many of the men who were spending their days at the barbershop, only worked part time, but in 1915, he and Walker began working for Western Electric, which meant that, because of the job’s long hours, they could only meet at the barbershop on weekends. Nevertheless, the number of visitors to the barbershop gatherings began to increase so much that in May 1916—the same month and year as recorded on the ‘great seal’—the group found a new meeting place, which they called the “Canaanite Temple,” on the second floor of a building at the corner of Rutgers Street and 12th Avenue. There, the barber Dixion was the assistant to Drew, who preached that African Americans were not “negroes” or “colored,” they were a “Holy People” from the land of Canaan whose religion was Islam. In 1919, Dixion, who apparently had become the leader of a faction that did not like the notion that African Americans were not Christians, ousted Drew as the head of the community. Drew remained in the city until at least 1921, when he was still employed at Western Electric with Walker, but by the next year Walker had lost track of him.

It is hard to say what we can take from this story. The abundance of specific pieces of information give the story some credibility, but that is strongly tempered by the lack of any references to Drew working as a healer, his multiple arrests, and the fact that some of the dates and facts in the story seem to conflict with the documented biographical information we have about Thomas Drew—although these could be explained away as minor errors in memory,

23 The copy I am using here comes from the AMP. Excerpts of this piece were published in A. Hopkins-Bey’s *Prophet Drew Ali: Savior of Humanity* (n.p.: n.p., n.d.).

a desire to hide less than favorable details, and the possibility that Drew Ali moved and changed jobs fairly frequently. What is perhaps the best clue in this narrative is the importance given to the man named Dixon, since several other stories about Drew Ali's early years mention a 'Dixon' and his Warren Street barbershop as key elements in the prophet's Newark era.²⁴ Interestingly, two additional pieces of evidence suggest that this Dixon was indeed a real person and that he may have been a Muslim Canaanite in Newark. One is a 1920 directory of black businesses in Newark, which lists an "S. Dixon" as a barber located at 174 Warren Street—just one block away from Drew Ali's Warren Street headquarters that year.²⁵ The other is the 1924 incorporation form for the Canaanite Temple, No. 1, Inc. mentioned in Chapter 3, which names a Samuel Dixon as a trustee of the group.²⁶ These are obviously enticing leads that seemingly support the rumors; unfortunately, nothing else from Walker's story has so far been corroborated by contemporary evidence.

One especially curious aspect of Walker's story is the fact that there is no mention of a Solomon/Suleiman figure. Although in the 1920s Drew Ali was referred to by MSTA members as the "one and only founder" of the MSTA,²⁷ for several decades now many in the MSTA have agreed that sometime before coming to Chicago, Drew Ali interacted with, and was possibly taught Islamic 'mysteries' (i.e., mystical knowledge) by one 'Dr. Suliman' as well as, perhaps, a representative of Abd el-Krim.²⁸ While there is, besides a very interesting claim made by MSTA member Gavrona Ali Mustapha Abdullah in 1931,²⁹ almost no

24 Bowen, "Abdul Hamid Suleiman," 29–34.

25 Ralph Wm. Nixon, *The Classified Directory of Negro Business Interests Professions of Essex County* (Newark: Bureau of Negro Intelligence, 1920), 13.

26 See AMP. It should be mentioned, however, that although the man's name is written as "Dixon" within the body of the document, in the space recording the names of the document's signers his name is spelled "Dickerson."

27 See "Temples Welcome Founder as He Blesses Moors," *Moorish Guide*, March 1, 1929, 1.

28 SAB, 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 MSTA 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 US. For a list of the various claims, see Bowen, "Abdul Hamid Suleiman," 29–34.

29 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:

evidence supporting the Abd el-Krim representative story,³⁰ the ‘Dr. Suliman’ tradition seems, given the current evidence concerning Rev. Dr. P.D. Solomon/Abdul Hamid Suleiman, very plausible.³¹ Both Drew Ali and Suleiman claimed to have mystical/hoodoo powers; both were said to have had mystical training in Egypt; both used Masonic/Shriner elements; both attempted to build at least a symbolic connection with Garveyites; both can be placed in Newark and New York City; and both were said to have led a Canaanite Temple—in fact, according to one rumor recorded in 1998, Drew Ali’s Canaanite Temple was near Bank Street and Rutgers Street, the exact location of Suleiman’s group.³² It is also significant that the timing of the appearance of Drew Ali in Chicago is consistent with not only Suleiman’s imprisonment and/or disappearance beginning around late 1923,³³ but also the UNIA’s promotion of the Moors in

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 MSTA—were being interrogated at the same time); 2) ALI’S MEN have relayed that they have heard of documents from the 1930s referencing this man as an important figure in the MSTA; and 3) 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-MSTA 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; MSTA FBI file, Report, 4/22/1944, Cleveland file 100–9538, 10.

30 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.

31 See Bowen, “Abdul Hamid Suleiman” for an extended discussion.

32 Nash, *Islam among*, 18.

33 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.

1925.³⁴ Finally, Drew Ali's ability to have a great deal of success as the leader of his African American Islamic group is itself suggestive 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.³⁵

While all of this evidence is circumstantial and there is not a single piece that directly and conclusively ties Suleiman with Drew Ali—in fact, it is certainly plausible that rumors about Suleiman had simply and perhaps inadvertently been mixed with rumors about Drew Ali—considering Drew Ali's connection to non-Christian currents among Newark and New York's African Americans, it seems likely that he had at least been familiar with Suleiman, and that he possibly either had been inspired by Suleiman's activities, had actually lost his followers to Suleiman in 1922–23, or had been a member of one of Suleiman's organizations—the Mecca Medina Temple or his later Caananites Temple. The connection to Suleiman would help explain a great deal about the peculiar mix of elements in Drew Ali's Islamic movement in Chicago, including its Hebrew-type elements (such as giving members the *surname* suffix of El)³⁶ and his claim that African Americans were descendants of the Canaanites.³⁷ 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

34 And, as mentioned in Chapter 2, 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.

35 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.

36 However, the possibility that the word, as it was used in the MSTA, had Hebrew roots was not accepted in the MSTA (see "'Bey of Baltimore' Protests He's a Teacher, Not Fugitive," *Sun* [Baltimore], October 28, 1934, 3). In most cases, early MSTA 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.

37 This claim is made in Drew Ali's *Holy Koran*. Interestingly, in the MSTA'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 Noble Drew Ali, *Koran Questions for Moorish Children* (n.p.: n.p., [1927?]), questions 53 and 54.

was able to teach a student—even a student who may have already identified as a Muslim, as some MSTA histories suggest—who could masterfully channel these elements into a successful organization.

In addition to Suleiman, other individuals may have influenced the development of the MSTA prior to 1925. According to Aaron Payne, an early attorney for the MSTA, prior to becoming the MSTA prophet, Drew Ali had lived with an “Indian”—presumably Payne meant a Native American, as South Asians were generally referred to as ‘East Indians’ at the time—who became Drew Ali’s “controlling spirit.”³⁸ Another interesting set of claims comes from the Johnson Bey family. In the early 1940s, one George Johnson Bey told federal agents that his father, Ira, had “started up” the MSTA in Chicago,³⁹ that Drew Ali was simply his “associate,” and that he had led the MSTA until his incarceration in 1929 (see Chapter 5).⁴⁰ This, however, is at best a distortion of the facts and at worst an outright lie: In no known pre-1929 MSTA document is Ira Johnson Bey identified even as a second-tier leader; Drew Ali was the group’s undisputed head and founder. However, there is evidence that suggests that some people in the MSTA did believe this claim, or at least something close to it. First of all, Ira was possibly sometimes referred to as Mohammed Bey,⁴¹ and in the 1940s at least some Moors believed that a Mohammed Bey was a key figure in the founding of the MSTA.⁴² Second, in newspaper photographs of Johnson Bey taken around

38 Herbert H. Nelson, “Negro Cult. Moorish American,” 4/25/40, Federal Writers Project Records, 1935–1944, Box 188, Folder Moorish Science Temple, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. This claim was probably associated with other rumors about Drew Ali having been influenced by Native Americans.

39 He claimed that it was originally located at 1841 State Street.

40 MSTA FBI file, Report, 9/21/1943, Chicago file 14–39, 23.

41 James Sullivan, “Malcolm Recalls ‘Moors’ War,” *Chicago Tribune*, February 28, 1965, 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 MSTA. 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 MSTA 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-7-0, “Topical Study Memorandum on Moorish Science Temple of America,” 5/28/1943, 2; Fathie Ali Abdat, “The Sheiks of Sedition: Father Prophet Mohammed Bey, Mother Jesus Rosie Bey, and Kansas City’s Moors (1933–1945),” *Journal of Religion and Violence* 3, no. 1 (2015): 7–33.

42 MSTA FBI file, Report, 2/26/1943, MID 201, Moorish Science Temple of America, 2.

the time of his arrest and trial 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 in turn suggests that he believed he possessed his own religious authority. After 1930, the most well-known MSTA faction that made the wearing of the beard a requirement was that of John Givens-El, who reportedly had been a follower or close associate of Ira as early as the fall of 1929.⁴³ In fact, there were a number of links between Ira and Givens-El. George Johnson Bey said that Givens-El had an MSTA marriage with George's aunt, Mittie Gordon, who, as will be seen in Chapter 8, led a pro-Japanese black nationalist group, the Peace Movement of Ethiopia, in which Islam was very important.⁴⁴ It is also known that Ira and his son maintained a rather strong following in several states, an accomplishment that would have been somewhat difficult had the followers not believed that Ira was the true leader of the MSTA, and that in the late 1940s, after Givens-El had died, George was able to take over several of Givens-El's temples. These facts suggest that Ira led an early MSTA faction that possibly influenced Givens-El's, and had 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 MSTA community.

The Teachings and Their Sources

Whatever his influences were, Drew Ali seems to have developed his own unique Islamic identity and organization. Indeed, despite the almost certainly false rumor that he was "almost totally ignorant and [could] scarcely write his own name,"⁴⁵ it is likely that many of the central teachings of his movement, particularly its identification with the Moors of North Africa, were first introduced to African Americans by Drew Ali. Even though the majority of the contents of his main text had been borrowed 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 most likely Drew

43 "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.

44 Ibid.

45 "Murder Plot Grew Out of this Cult," *Chicago Defender* (City ed.), March 23, 1929, sect. 1, 6.

Ali—not Suleiman or Ira Johnson Bey—who brought these and other ideas all together in a way that would resonate with thousands of African Americans.

One of the aspects of Drew Ali's movement that made it different from Suleiman's was his giving Garvey-connected themes a very prominent place. Suleiman, as far as we know, at one point believed in emigration and sought ties with Garveyites, but Drew Ali went much further than this. According to the Moorish prophet, Garvey was his "forerunner" in the same way that John the Baptist was one for Jesus. Garvey, Drew Ali taught in his 1927 *Holy 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."⁴⁶ 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.⁴⁷ By using the specific reference to John the Baptist, Drew Ali was effectively asserting that he was the "greater and more dangerous Marcus Garvey" that Garvey himself had predicted would come. Further bolstering this supposed spiritual connection with Garvey, Drew Ali claimed that he had visited the UNIA head in prison during the fall of 1927 where he obtained Garvey's personal approval for the MSTA.⁴⁸

Other terms and various elements of Drew Ali's message also seem to have been influenced by the UNIA community. He emphasized, for instance, the idea that 'Moorish' was in fact a nationality—echoing Garvey's own nationalism.⁴⁹

46 Drew Ali, *Holy Koran of the Moorish Science Temple of America* ([Chicago]: Noble Drew Ali, 1927), chapter XLVIII.

47 However, the MSTA 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.

48 "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), which puts Garvey's supposed contact with Drew Ali taking place a month after Garvey sent his letter. See Hill, *Garvey Papers*, 7:82n2; Sheik Way-El, *Noble Drew Ali & the Moorish Science Temple of America: "The Movement that Started It All"* ([Washington, DC]: Moorish Science Temple of America, 2011), 31.

49 However, when Suleiman first appeared, in Washington, DC in 1905, he also encouraged the development of an African American 'nation' in West Africa, so he may have also been partly responsible for Drew Ali's stress on the term.

The term ‘science’ in Moorish Science Temple of America resonated with, at once, hoodoo, the New York Muslim mystic identity, and Garvey’s ‘scientific understanding of religion.’ In his *Holy Koran*, Drew Ali also urged readers to “know thyself”⁵⁰—although this exhortation dates back to ancient Greece, it had been frequently stressed in the UNIA as a way of encouraging its followers to accept black unity and black greatness.⁵¹ Another interesting connection is Drew Ali’s use of the expression ‘uplift fallen humanity.’⁵² The use of the term ‘uplift’ connected him to the mainstream 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 US Christian preachers of all races, it had also been employed 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. Drew Ali is not listed as a member of this organization,⁵³ but we know he was in New York around that time so it is possible that, if this group did influence him at all, it was by inspiring him to use this appealing phrase.

Yet another aspect of the MSTA that suggests at least an indirect UNIA influence is Drew Ali’s identification of African Americans with Asia—in his doctrines, American blacks are said to be in reality ‘Asiatics,’ and Drew Ali prophesized the imminent ‘uniting of Asia.’ For Drew Ali, all peoples 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.⁵⁴ This 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 echoes certain themes connected to the UNIA. The *Negro World* frequently promoted a feeling of brotherhood with Asians, even running a headline that was sure to pique the interests of those who appreciated Eastern connections: “Asia for the Asiatics Has Europe Quaking.”⁵⁵ The linking of black people and Asians was

50 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.

51 See, e.g., “Hon. Marcus Garvey Warns Negroes against Big Concentrated Effort to Destroy the U.N.I.A.,” *Negro World*, May 9, 1925, 1.

52 This appeared in several places in Drew Ali-era MSTA writings. The first, and most important, is in the final line of Ali’s *Holy Koran* (chapter XLVIII).

53 “Negro Universal Society of New York for Uplift of its Fallen Humanity,” *Negro World*, February 3, 1923, 5.

54 See Ali, *Holy Koran*, chapter XLV.

55 February 28, 1925, 2.

an exercise also promoted by the 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 titles 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 US. In fact, Dusé's effort to connect the struggles of black people with Asians was one of his most unique contributions to Pan-Africanism.⁵⁶

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 links with Asian Muslims, particularly Indians, and while in the US he connected with the local Asian Muslim immigrant community, being invited by several Indian Muslims to Detroit in the fall of 1922—which apparently was the cause of his leaving his position as part of the *Negro World* staff.⁵⁷ Dusé also, in the mid-1920s, when serving as the president of Detroit's Universal Islamic Society, a multi-racial Islamic group composed primarily of immigrants,⁵⁸ 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 than had previously obtained.”⁵⁹ Gaining commitments from local literary and artistic circles, he formed in Detroit the American-Asiatic Association in late 1925,⁶⁰ though infighting led to his resignation the following November and the group's demise shortly thereafter.⁶¹ 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 1928.⁶² The fact that the UNIA- and Suleiman-linked

56 See Duffield, “Dusé Mohamed Ali,” 516–28.

57 Duffield, “Dusé Mohamed Ali,” 690.

58 See Duffield, “Dusé Mohamed Ali,” 688–93; Howell, “Inventing,” 92–101; and Chapter 9 below. We do not 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.

59 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.

60 Duffield, “Dusé Mohamed Ali,” 661.

61 Duffield, “Dusé Mohamed Ali,” 691–93; Dusé Mohamed Ali, *Dusé Mohamed Ali*, 180–82; Sally F. Howell, “Inventing the American Mosque: Early Muslims and Their Institutions in Detroit, 1910–1980” (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2009), 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*).

62 There is some conflict between historians over the details connected to these activities.

Dusé was apparently doing more than anyone but Drew Ali to stress the connections between black people and Muslim Asians in the 1920s suggests that he may have impacted MSTA doctrines in some way.⁶³

The MSTA was probably also influenced by Garvey's movement on both an organizational and an ideological level. The group, like the UNIA, had a constitution, and local branches and regions had temples led by individuals with important-sounding titles, such as 'grand sheik' and 'grand governor'—reflecting the fact that both the UNIA and the Moorish Science Temple of America were significantly influenced by Freemasonry's organizational structures and thematic elements. In the MSTA, the Masonic/Shriner influence could also be seen in the group's use of fezzes, its Masonic- and Shriner-style costumes, its secret hand signals and passwords, the practice of standing with one's feet at a forty-five-degree angle, the naming of meeting places 'temples,' and its use of a number of Masonic symbols and titles, such as 'Noble.'⁶⁴ Furthermore, as we will see, the MSTA, like Garvey's group, attempted to meet a number of economic goals, such as providing charity and mutual assistance to members and promoting the creation of black-run businesses that African Americans would patronize.

In addition to his apparent Garvey influence, Drew Ali employed particular practices and concepts from the folk and mystical religion scenes. For example, as both Prof. Drew and Drew Ali he performed what many people believed were miracles, including his 'routing' out spirits and his escape and nail tricks.⁶⁵ As we have seen, in his Prof. Drew days he also reportedly taught his followers, just

See Duffield, "Dusé Mohamed Ali," 693–96; Howell, "Inventing," 99–100; Khan, *Chains to Lose*, 422–24.

63 However, a direct connection between Drew Ali and Dusé seems unlikely since, given the latter's prominence, the MSTA would almost certainly have publicized its relationship with him, as it did for other well-known black figures with which it had connections. Nonetheless, as will be pointed out in Chapter 9, there is at least one clue that there was some contact between the MSTA and Dusé before 1930.

64 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.

65 On Drew Ali performing miracles, see "Sister S. River-Bey Interviews Sheik George Cook-Bey and Sheik Issac Cook-Bey," accessed June 12, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r9rod4D5MV4&app=desktop>. On his activities as an escape artist, see "Sister S. River-Bey Interviews" and the advertisements in Peter Lamborn Wilson, *Sacred Drift: Essays on the Margins of Islam* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1993), 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.

as many black preachers had done before, that they were a ‘holy people,’ and in the MSTa he continued to stress African Americans’ connections with the Divine.⁶⁶ He appears to have embraced, moreover, the concept popular among Ahmadis that Islam was sent to black Christians in particular—and like the Ahmadis, his followers were recorded as having continued singing songs based on Christian spirituals even after embracing Islam.

Non-Christian folk traditions seem to have played a role as well, as Drew Ali appears to have possibly been influenced by esoteric teachings about the number seven, with which the links to Suleiman are at best tenuous.⁶⁷ The number seven adorned the cover of most copies of Drew Ali’s *Holy Koran* (partly because of this, the book is often 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 MSTa meetings, and was highly important for the group’s understanding of a person’s life.⁶⁸ Although we will see that there was one very clear non-folk source for his emphasis on the number, given that, as has been discussed, hoodoo placed great value on it, and Drew Ali—whose background as a longshoreman put him in touch with many believers in hoodoo⁶⁹—had made a career of mixing folk religion with non-folk esotericism, it is highly probable that his use of the seven was done with the conjure tradition in mind.

Fascinatingly, Drew Ali probably also taught the red flag hidden transcript. Although there is no available record of Drew Ali transmitting the folktale, and although the official MSTa catechism explicitly taught that the post-1915 Moroccan flag, which contained a green five-pointed star on a red background,⁷⁰ was the official national flag of Moorish Americans (MSTa members), there are still several pieces of evidence that suggest that the red flag story was indeed transmitted in the movement. The single most persuasive piece of evidence is the

66 See the discussion below.

67 The two main links between Suleiman and the number seven are a) the fact that in 1922–23, which were the peak years 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.’

68 See below.

69 Dana, “Voodoo,” photo caption on 529. Hyatt, notably, mentions a hoodoo teacher living in Norfolk, Drew Ali’s childhood home; see his *Hoodoo*, 1166.

70 On this flag, see Mouline, “Drapeau marocain”; Dubreuil, *Les pavillons*; Smith, *Flags through*, 254.

fact that in the 1970s some Moors were actually recorded as passing on the red flag story as part of Moorish history.⁷¹ While it is true that this does not prove that Noble Drew Ali himself had related the tradition, it certainly increases the likelihood, and it suggests that other Moors prior to that time had connected the red flag tradition to their community's identity. Another clue is the fact that, as we have seen, from the late seventeenth century until late 1915 the Moroccan flag was plain red with no additional symbols—it was therefore identical to the flag in the folk tradition. Given that no other African country had adopted the plain red flag as its main flag, if a person in the early twentieth century was attempting to research the source of the red flag hidden transcript, he or she would have likely stumbled upon this fact, either in a book or from someone knowledgeable of the topic. Making this connection thus may have even been the original reason Drew Ali identified African Americans with the Moors. In fact, according to some sources, the prophet was very much conscious that the plain red flag had been used by the Moroccans during the slave era. An early report records a teaching of Drew Ali wherein the flag, which was “over a thousand years old,” had originally been white with a star in the center but later was turned red after being dragged in blood during a war between the Moors and the Europeans.⁷² Another tradition passed on in the MSTA community claims that Drew Ali taught that in 1776 George Washington hid the “red banner of the Moors” in a safe place in Independence Hall, an act that Moors claimed was memorialized in the folk story of Washington cutting down the cherry tree, which they interpreted as a metaphor of the flag being stashed away.⁷³ Clearly both the description of a “red banner” and the image of a cherry suggest a plain red color during this era, as does another related tradition about Drew Ali, which states that the MSTA practice of holding a ‘Tag Day’ commemorates “the day the star”—that is, the five-pointed green star—“was returned,” after having been removed, “to the Moorish flag.”⁷⁴

We have, in addition, evidence from the 1920s that suggests that some members of the MSTA did indeed identify with Morocco's pre-1915 red flag. In fact, reports coming out of Virginia in 1928 indicate that there may have initially

71 “D.C. Moors Join 2,000 in Ceremony,” *Washington Afro-American*, August 11, 1973, reprinted in Sherry Sherrod DuPree, ed., *African American Holiness Pentecostal Movement: An Annotated Bibliography* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1996), 384.

72 Herbert H. Nelson, “The Moorish American Science Temple,” 2/5/40, 1, Federal Writers Project Records, 1935–1944, Box 188, Folder Moorish Science Temple, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library.

73 Wilson, *Sacred Drift*, 18–19.

74 Wilson, *Sacred Drift*, 19113.

been some flexibility or experimentation with what flag with which the MSTA was going to be associated. One of Noble Drew Ali's early grand sheiks, J. Mosby-El, who was probably an individual who knew Drew Ali back in the 1910s, was observed carrying as the Moorish flag a flag with a red background and white crescent—which was indeed a flag sometimes used in Morocco before 1915.⁷⁵ In a different report about Mosby-El's activities, though, it was recorded that he

was trying to enlist members to live under the red flag which he called the flag of the nation of his race. He said that the red flag connoted "peace, love and happiness," and that Mohammed was the only ruler.⁷⁶

And in yet another version of the story, Mosby-El's flag was described as the "red flag of the world."⁷⁷ The repeated references in these reports to what was simply called a 'red flag'—in fact, in one article, the MSTA was referred to as the "'Red Flag' Temple"⁷⁸—strongly implies that Mosby-El and perhaps others in the movement were at some point displaying a plain red flag, or were at least identifying whatever flag they were displaying as a 'red flag.' Furthermore, Mosby-El's description of the flag as connoting 'peace, love and happiness' tells us with near certainty that he was not thinking about the post-1915 flag. According to the official MSTA catechism, which appears to have been first published in the summer of 1928, the primary symbolism of the Moorish flag was not contained in three words but five—'love, truth, peace, freedom, and justice'—and that these principles were represented by the five points on the green star of the post-1915 flag.⁷⁹ It is hard to imagine a leader in the movement, if he was actually using the post-1915 flag, forgetting that the flag "connoted"

75 "‘Prophet’ Mosby in the Toils of the Law," *Richmond Planet*, May 26, 1928, 1; M.A. Le Gras, *Album des pavillons, guidons, flammes de toutes puissances maritimes* (Paris: Auguste Bry, 1858), 61; Fathie Ali Abdat, "Before the Fez: The Life and Times of Drew Ali, 1886–1924," *Journal of Race, Ethnicity, and Religion* 5, no. 8 (2014): 22–23. Interestingly, in the 1930s, a Moor in Detroit would be known to have a blue and red flag—and I am not aware of any Muslim country to have used such a flag; see "Cult Murderer Kills Self," *Michigan Chronicle*, September 9, 1939, 1, 2.

76 "Police Put ‘Prophet’ in Jail for Preaching Race Sedition," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, May 21, 1928, 1, 8.

77 "News from Other Cities," *New York Evening Post*, May 21, 1928, 28.

78 "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, 17.

79 This teaching is found in question 20 of the Moorish catechism.

five, not three points, considering that there would be an obvious reminder that there were five points on the flag itself. These reports therefore support the possibility that Drew Ali was aware of Morocco's various pre-1915 flags, and they tell us that, despite the MSTA's catechism serving as the official doctrine, it is very likely that early on at least some members—and perhaps even Drew Ali himself—felt free to identify with different flags, and even plain red flags in particular. Given, furthermore, the black folk tendency to be flexible with, and interchange images, there should be little doubt that, regardless of what Drew Ali intended, many of his followers interpreted even the post-1915 Moroccan flag as being the same one from the folk tradition.⁸⁰ It is almost certain, then, that it was for this reason that Moors proudly displayed the post-1915 Moroccan flag in their temples alongside the US flag.⁸¹

It may partly be due to the influence of old slave traditions that the Moors were also very willing to follow Drew Ali's model by wearing red fezzes and turbans and decorating their houses and meeting places with red fabric. As we have seen, the color red was extremely popular among Africans and the enslaved, and in fact red was still a very important color in hoodoo, with some conjure doctors, including at least one in New Jersey in the 1930s, continuing to believe that red clothing helped keep spirits away.⁸² It has also been noted that red brimless headpieces were fairly common in African-based cultures throughout the world, including in the Americas—and awareness of this fact among African Americans may help explain the appeal of an early MSTA jus-

80 It is very likely that those who were familiar with hoodoo were already familiar with the five-pointed star, which appears several times in the popular hoodoo text *The Sixth and Seventh Books of Moses*.

81 One other issue about the MSTA flag should be addressed here: although there seems to have been some flexibility in flag use, the MSTA was not known to have ever used the flag employed by the Rifi rebels—which contained a red background, a white crescent, a white diamond, and a green, five-pointed star—despite the fact that the Rifi leader, Abd el-Krim, had announced, in language strikingly similar to Drew Ali's, his desire to unite Moroccans as a 'nation' under a single flag, and had even named his nation's government *al-Makzhan*, a North African term that, as will be discussed below, Drew Ali would apparently use. Although these similarities between Abd el-Krim's thought and Drew Ali's suggest a connection, the fact that the MSTA did not use the central symbol of the Rifi movement is strong evidence that Drew Ali had not been directly influenced by a representative of Abd el-Krim, as some rumors have insisted. See Pennell, *A Country*, 75, 133–34, 230–31, 234. The symbol for the flag was also sometimes worn as an insignia on clothing; see David Montgomery Hart, *The Aith Waryaghar of the Moroccan Rif: An Ethnography and History* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1976), 387.

82 Hyatt, *Hoodoo*, 127.

tification given for wearing the red fez, recorded in 1940, which holds that the wearing of the fez “implies recognition of one’s truth and ancient birth-right of their forefathers in Africa.”⁸³ While there do seem to have been some exceptions to the trend of only wearing red headgear—some women wore white turbans and some MSTA sheiks (leaders) were known to wear black fezzes⁸⁴—overall the emphasis on red seems to have been very consistent in the MSTA, a fact that suggests its members deeply identified with the color.⁸⁵

Another noticeable MSTA folk element is the symbol over which the image of the number seven was almost always superimposed on MSTA products, including its *Holy Koran*: a circle broken into four even quadrants. Although, as we have seen, both the number seven and this type of circle were popular in hoodoo, with the circle being typically represented as \oplus , this particular circle symbol was not an especially common talisman outside of African and African-descended esoteric communities. In white-dominated esotericism, the symbol primarily represented the four classical elements of the universe, and was sometimes used when representing the Malkuth sephiroth in the Kabbalah. However, in modern white esotericism, not only is the symbol rarely employed for pure talismanic purposes, usually its quadrants are each filled with another, very symbolic image; almost never does the circle stand alone or with a single image superimposed over it, as it frequently does in African and African-descended communities. It is possible that the symbol was employed by some early North African slaves or immigrants; Muslim Berbers have used the image in their Tifinagh script for the yab frictive letter, which has sometimes been applied as a talisman.⁸⁶ However, as we have seen, the most likely African

83 Benjamin F. Jack, “The Moorish American Church,” 1/3/40, 5, in Federal Writers Project Records, 1935–1944, Box 188, Folder Moorish Science Temple, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library.

84 The earliest report that I have seen of a Moor in a black fez is “‘Prophet’ Mosby Fined Ten Dollars,” *Richmond Planet*, June 2, 1928, 1.

85 It should be pointed out that the interest in red in African American folk culture and the MSTA almost certainly did not come from the Islamic folk traditions of Morocco. Although Morocco’s flag was red and many of its men and some women wore red headgear, in folk life, the color red was generally associated with blood and evil, particularly wicked jinn (spirits), though some tribes displayed red flags apparently as a symbol of associated with good. See Westermarck, *Ritual and Belief*, 1:264, 277, 330–32, 344, 360, 360 and Hart, *Aith Waryaghar*, 182.

86 See, e.g., Lloyd D. Graham, “The Magic Symbol Repertoire of Talismanic Rings from East and West Africa,” 9, unpublished paper, accessed November 10, 2015, https://www.academia.edu/7634962/The_Magic_Symbol_Repertoire_of_Talismanic_Rings_from_East_and_West_Africa.

ethnic source for the symbol's use in hoodoo is the Bakongo from West Central Africa. After it was incorporated into hoodoo, this circle symbol, like the number seven, became deeply connected with the Book of Revelation and was frequently given the Revelation-based title 'four corners of the Earth,' although it was also linked with the 'four winds,' which were in both Revelation and the story of the Dry Bones.

There is at least one reference to the 'four winds' in the Drew Ali-era MSTA material; however, this mention does not link the winds to the group's central symbols.⁸⁷ The strongest evidence that these symbols were understood with a hoodoo folk lens, then, comes from Rufus German Bey, an early member of the movement. Many years after the group's founding, German Bey explained to a reporter that the MSTA's *Holy Koran*, which contains the 'circle seven' image on its cover, was also referred to as

"The Book of the *Seven Seals*,["] a reference to *St. John's Revelation*, in which such a book is mentioned. [...] The number 7 holds special significance for the Moors. It is seen everywhere surrounded by a circle broken in four parts, representing the *four corners of the earth* and their respective prophets: Jesus, Mohammed, Buddha and Confucius.⁸⁸

German Bey's assertions, which confirm the connection of the MSTA 'circle seven' image with old black folk beliefs, are further verified by two reports about the Moors from the early 1940s. One states that the circle "represents the four corners of the world" and the other notes that Drew Ali's *Holy Koran* was indeed known as the "Book of the Seven Seals."⁸⁹ By becoming a popular movement, then, the MSTA would, by default, help re-popularize the notion that the ⊕ and the number seven represented African Americans and their salvation, as prophesized in Revelation, and at the same time appealed to

87 "Demanding Ours," *Moorish Guide*, October 26, 1928, 4.

88 Gene Oishi, "Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory of Noble Drew Ali," *Sun* (Baltimore), October 31, 1978, B1–B2, emphasis added. I have been told by a present-day Moor what is apparently the current understanding of the broken circle symbol, and it does not reflect the hoodoo tradition. Now it is taught that the four points on the circle represent a square superimposed on the circle, with the square representing matter and the circle representing spirit—and thus the combined image represents the divinely-connected manifestation of man.

89 Benjamin F. Jack, "The Moorish American Church," 1/3/40, 5, in Federal Writers Project Records, 1935–1944, Box 188, Folder Moorish Science Temple, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library; MSTA FBI file, Report, 3/22/1943, Savannah file 100–2447, 4.

those (like the Ahmadis) who believed Islam was the new religion promised to black Christians. Later, the Nation of Islam—which for many years had several Moorish American members—appears to have borrowed the high significance given to the MSTA's set of symbols by emphasizing both the number seven and a four-pointed symbol, which the NOI's famous use of the 'X' may have initially represented. In addition, a related concept was used in both groups: what was called 'standing in the square,' wherein a person stood with his or her feet at a forty-five-degree angle; despite ostensibly being a Masonic practice, it appears to have been understood in both groups as related to the traditional four-pointed symbol.⁹⁰

Although Drew Ali was employing black folk elements and many of his followers were undoubtedly understanding these elements through a folk lens, the MSTA's founder was also partly influenced by white-dominated esotericism. As Prof. Thomas Drew he had admitted to studying mail-order occult books, almost all of which at that time were written by white men, and at that time he even sold his clients a white-authored book, the *Aquarian Gospel*. Given these known esoteric influences, it is likely that he had others as well. It is perhaps significant, then, that sometimes the early MSTA's interpretation of the number seven was somewhat reflective of that originally promoted by Theosophy,⁹¹ and extremely close to the Rosicrucian teachings of the white Max Heindel, who was himself significantly influenced by Theosophy.

Heindel was a German immigrant to the US 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*,⁹² which incorporated themes from Theosophy, astrology, and various other esoteric traditions, and became fairly popular in the US esoteric scene at the time. This book, notably, emphasizes the number seven, expanding on the Theosophical teachings on the subject. Heindel claims, among other things, that there are seven periods in 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,

90 On Drew Ali teaching this to early Moors, see "Sister S. River-Bey Interviews." Also, as mentioned in an earlier note, contemporary Moorish Americans understand the ⊕ as a square superimposed on a circle, which suggests a connection with 'stand in the square.'

91 See Campbell, *Ancient Wisdom*, 62–65.

92 Max Heindel, *The Rosicrucian Cosmo-Conception or Christian Occult Science* (Chicago: M.A. Donahue & Co., 1910).

and the seventh part is the mind, “the mirror through which the threefold spirit reflects itself through the threefold body.”⁹³ Moreover, Heindel asserts 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.”⁹⁴ 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”;⁹⁵ and from fourteen to twenty-one, the human body becomes strong so that it may propagate.⁹⁶

The early MSTAs held ideas about the number seven that were so similar they suggest an influence from Heindel.⁹⁷ Drew Ali’s *Holy Koran* contains a few references to seven spirits of God, and in 1935 an MSTA leader wrote what are now transmitted as oral teachings about the relationship of the number seven to human life:⁹⁸

[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.

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 []) power that consists the soul [*sic*] (Byz) [*sic*]: Rational, irresistible and inconceivable [...]

93 Ibid., 88.

94 Ibid., 149.

95 Ibid., 143.

96 Ibid., 142.

97 The contemporary group of MSTA historians, ALI’S MEN, rejects the idea that Drew Ali borrowed directly from Heindel. They explain the similarities by saying that Heindel was simply teaching the same universal, perennial truth that Drew Ali taught; SAB, email message to the author, November 20, 2012.

98 The MSTA historians, ALI’S MEN, have informed me that the following teachings have been passed on orally in the MSTA since the 1920s; SAB, email correspondence with the author, November 20, 2012. However a very different understanding of the number seven was taught in a prominent MSTA temple in the 1970s; see The Sheik, “Moorish Science Temple Coming Home,” *Chicago-South Suburban News*, September 23, 1972, 10.

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.⁹⁹

Even if the MSTA's doctrines do not match Heindel's exactly, the general parallels are very clear.

Another connection with Heindel's thought is apparent in the ideas surrounding spiritual growth. 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.¹⁰⁰ 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 'Third Heaven,' in which a human realizes his or her past lives and contemplates his or her future reincarnation.¹⁰¹ The MSTA, meanwhile, teaches very similar concepts. Members are encouraged to study to become an 'adept'—also referred to as entering the 'Adept Chamber, 3rd

99 E[dward] Turner-El, [unknown], *Moorish Guide*, April 19, 1935, 3.

100 Heindel, *Cosmo-Conception*, 126.

101 Heindel, *Cosmo-Conception*, 129.

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.”¹⁰² According to an early MSTA ‘ministry ordination’ certificate, those who have fully mastered the teachings understand that they are truly part of Allah, and can “relat[e] [...] infinite experience.”¹⁰³ Reincarnation is also taught, and it was an important element for many of the post-1929 factions.

After publishing *Cosmo-Conception*, Heindel quickly gained a following, known as the Rosicrucian Fellowship, that stretched from Los Angeles to New York City. While there is no publicly-available data on any African American members at the time, interestingly, there are a few pieces of evidence connecting 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 Rosicrucianism. In the 1930s, when Dusé was living in Lagos, Nigeria, he edited a weekly magazine, *The Comet*, for which La Page wrote a column expounding on moral and religious ideas, which frequently included Heindel’s teachings.¹⁰⁴ Dusé’s magazine even sometimes ran pieces written by Heindel’s wife and Heline in lieu of La Page’s column. However, the earliest evidence for a connection between Dusé and La Page is 1931,¹⁰⁵ and there is no clear evidence that Dusé himself was a Rosicrucian,¹⁰⁶ although it is suggestive that La Page appears to have been living, since as early as 1924, in New York state, where she likely met

102 SAB, email correspondence with the author, August 4, 2012.

103 See the ministry ordination certificate in the Schomburg Center’s MSTA collection.

104 La Page wrote for *The Comet* from 1933 until 1937, the year she left Nigeria and divorced Dusé.

105 See Duffield, 651–652.

106 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.

Dusé, and thus was in relatively close geographical proximity with the center of the black Islamic movement.¹⁰⁷

Still, the most important elements from the American mystical religion scene that Drew Ali used are those that were employed for his *Holy Koran of the Moorish Science Temple of America*. This book—which Drew Ali did not claim to write, but only to have “divinely prepared”¹⁰⁸—was largely composed of uncredited borrowings of portions of two works that were being sold at that time to both African Americans interested in hoodoo and white esotericists, and were particularly popular among Rosicrucians: Levi Dowling’s Theosophy- and New Thought-influenced *The Aquarian Gospel of Jesus the Christ* and a book, known in its 1925 Rosicrucian edition as *Unto Thee I Grant*, which was originally published in 1745 as *The Economy of Human Life. Complete in Two Parts. Translated from an Indian Manuscript Written by an Ancient Brahmin*.¹⁰⁹ In many cases, all that was changed in Drew 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, whereas the *Aquarian Gospel* passages deal with an alternative history

107 She had a poem, entitled “The Phantom Drum,” run in the *Tonawanda Evening News* on August 12, 1924.

108 This phrase is on the title page of the book. One rumor says that Drew Ali paid a man \$500 to write the *Holy Koran*, although, given what appears to have been Drew Ali’s strong vision and leadership, this seems unlikely; see Whyte, “Christian Elements,” 25.

109 Sheik Way-El, in his unpublished essay “Was Noble Drew Ali Allah’s Prophet in the West? Part 1: How Academics and Various Leaders Got It Wrong” (January 13, 2016), was apparently the first to point out the *Economy of Human Life* source as well as another source that was used by Drew Ali in his *Holy Koran: Elegant Extracts: Or, Useful and Entertaining Passages in Prose: Selected for the Improvement of Young Persons: Being similar in Design to Elegant Extracts in Poetry* (London, 1790). For a breakdown of how the chapters in Drew Ali’s book correspond with *Aquarian Gospel* and *Unto Thee I Grant*, see Gomez, *Black Crescent*, 232–235 (including notes). *Unto Thee I Grant* was published twice in the 1920s by two white men who 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), esp. 44; Caverly, 343; Mitch Horowitz, *Occult America: The Secret History of How Mysticism Shaped Our Nation* (New York: Bantam Books, 2009), 204; Yusuf Nuruddin, “African-American Muslims and the Question of Identity: Between Traditional Islam, African Heritage, and the American Way,” in *Muslims on the Americanization Path?*, eds. Yvonne Y. Haddad and John L. Esposito (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 240–242, 242n12; Wilson, *Sacred Drift*, 20–21.

of Jesus visiting India and being influenced by its religious teachings—a fact that verifies not only that it was the latter book that Prof. Drew was selling in 1920, but also that Drew Ali had a tool for winning over Ahmadis, who had been taught a similar story. The core message conveyed in Drew Ali's *Holy Koran* largely reflects what was conveyed by Dowling: the New Thought concept 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. In addition, like Theosophy and New Thought generally, Drew Ali's book is very this-worldly oriented: it rejects the idea that there is a heaven or hell in the afterlife; heaven and hell are mere states of mind.¹¹⁰

What is perhaps the most interesting link between Dowling's book and the *Holy Koran* is that the former provides the passages that contain the book's references to the number seven, as well as the very concept of the 'circle seven.' As Judith Weisenfeld has recently pointed out, one portion of Dowling's book that Drew Ali did not use in the *Holy Koran* includes a story about Jesus being initiated by a hierophant, who teaches Jesus that "the circle is the symbol of the perfect man [...] And in the record book the scribe wrote down, The Logos-Circle-Seven; and thus was Jesus known."¹¹¹ This, then, was undoubtedly Drew Ali's primary source for the particular image that adorned the cover of his book—and this is true despite that fact that the MSTA circle, unlike the circle described by Dowling, is broken into four quadrants and was understood by Moors like German Bey in a highly hoodoo-oriented way. Drew Ali, like Starck and the many other African Americans who would employ Dowling's book and other white-authored occult texts, was using white esotericism to give new meaning to African American folk knowledge.

But beyond the notions that were found in previous books, Drew Ali added a few concepts that were, as far as is currently known, truly unique for an American book at the time. As German Bey reported, for instance, Drew Ali had emphasized the concept that his teaching was the same as that which had

110 It should be noted that after it became public knowledge that the *Holy Koran* contained long passages from these two works, many MSTA members began denying that Drew Ali had plagiarized them. Since Dowling claimed to have received the story conveyed in his *Aquarian Gospel* from the 'Akashic records'—an unseen library that supposedly contains all knowledge from all time, but which can only be accessed through psychic/mystical powers—it has been common for Moorish Americans to insist that Drew Ali also obtained the contents of his book from the Akashic records.

111 Dowling quoted in Judith Weisenfeld, *New World A-Coming: Black Religion and Racial Identity during the Great Depression* (New York: New York University Press, 2016), 49.

been taught by the major religious figures of the ‘four corners of the Earth’—although it was by that time an old idea of Theosophists that the founders of the majors religions had taught what were essentially the same doctrines, Theosophists had not previously connected these figures to the ‘four corners’ idea. An even rarer set of assertions, however, were those that centered around the ancient genealogy of African Americans. In the *Holy Koran*, first of all, Drew Ali asserts that the Moorish people are the descendants of the ancient Moabites, and that the Moabites were the founders of Mecca.¹¹² To this he added in the *MSTA* catechism that Mecca was located in the land of Canaan and was the site of the Garden of Eden.¹¹³ African Americans, then, are the descendants of *both* the Moabites and the Canaanites, and it was after these groups were driven out of their land by Joshua that they migrated to North Africa where they became known as Moors, whose

dominion and inhabitation extended from North-East and South-West Africa, across great Atlantis even unto the present North, South, and Central America and also Mexico and the Atlantis Islands; before the great earthquake, which caused the great Atlantic Ocean.¹¹⁴

Drew Ali claimed, furthermore, that Jesus and “Mohammed the First”—that is, Islam’s Prophet Muhammad—were both, like modern African Americans, “of the true blood of the ancient Canaanites and Moabites and the inhabitants of Africa,” and they had sought, like Noble Drew Ali was doing, to “redeem” their people from the oppression of Europeans.¹¹⁵

African Americans, as we have seen, have long been associated with the Canaanites; Drew Ali’s use of the concept, then, may have simply been a reference to this traditional view, and it could have also been employed as a means to attract Suleiman’s former followers or those influenced by the black Jews’ emphasis on this tradition. Fascinatingly, however, the notions that certain Muslims, and North Africans in particular, were descendants of Canaanites and that the Canaanites had come from Arabia were verifiably much older than both Drew Ali and Suleiman. These traditions had been known to various Muslims and North Africans since the first millennium AD, and some Berbers (in other words, Moors) were apparently identifying as descendants

112 Drew Ali, *Holy Koran*, chapter XLV.

113 Drew Ali, *Koran Questions*, questions 53 and 54.

114 Drew Ali, *Holy Koran*, chapter XLVII, prologue. Note that the event of Joshua driving out the Canaanites is a reference to the story popularized in the “De Sun Do Move” sermon.

115 Drew Ali, *Holy Koran*, chapter XLVI.

of the Canaanites in as late as the nineteenth century—a fact that raises the possibility that Drew Ali had learned of these traditions directly from a North African.¹¹⁶ As for Drew Ali's assertion about the Moabites, a previous scholar, Ernest Allen, Jr., hypothesized that it was developed by taking advantage of a feature of African American—not African—discourse. In African American vernacular, with its post-vocalic -r deletion, the term 'Moabite' can sound very similar to 'Moavid,' or 'Almoravid'—the name of the North African Muslim group from which the term 'Moor' is generally thought to have been derived.¹¹⁷ This linking of 'Moabite' with 'Moor' was, in fact, even explicitly employed by a leading MSTA member in the 1940s.¹¹⁸ However, as has recently been pointed out by Moorish American researcher Sheik Way-El, there is not only a documented tradition of medieval Europeans referring to the Almoravids as Moabites, but there is also a range of medieval theories concerning the Moabites having emigrated to North Africa.¹¹⁹ Therefore it is possible that one of these traditions was also known to Drew Ali, and that he did not independently invent this connection either. Interestingly, though, the ability to creatively reinterpret the pronunciation of a North African term may explain a different claim in 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. The contemporary MSTA historians ALI'S MEN have proposed that 'Amexem' may be a transliteration of an American pronunciation of the North African term '*al-Makzhan*' (pronounced 'ammakzhan') which, prior to 1957, was typically used to refer to the government of Morocco and Tunisia, and had even

116 On early Islam's engagement with the figure of Canaan, see Reuven Firestone, "Early Islamic Exegesis on the So-Called 'Hamitic Myth,'" in *Adaptations and Innovations: Studies on the Interaction between Jewish and Islamic Thought and Literature from the Early Middle Ages to the Late Twentieth Century, Dedicated to Professor Joel L. Kraemer*, ed. Y. Tzvi Langermann and Josef Stern (Paris; Dudley, MA: Peeters, 2007), 51–66. On the presence of the Canaanite story among North Africans, see Dana W. Reynolds-Marniche, "The 'Denigrification' of Berbers and 'Canaanites,'" *West Africa Review*, no. 23 (2013): 44–45 as well as Reynolds-Marniche's blog, *Afro-Asiatica: An Odyssey in Black*.

117 Allen, "Identity and Destiny," 183.

118 See the transcript of a mid-century radio address given by MSTA leader Grand Sheik Frederick Turner-El, who stated that "The word Morrocoo [*sic*] derives from the Biblical [*sic*] word Moabite. The word Moabite derives from the word Moab, and Moab was the grandson of Lot"; "Moorish Science Temple of America," [1954?], in Miscellaneous Manuscripts Collection, MS 352, Series VI, Box 41, Folder 892, Yale University Library.

119 Way-El, in his unpublished essays "Was Noble Drew Ali Allah's Prophet" and "Moors, Moabites, and Berbers; Are These Names and People Historically Synonymous? Analyzing Historical, Biblical, and Archaeological Correlations," Pdf, March 23, 2017.

been employed by Abd el-Krim as the name of the government of his hoped-for new nation.¹²⁰ Taken together, the above evidence suggests that Drew Ali had combined Garveyite black nationalism with Masonry, uplift ideals, African American folk knowledge, white esotericism, and at least some little-known genealogical traditions about North Africans possibly passed on from a real Moroccan.¹²¹

The Project

Drew Ali's primary motivation for adding together these various elements appears to have been much more than simply giving African Americans a new religious identity. It seems, rather, that in his mixing a wide variety of religious, political, and cultural concepts, the former healer's ultimate project was to dramatically improve all elements of the lives of black Americans.

Besides offering his religious texts and his genealogy for American Moors, one of the key techniques Drew Ali employed to accomplish this goal was to increase African Americans' sense of racial pride through presenting a historical vision of black Americans that would both deemphasize their enslaved past and connect them with accomplished African civilizations. As a 1928 MSTA newspaper editorial put it:

We must have the history of our fore-fathers taught to our children. We have ceased to calculate our history from the landing of the 'First Twenty' [North American slaves] or the close of the Civil War. While all records of the tombs in the old world are proclaiming our glory to the nations, we have come now demanding that we be given credit for the great work done in the past by our ancestors. We are not asking others to give these records to the world for us but we demand that such records be broadcasted to the *four winds* by us and for us.

A pride that goes with the knowledge of great deeds will serve to cause our posterity to take heart and look into the vast future with a hope eternal. Such can never be done except they be taught who they are and where they are from. Yes, we are demanding that these things be done

120 SAB, Facebook correspondence with the author, April 25, 2013; Pennell, *A Country*, 75, 133–34, 230–31, 234.

121 The previously-mentioned figure of Gavrona Ali Mustapha Abdullah is currently the best lead we have for tracing down a direct Moroccan connection, although it is also a very real possibility that Drew Ali had come into contact with Moroccan acrobat performers.

and we know that it will require some time before we have created that consciousness in others of our group to assert themselves likewise but that day is coming when such will be the case.¹²²

Drew Ali believed that by expanding their view of themselves from being a group whose history primarily traces back to slavery to a group that possesses an old and venerable history, African Americans would be psychologically prepared to return to a state in which they could accomplish great things. Drew Ali was, essentially, like Garvey, attempting to counter African Americans' negative self-image that had been produced by slavery and reinforced by both white racism and certain tales within blacks' own folk culture.

Furthermore, by claiming that African Americans were actually Moorish Muslims whose ancestors were Canaanites and Moabites, Drew Ali had found a way to appeal to African Americans' folk identification with Old Testament figures and the Earth's earliest people while simultaneously reaping the psychological and emotional benefits of claiming a link with both history's renowned Moors and the broader Islamic civilization. In his "Historical Message to America" essay from the summer of 1928, Drew Ali, using without citation a quote from Alfred W. Martin's 1921 *The World's Great Religions and the Religions of the Future*, paints a picture of Islamic history to which Moorish Americans would be proud to be connected:

To the early representatives of this faith [Islam] the world's debt is incalculably great. For it was they who transmitted the treasures of Greek literature from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance; they who originated the graceful forms of which the Tajmahol and the Alhambra are the most famous examples. It was they who contributed to the sciences of algebra and chemistry, astronomy and medicine; they who dotted the Saracen empire with universities of the world. During those centuries of ecclesiastical despotism when the Christian Church suppressed all intellectual activities save those that were theological, causing the talent that reproduces to supplant the genius that creates, Mohammedans did all in their power to encourage and stimulate research in every branch of human inquiry.

The Moors or Mohammedans added to the beauty and grandeur of Spain. For centuries art, science, literature, and chivalry flourished among

122 "Demanding Ours," *Moorish Guide*, October 26, 1928, 4 [emphasis added]. Note the reference to the Revelation-connected 'four winds' in the first paragraph.

them, while the rest of Europe was still sunk in the gloom of the Dark Ages. The Moors were the most ingenious and industrious of the subjects of Spain. Their expulsion from Spain in 1610 was one of the chief causes of decadence of that country; for both agriculture and industry fell into decay after their departure.¹²³

Along with this impressive legacy, Drew Ali claimed for Islam additional traits that a person from the low strata of any society might value, but would have carried special weight for African Americans. In his *Holy Koran*, he insists that Islam will “redeem” the poor, freeing them from oppression and bringing to the world “Love, Truth, Peace, Freedom, and Justice”¹²⁴—themes that resonated with the old black expectations of biblical redemption. Drew Ali reinforces this claim in his “Historical Message” by modifying a quotation that was originally attributed to the Buddha himself, which he uses to present Islam as being the ultimate example of a religion of equality: “Mohammedanism makes no distinction between high and low, rich and poor; it is like the sky, it has room for all.”¹²⁵ Again, such a view would have aligned with African American views on what a ‘true’ religion should be.

But Drew Ali’s project did not end with the mere religious and ethnic identification with Muslims and the Moors. In his “Divine Warning to the Nations,” the prophet advances the notion that African Americans’ ability to obtain equal and just treatment in the US is hinged upon them recognizing their “free national name,” or, as it was sometimes called, the “national descent name.”¹²⁶ What Drew Ali meant by these terms is not entirely clear at first glance. One might in fact suspect that Drew Ali had simply been influenced here by either Marcus Garvey’s black nationalism or Abd el-Krim’s call for a ‘nation.’ However, although it is possible that these men had influenced Drew Ali on this topic,

123 Noble Drew Ali, “Moorish Leader’s Historical Message to America,” *Moorish Guide*, August 24, 1928, 2. Much of the first paragraph is taken from Alfred W. Martin, *The World’s Great Religions and the Religions of the Future* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1921), 149.

124 Noble Drew Ali, *Holy Koran*, chapter XLVI.

125 Drew Ali, “Historical Message,” 2. The Buddhism version of this quote could be found in numerous late nineteenth and early twentieth century books; I could not find its original source.

126 This has been reproduced in Richard Edwards-El, *The Muqarrabeen Files* (n.p.: SMD Media Group, 2008), 16–18 and Timothy Dingle-El, *The Resurrection: Moorish Science Temple of America, Inc. The Truth: Be Yourself and Not Somebody Else* (Baltimore: Prince of Printing, [1978] 1995), 58–60.

the contextual evidence suggests that the MSTA concept of ‘free national name’ was used in a slightly different way than how the other two men had employed the term ‘nation.’ It seems, in fact, that unlike Garvey, who continued to call African Americans ‘negroes,’ Drew Ali was using these terms to further dissociate African Americans from what Henry McNeal Turner had already pointed out were negative, color-based labels—‘negro,’ ‘colored,’ etc.—by substituting them with a non-colorist folk-based label, and one that could be used as a path for gaining a new, deeply political identity that affirmed African Americans’ right to live as full, not second-class, citizens in the US.

To see the multiple levels at which this ‘free national name’ concept was functioning here, it should be understood, first of all, that in the MSTA of the 1920s the term ‘free national name’ was apparently associated both with the Moors’ identity as ‘Moorish Americans’ and their new, MSTA-given surname suffixes, Bey and El (pronounced ‘eel’), which were said to represent the particular Moorish tribe from which the individual Moor was descended. Therefore, on one level, Drew Ali was probably appealing to the African American folk emphasis on the importance of obtaining a name that represents one’s stage and position in life. Indeed as multiple observers of the movement noted, names were extremely important for the Moors. The ethnographer Arthur Fauset relayed that for members of the MSTA, “the name means everything.”¹²⁷ Similarly, the African American writer and editor Dan Burley recalled that the Moors in Chicago “took violent, fierce pride in [...] their ‘Beys,’” a fact that suggests that they deeply believed in the symbolic and cultural significance of their new names.¹²⁸ Interestingly, there was also a Freemasonic theme embedded in the term ‘free national name,’ as African American Masons, following the white Masons’ precedent, have long regarded the ‘free’ in ‘Freemasonry’ as indicative of liberty from bondage; furthermore, in Freemasonry, just as in many fraternal groups around the world, neophytes receive a new name upon initiation. Drew Ali may have thus also been appealing to Masons or at least the folk awareness of them.

However, the key to understanding Drew Ali’s primary objective with this concept lies in his assertion in “Divine Warning” that all immigrants to the country—no matter if they are “Italians, Greeks, English, Chinese, Japanese, Turks, [or] Arabians”—are “forced” by “the law” to “proclaim their free national name and religion before the constitutional government of the United States

127 Fauset, *Black Gods of the Metropolis* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, [1944] 2002), 47.

128 Dan Burley, “Pomp, Mysticism Key to Power,” *Chicago Defender* (Ntl. ed.), August 29, 1959, 1.

of America.” Because this is the established practice, he argues, African Americans should also be required by “the law” to do the same.¹²⁹ Drew Ali is apparently claiming here that since ethnic minorities are required to identify their national origin and religion in government documents, African Americans are legally obliged to do so as well—in other words, African Americans have no choice but to stop using non-colorist language when they identify themselves. This notion is reinforced in Drew Ali’s MSTA “Divine Constitution and By-Laws,” which states that “all men now must proclaim their free national name to be recognized by the government in which they live.” By conveniently ignoring the fact that in many government documents of that era the immigrant’s race is also recorded, Drew Ali implies that identifying with a particular ‘free national name’ is not only required by law, doing so will give African Americans an official, legal, and politically-recognized identity that a) is not founded on stereotyped, color-based racial concepts, which both lead to whites treating blacks as second-class citizens and fostering low self-esteem among African Americans; and b) by it doing away with the concept that they are second-class citizens, makes African Americans realize that their political power is equivalent to that of whites. In fact, Drew Ali asserts, African Americans (as Moorish Americans) have always possessed equal rights and political power under both the US Constitution, a document that Drew Ali praises for being accepting of all people and religions as equal, and what he calls “the free national constitutional law that was enforced since 1774 [and that] declared all men equal and free”—which was possibly a reference to the Declarations and Resolves of 1774’s First Continental Congress.¹³⁰

Curiously, Drew Ali also claims in his *Holy Koran* that 1774 was the year African Americans had their names and nationality—which also meant their red flag—“taken away,” and they were “given” instead the names “negro, black and colored,” an event that occurred as a result of African Americans’ “sin” of not honoring “the principles of their mother and father, and stray[ing] after the gods of Europe of whom they knew nothing.”¹³¹ A similar claim is made in the “Divine Constitution and By-Laws,” but here the prophet insists on a different date, 1779, and specifically identifies the “slave holders” as the people

129 Edwards-El, *Muqarrabeen*, 17–18.

130 Ibid., 18; Drew Ali, “Historical Message,” 1, 2; Noble Drew Ali, “Prophet Makes Plea to Nation,” *Moorish Guide*, February 15, 1929, 1 and March 1, 1929, 1. For more on the ‘free national constitutional law that was enforced since 1774,’ see Sheik Way-El, “Free National Constitutional Law or Free National Constitution Of 1774? Properly Understanding this Phrase,” unpublished manuscript (March 2016).

131 Drew Ali, *Holy Koran*, chapter XLVII.

responsible for giving the enslaved the non-national names, which “lasted until 1865.” It is not clear what exactly Drew Ali understood as occurring in 1774 and 1779, or how he reconciled the different dates that he used, but, regardless, Drew Ali’s point was that, as long as they identified as Moors, contemporary African Americans’ status as full citizens was secured by the US’s foundational document.

Consistent with his view that the Constitution is the supreme document for establishing African Americans’ legal status in the US, Drew Ali does not ever address the 1857 Dred Scott decision of the US Supreme Court, which explicitly denied citizenship for African Americans. It is likely that he found that decision to be invalid, as not only did it violate his interpretation of the Constitution, it referred to African Americans as ‘negroes,’ which Drew Ali rejected as an illegitimate term. Along with this ignoring of the Dred Scott decision, he also argues that since African Americans have always legally been full citizens under the Constitution, the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments—which effectively made the Dred Scott decision invalid—were not necessary and have no relevance for African Americans’ lives.¹³² The reason Drew Ali makes this last point is probably to reinforce the MSTA view, as explained above, that African Americans should cease “calculat[ing] our history from the landing of the ‘First Twenty’ or the close of the Civil War.”¹³³ By insisting that the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments are not relevant, he implies that there is no reason for African Americans to base their political, social, or emotional identities on their freedom from slavery. Doing so prevents African Americans from recognizing not only the great pre-American history of their people, but also the importance of the citizenship they were originally granted by the Constitution. The concept of the ‘free national name,’ therefore, was largely designed as a tool to help African Americans claim and obtain their *civil* rights. By rejecting color-based racial categories and instead embracing a ‘national’ identity, Drew Ali hoped that African Americans would conceive of themselves as political and cultural equals with people who had not been enslaved, which would in turn give them the confidence to exercise the legal and political rights as first-class American citizens.

It is possible that Drew Ali’s project was initially inspired by the recent activities of Native Americans and the triracial Nanticokes and ‘Moors’ of Delaware. In 1919, one Red Fox, a Harvard graduate, made headlines for Native Americans when he appealed to Congress to confer citizenship upon the Natives in order

132 Edwards-El, *Muqarrabeen*, 18.

133 “Demanding Ours,” *Moorish Guide*, October 26, 1928, 4.

to give them ‘liberty’ in America.¹³⁴ Two years later, tired of being denied rights due to their being classed as ‘negroes,’ the Nanticoke triracials attempted to obtain improved conditions for themselves by deciding to form a corporation and acquire a state charter, which would give legal status to their non-black, yet non-white identity, and thus grant them political recourse for challenging attempts to segregate them.¹³⁵ In early 1922, after obtaining their charter and beginning to issue membership cards, there was a noticeable increase in pride among the Nanticokes; they began wearing their traditional garments and showed greater interest in adhering to religious and cultural practices. Although the Delaware Moors, the other triracial group in the state, did not use this incorporation method, they too experienced a revival of identity at the time, and this helped them prevent prejudiced treatment. The story of the Nanticokes and Moors quickly spread to New Jersey, New York, and other states through newspaper articles and the triracials’ family members who had migrated to those regions.¹³⁶ It may have been during this period, then, that Drew Ali learned about these various efforts. It is notable that the prophet’s own movement, like that of the Nanticokes, used incorporations, charters, and membership cards as means to help foster both political power and pride in a non-‘negro’ identity.¹³⁷

Again, though, whatever his influences, the main ideological components of Drew Ali’s project were unique, and should be restated. Drew Ali asserted that African Americans should reject race-based identities and instead claim a ‘Moorish’ identity, which can be understood as having three distinct but interconnected elements: 1) *Muslims and Islam’s historical legacy*. For Drew Ali, identifying as Muslims and with Islam—which meant both the worldly achievements of Islamic civilization and the Theosophy, New Thought, and black folk religious principles and practices that Drew Ali asserted were Islamic—would instill in African Americans deep cultural and psychological pride that would, in turn, motivate them to improve their own economic and

134 “Indian Appeals for Citizenship,” *Wilmington Morning News*, September 13, 1919, 11.

135 C.A. Weslager, *Delaware’s Forgotten Folk: The Story of the Moors & Nanticokes* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1943), 91–95.

136 Weslager, *Delaware’s*, 96, 99–100, 110, 130, 136; Stanley B. Pizeck, “Colony of Indians Live and Prosper on Fertile Farm Land in Sussex County,” *Wilmington Morning News* September 6, 1919, 12; *idem.*, “Nanticoke Indians Excel in Education and Farming,” *Wilmington Morning News*, September 9, 1919, 11; *idem.*, “Delaware Moors Are Prosperous People,” *Wilmington Morning News*, September 22, 1919, 8; Lester A. Walton, “Unique Colony Outgrowth of Amalgamation,” *St. Louis Argus*, November 12, 1926, 9.

137 Charters are even mentioned in chapter XLVIII of the *Holy Koran*.

social condition, and would also, by eliminating psychologically and politically destructive race-based identity categories, make whites and blacks alike view African Americans with much greater respect. 2) *Moorish ethnicity*. Because, traditionally, the Moors were well-known as ‘negro’ African Muslims, and because Drew Ali could offer folk-based justifications for African Americans identifying as Moors, this was the needed, culturally-appropriate legitimization for the claim that African Americans were indeed Muslims. 3) *Moorish nationality and name*. By asserting that claiming both one’s nation or nation of descent and the ‘free’ name associated with it will bring individuals in line with US law and therefore will confirm their full equality as citizens under the US Constitution—particularly after those people incorporate and obtain a charter—Drew Ali hoped that African Americans would, through following the folk practice of name changing, gain the confidence to fully participate in the country’s political and legal systems, which would give them the ability to employ political and legal/judicial means to improve—to uplift—their condition in the United States.

From the above, it is clear that although Noble Drew Ali had started his professional religious career as a generic ‘oriental’ mystic and healer, and may have indeed been influenced by Garvey, Suleiman, the Ahmadis, and a host of other teachers, his Moorish project was profoundly original. No one had previously put together these various elements in this way, which—by creatively weaving together potent aspects of black folk religion with white esotericism, Moroccan knowledge, the American Moor tradition, and Garveyite black nationalism—helped impoverished and uneducated African Americans conceive of themselves and behave in ways that would uplift them as individuals and as a community. This would prove to be a remarkably effective program, and Drew Ali’s Moorish Science Temple of America would go on to play a major role in shaping the course of African American Islamic history.

The Moorish Science Temple of America

Having reterritorialized numerous elements of black culture and linked them in several ways with the religious market opened up by Garvey, in the second half of the 1920s Noble Drew Ali created a movement that would, before the decade was over, gain far more Muslim converts than any previous African American Islamic organization. It seems, in fact, that it was because of this success that the MSTA was responsible for fully establishing African American Islam as a permanent and important religious component within the black community. Indeed, even after the Moorish prophet's death in 1929 and the movement's subsequent schisms, the MSTA remained the most prominent, widespread, and influential Muslim community throughout the first era of the AAIR. The present chapter outlines this history.

The Noble Drew Ali Era, 1925–1929

Oral tradition tells us that it was in the year 1925 that Noble Drew Ali appeared in Chicago, a city that hosted the US Ahmadiyya headquarters as well as probably several thousand Garveyites.¹ While standing atop crates in alleyways, and, according to some accounts, selling ice and coal, Drew Ali preached to passersby about his mystical powers and about black Americans' true religion, what he referred to as their *real* 'old time religion': Islam.² African Americans, he said, were not 'negro, black, or colored'; they were 'Moors,' descendants of

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- 1 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 in 1925, although this was probably, at best, the number of registered members *and* sympathizers. The group, it seems, may have even been experiencing internal problems that year, as in August 1926 the group announced to the local press that it was "*again* functioning vigorously" (emphasis added), suggesting that it had recently experienced a lull; see "News and Doings of the U.N.I.A.," *Chicago Enterprise*, August 7, 1926, 2.
 - 2 This story primarily 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 biblical Moabites and Canaanites, and members of the El and Bey tribes. Moreover, he claimed, their suffering in the US was not simply due to their enslavement, but instead was primarily the result of not knowing the truth of their origins. The Prophet Noble Drew Ali had therefore come to Chicago to ‘uplift’ the ‘Moorish Americans’ by reminding them of this truth, or, as he termed it, this ‘science.’ By October, Drew Ali had amassed a small following, which he organized that month in what was called at the time the Moorish Temple of Science.³

Drew Ali’s group does not appear to have been able to attain instant mass popularity,⁴ as it did not even incorporate until late 1926.⁵ But in 1927, around the time the Ahmadi movement was beginning to reach its 1920s nadir (see Chapter 8) and Garvey’s imprisonment had begun leading to the UNIA’s losing cohesion, Moorish temples started being organized in numerous cities east of the Mississippi River.⁶ By the spring of 1929, when the group was known as the Moorish Science Temple of America, over a dozen branches could be found in black communities from Milwaukee and Pine Bluff, Arkansas, the

the phrases ‘old time religion’ and ‘uplift’ in his group’s catechism and *Holy Koran*, cf. for example chapter XLVIII. For the “ice and coal” reference, see Whyte, “Christian Elements,” 23.

- 3 MSTA history circular, late July 1929, 1, 2, AMP; Drew Ali, “Historical Message,” 1, 2. In the former document, for the official founding date of the first temple the date of October 16 is given on page 1, but October 15 is given on page 2. In the latter piece, Drew Ali writes that the MSTA was “organized” in Chicago in 1925. This date was confirmed in 1928 by the leader of the MSTA temple in Richmond; see “Police Put ‘Prophet.’”
- 4 It is said that in the early days of the group Drew Ali told his early Chicagoan followers that the symbol of Islam—the star and crescent moon—would soon be clearly visible in the night sky and it would symbolize the rising of Islam in the West. 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; see Selby Maxwell, “Crescent and Star,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 19, 1925, 18. The ‘star,’ however, was in fact Venus.
- 5 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.
- 6 My assertion here agrees with the charter dates of the first eleven temples given on pages 1–3 of the MSTA history circular from late July 1929, contained in the AMP, which are as follows: No. 1 (Chicago): 10/16 or 10/15/1925; No. 2 (Charleston, WV): 3/17/1927; No. 3 (Milwaukee): 8/28/1927; No. 4 (Detroit): 10/1/1927; No. 5 (Pittsburgh): 11/15/1927; No. 6 (Richmond, VA): 1/11/1928; No. 7 (Cleveland): 4/[?]/1928; No. 8 (Pine Bluff, AR): 5/1/1928; No. 9 (Chicago): 7/16/1928; No. 10 (Newark): 7/29/1928; No. 11 (Philadelphia): 8/3/1928.

group's most northwestern and southwestern points, to Richmond, Virginia and Newark, its eastern limits. Evidence suggests that around 7,000 people had joined the movement by late 1928, making it almost five times larger than the Ahmadi movement at its peak and therefore the largest African American Muslim organization to have existed by that time.⁷

7 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 and after the group's early period, but we can gain a more accurate picture by using the temple membership numbers that were reported by the MSTA 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 26, 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 26 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 MSTA 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"; SAB, 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 member SAB also has said, 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 MSTA activity in the 1920s and the home base of Drew Ali, most likely the largest MSTA temple in the 1920s—in one *Moorish Guide* article there is a claim that the combined Chicago temples 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 there not being what I conservatively assumed was an overlap of 'eligible members' and 'adepts,' under-reporting and that membership numbers rose slightly by December 1928/January 1929, which was probably the true peak of the Drew Ali-era MSTA. I should also point out that ALI'S MEN claim (but, again, without documentation) that until

We have little information about the precise mechanisms behind the MSTA's success, but it is likely to have been the product of several different factors—the most important of which was probably, like Garvey's movement, the recruitment of preexisting social networks. Besides the recruitment of individuals who had already been followers of Drew Ali since his days as the healer Prof. Thomas Drew, there is a strong likelihood that family networks were also very important. We know, for example, of one early Moor, Isaac Cooke-Bey, bringing in his brother, George Cooke-Bey, and then, after both were made leaders in the movement, the brothers established a temple in Baltimore by recruiting a local family.⁸ But Drew Ali's message undoubtedly appealed to people involved with other social networks as well, including Garveyites, who were already attracted to this kind of uplift message and had been exposed to the UNIA's Moorish Islamophilia. In fact, Isaac Cooke-Bey, who was apparently responsible for organizing temples not only in Baltimore, but also in Newark, Philadelphia, and Washington, told potential Moors that he was personally acquainted with Garvey and explicitly promoted Garveyism while attempting to develop his temples.⁹ The movement probably also appealed to the Ahmadis, who, besides frequently being Garveyites themselves, may have been initially attracted to Drew Ali's claims that were similar to their own teachings and beliefs: that their 'forefathers' were Arabic-speaking black Muslims, that Jesus had traveled to India, and that Islam was prophesized as the next religious stage for black Christians.¹⁰ Indeed, it is extremely likely that the MSTA was drawing in former Ahmadis who had left the movement out of protest due to its accepting of whites; Drew Ali reportedly attended at least one Ahmadi meeting in Chicago, and it may have been there where he first attracted local followers.¹¹ The prophet may have also drawn in individuals who had been involved with the various black Hebrew or New Thought-influenced African American groups, all of which had elements close enough to Drew Ali's teach-

May 1928, the MSTA was a civic—not religious—organization that had over 9,000 members, and not all were Muslim; SAB, email correspondence with the author, August 5, 2012.

8 See "Sister S. River-Bey Interviews."

9 B.J. Jack, "The Moorish American Science Temple," 2/14/40, 5–6, Federal Writers Project Records, 1935–1944, Box 188, Folder Moorish Science Temple, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library.

10 As demonstrated in Chapter 8, there was a sharp decline in Ahmadi membership in the late 1920s, especially in Chicago, a fact that suggests many Ahmadis became Moors. I have, however, found very few documentations of Moors admitting they were former Ahmadis; one is suggested in Fauset's *Black Gods* (page 116).

11 Whyte, "Christian Elements," 23.

ings that making a transition from one to the other would have been relatively easy. Chicago was not only home to multiple black Hebrew organizations in the 1920s, it was also where Fred Starck reportedly ran the original Aquarian School of Higher Thought and Church of Divine Science, whose followers would have been intrigued by the Moorish leader's unique use of the *Aquarian Gospel*. Some followers, on the other hand, had not yet experimented with non-Christian groups, but were unhappy with the Christianity to which they had been exposed as children; and a few, such as Hajj Hamdi Bey, also had an inclination for mysticism.¹² Others undoubtedly saw Drew Ali as an especially wise healer, Freemason, conjure doctor, uplift preacher, and carrier of the folk tradition. Indeed, Drew Ali had skillfully incorporated so many elements into his teachings that he had the ability to appeal to a wide variety of African American subcultures and religious markets simultaneously.

Still, for many individuals, the primary attraction was probably not doctrinal but the more practical aspects of the MSTa. The group apparently offered, like most black Masonic orders and many churches, burial benefits and help when members became sick—all of which was augmented by the healing powers and medicines that Drew Ali promoted.¹³ In addition, like the Garvey movement, the MSTa operated a number of small businesses that provided both employment and personal profit. The Chicago headquarters had a Moorish Cafeteria, a Moorish Grocery and Delicatessen, a moving and hauling company called the Moorish Express, a *Moorish Guide* newspaper that ran advertisements for local businesses,¹⁴ and a Moorish Manufacturing Corporation that produced Drew Ali's various tonics and herbs, which were advertised in the MSTa newspapers and were sold by Moorish promoters when they traveled out of state.¹⁵ By mid-

12 James P. Mayes, "Muslims of African Descent in America: A Concise History from Africa to 1977" (MA thesis, Ohio State University, [1977?]), 47, 77–79.

13 "The Moorish Science Temple of America," *Moorish Guide*, September 14, 1928, 4; "Prophet Mosby in the Toils." These benefits may have been taken care of by the Moorish Welfare Club; see "West Virginia Welfare Club Gives a Benefit Dance," *Moorish Guide*, February 1, 1929, 1.

14 According to some accounts, the *Moorish Guide* was first published in 1927 and was distributed only in Chicago. No copies of ties original version have been located. A "national edition" was started in August 1928.

15 *Moorish Guide*, August 24, 1928, 1, 2, 3; *Moorish Guide*, September 14, 1928, 2, 3; *Moorish Guide*, September 28, 1928, 1; *Moorish Guide*, January 15, 1929, 1, 3; *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 4, 1926, 32; *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 5, 1926, G18; *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 7, 1926, 44; "Man Who Claims Moorish Origin Held by Police," *Pine Bluff Daily*

1928, other temples had started additional enterprises; the Pittsburgh group had a laundry, barbershop, and grocery and the Detroit temple, the second largest, owned several businesses, including two combination grocery store and meat markets, a laundry, and a printing press.¹⁶

Fostering business in the black community was in fact strongly encouraged by Noble Drew Ali and his *Moorish Guide*. In his August 1928 “Historical Message to America,” Drew Ali proclaimed that

We must promote economic security [...] no other one thing is more need among us [African Americans] at this time than greater economic power. Better positions for our men and women, more business employment for our boys and girls and bigger [increases?] will follow our economic security. We shall be secure in nothing until we have economic power. A beggar people cannot develop the highest in them, nor can they attain to a genuine enjoyment of the spiritualities of life.

Our men, women and children should be taught to believe in the capacity of our group to succeed in business in spite of the trials and failures of some of them. Trials and failures in business are by no means confined to any particular group of people. Some business ventures of all people fail. We have many men and women among our people who are qualified, both by training and experience who are shining lights in the business world of all the people. It is a sad weakness in us as a people that we have withheld the very encouragement, support and patronage that would have made some of our worthy business ventures a grand success. And worst of all, have joined in the condemnation of them when they failed. Except in cases of actual dishonesty, discourtesy, lack of service and actual unreliability, our business enterprises in every field of endeavor

Graphic, March 10, 1928, 2; “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, 17; “\$10 for Wives’ Cult Head to Fight Ban,” *Pittsburgh Sun-Telegraph*, April 17, 1928, 18; “Negroes Moabites’ Says Science Leader,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, April 21, 1928, 9; “The Beys, Sheiks and Alis Clog Election Machinery,” *Detroit News*, August 3, 1928; “Moroccan Temple Leader Here Born in Mississippi,” *Afro-American*, December 29, 1928, 14; Emily Suzanne Clark, “Noble Drew Ali’s ‘Clean and Pure Nation’ The Moorish Science Temple, Identity, and Healing,” *Nova Religio* 16, no. 3 (2013): 31–51.

16 “Moorish Leader is Postmaster’s Guest,” *Chicago Defender* (City ed.), June 30, 1928, sect. 1, [3?]; “Moorish Head Makes Plans for Conclave,” *Chicago Defender* (Ntl. ed.), July 21, 1928, A4; “Report of Temples,” *Moorish Guide*, October 26, 1928, 4.

should have fullest confidence, cooperation and patronage whenever and wherever they can be given. [...] The problems of life are largely social and economic.¹⁷

Various articles in the group's newspaper reinforced this message. In September 1928, for instance, the paper's editor asserted that the "greatest plight" of African Americans was "economic slavery," and that the best way for American blacks to free themselves from this condition was by supporting and establishing "our own" businesses and land.¹⁸ By early 1929 plans were even in the making for the creation of "a town owned and completely operated" by Moorish Americans.¹⁹

Another attractive aspect of the group's practical activities was its involvement in the political realm. In January 1928, Drew Ali traveled to Havana, Cuba purportedly to attend that year's Pan-American Conference, a convention held to foster political and trade relations between the different countries of the Americas.²⁰ A ship manifest from January 25 shows that Drew Ali and his assistant, Charles Kirkman Bey, had indeed recently been to Cuba, where the Conference had started on January 16 and would run through most of February, and that they were now returning.²¹ Because, however, there is no mention of the Moors in any readily accessible records or accounts of the Conference, we cannot confirm Drew Ali's claim of having actually attended, and, even if he visited the event, it remains unclear what exactly he was doing while there.

Beyond this international political effort, evidence suggests that Drew Ali's political/legal message about African Americans claiming a 'free national name' was a source of great motivation to organize politically and stand up to white oppression within the US. A. Brown-El, who began promoting the Moorish Holy Temple of Science in Pine Bluff, Arkansas in early 1928, was telling

17 Drew Ali, "Historical Message," 1, 2.

18 "The Moorish Science Temple of America," *Moorish Guide*, September 14, 1928, 4. Also see Claude D. Greene, "Our Dollars and Sense," *Moorish Guide*, September 14, 1928, 2.

19 "Moors Endorse Village Idea," *Moorish Guide*, February 1, 1929, 1; "Prophet Begins Second Tour," *Moorish Guide*, February 15, 1929, 1, 2.

20 Kirkman Bey, in the FBI interview, claimed that he went with Drew Ali to Havana for "vacation," but other MSTa 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> and "Trips of the Prophet," *Moorish Guide*, August 24, 1928, 1.

21 Available on *Ancestry.com*. I would like to thank SAB for bringing this document to my attention.

local African Americans that they should “demand their rights” that had been accorded to them by the Constitution.²² The city’s officials, however, responded by arresting Brown-El for “agitating Negroes against the whites.”²³ Perhaps disillusioned by Brown-El’s arrest, in mid-May, J. Mosby-El—in the incident in which he flew the ‘red flag’—was proclaiming his own, very different version of Drew Ali’s message in the streets of Richmond, Virginia.²⁴ Witnesses attested to him exclaiming “To hell with the American flag; down with the white people!”²⁵—assertions that led to Mosby-El being arrested and having his temple raided.²⁶ It seems, then, that sometimes the ‘nationality’ concept inspired Moors to go out and confront whites in ways that Drew Ali did not necessarily intend. By the fall, in fact, several Moors had caused disturbances by, according to Drew Ali, “flashing” their “nationality cards”—cards issued to members of the MSTA—at “Europeans,”²⁷ apparently due to a widespread belief that the cards had magical powers that would protect the Moors from white harassment and abuse.²⁸

Noble Drew Ali therefore had to make multiple attempts to disabuse members of incorrect views that some had about the political elements of his message. Back in January 1928, when the Chicago headquarters issued Mosby-El a charter for starting a temple in Richmond, Drew Ali’s organization was known

22 “Man Who Claims Moorish Origin”; “Arrested for Advising Negroes to Seek Rights,” *St. Louis Argus*, March 23, 1928, 9; “Moorish-American Arrested as Agitator,” *Chicago Defender* (City ed.), March 24, 1928, sect. I, 5.

23 “Arrested for Advising.”

24 On the two men being neighbors, see Abdat, “Before the Fez,” 22–23. On Mosby-El being from Richmond, see “‘Prophet’ Mosby in the Toils.” However, it should be mentioned that in another article (“Police Put ‘Prophet’ in Jail for Preaching Race Sedition,” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, May 21, 1928, 1, 8) he was reported to have first met Drew Ali in Chicago “about” three years before.

25 “‘Prophet’ Mosby in the Toils”; “Police Put ‘Prophet’”; “‘Prophet’ Mosby Fined Ten Dollars”; “Street Speaker to Face Trial Here,” *Richmond Planet*, June 2, 1928, 1.

26 Ibid.; “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, 17. Given that a) Mosby-El probably knew Drew Ali as far back as the 1910s—when Drew Ali may have been associated with Abdul Hamid Suleiman—and b) Suleiman’s teachings, as was suggested by the 1927 Christian missionary’s report, was far more critical of whites than Drew Ali’s teachings, it is possible that Mosby-El was expressing sentiments of Suleiman’s group or those of another pre-MSTA Muslim organization.

27 “Prophet Warns All Moslems,” *Moorish Guide*, January 15, 1929, 1.

28 [Frank] Yerby, “Moors,” 12/5/38, 3, Federal Writers Project Records, 1935–1944, Box 188, Folder Moorish Science Temple, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library.

as the ‘Moorish Temple of Science of the World’;²⁹ but within days of word getting back to Chicago about Mosby-El’s speech and arrest, the group incorporated under a new name, the ‘Moorish Science Temple of America,’ presumably to emphasize its loyalty to the US government and its laws.³⁰ Drew Ali also began sending messages to his followers explicitly stating that they needed to adhere to the laws of the country in which they resided, and to stop showing their MSTA cards to whites.³¹

By the summer of 1928 Drew Ali had better mobilized his Moors, reportedly by using Wednesday night meetings in which members were taught the MSTA political agenda and platform.³² In August, the prophet, probably taking a cue from the UNIA’s political activities in 1924, began sending Moors out to register to vote for the upcoming elections. In Detroit, this led to some conflicts due to what appears to have been another miscommunication concerning Drew Ali’s concept of the ‘free national name.’ Upon conversion and receiving their Moorish surname suffixes, El or Bey, most members, having been raised in the black folk tradition, immediately began insisting on using the new name in all aspects of their lives—but because they did so without making a legal name change, when the Detroit Moors went en masse to register to vote, city officials refused to authorize their registrations unless the Moors agreed to use their legal names, which few Moors did.³³ Further complicating the matter was the Moors’ refusal to be marked down as ‘negro’; they of course insisted on being listed in this government document as ‘Moorish,’ which, unsurprisingly, confused and frustrated the city employees, who had to seek advice for handling the Moors’ persistent demands to be registered.³⁴

The difficulties in Detroit, however, did not put an end to the MSTA’s national voting program. That same month, Drew Ali implied in the *Moorish Guide* that the MSTA would act as a single voting bloc for upcoming elections, and in late September the newspaper announced that Moors in Chicago would be voting for the African American politician Oscar DePriest in his bid for

29 “‘Prophet’ Mosby in the Toils.”

30 Abdat, “Before the Fez,” 25.

31 “Prophet Warns All Moslems.” See also Noble Drew Ali’s pamphlet *Humanity*.

32 SAB, email correspondence with the author, August 5, 2012.

33 “The Beys, Sheiks and Alis”; “Proves Right to Vote by Records of 1892,” *Detroit Free Press*, August 3, 1928, 7; “4 Races or 5? Voters Must Tell, Anyhow,” *Detroit Free Press*, August 9, 1928, 7.

34 Ibid.

Congress.³⁵ Soon DePriest and several other black political figures in Chicago were courting the Moorish vote, even attending the group's convention that fall and various later gatherings.³⁶ When the new year commenced, the MSTA kept up its strong push for political influence; Drew Ali attended the Illinois governor's inauguration and the group's 'supreme business manager,' Claude D. Greene, wrote a piece for the *Chicago Defender* supporting the re-election of Alderman Louis B. Anderson.³⁷

Although political issues were very important in the movement, religion of course was not forgotten, and in July 1928, the MSTA, which had previously been incorporated as a civic organization, now incorporated as a religious organization, thereby officially making religion the central focus of the movement. Unfortunately, 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 an MSTA faction made by Arthur Fauset in his 1944 study of African American religious sects.³⁸ As will be shown, however, by the time Fauset conducted his study, the various MSTA factions had developed distinct identities and practices, and so, while it is likely that each faction's practices were derived from those in the Drew Ali period,³⁹ what the original elements were are currently not fully known. Nevertheless, there exists a small amount of relatively reliable information about the early practices and the structure of its social-religious hierarchy. One 1928 newspaper article reported, for instance, that the movement had at least seven 'degrees'—the hoodoo and Masonic term for grades of initiation.⁴⁰ Although this can-

35 "Politics," *Moorish Guide*, August 24, 1928, 3; "We Can Elect One Congressman," *Moorish Guide*, September 28, 1928, 4.

36 Edwards-El, *Muqarrabeen*, 30–31; "Moorish Leader Is Postmaster's Guest," *Chicago Defender* (City ed.), June 30, 1928, sect. 1, [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. 1, 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.

37 "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. 1, 3.

38 Fauset, *Black Gods*, 41–51.

39 Fauset, in fact, was aware of this fact through his work with the Works Progress Administration (WPA) whose writings on the MSTA written during the early 1940s made this observation; see the WPA's *Early Studies in Black Nationalism*.

40 "Prophet' Mosby in the Toils."

not be verified, we will see that at least one post-Drew Ali faction also used a degree system—so it is likely that it was based on the Drew Ali-era system. Evidence from the group's newspaper at the time also suggests that members prayed (in what way is unclear) and there was, in addition, a strong, almost 'religious,' emphasis on using the Moorish healing products—what were essentially rebranded versions of the oils and tonics that Drew Ali had been using since his days as Prof. Thomas Drew. It was said, furthermore, that Drew Ali performed various miracles, including the using of his "spirit" to "rout [...] enemies" from a temple where he was not physically present, which was probably also an expansion of a practice he had employed in his previous persona,⁴¹ as were Drew Ali's performances as an escape artist in early public shows, which apparently were put on by the MSTA to both entertain and draw in new converts.⁴²

As for the organization's weekly meetings, we have fragmentary evidence. There exists, first of all, a program for a temple meeting found in an MSTA newspaper in 1928 as well as a number of descriptions of meetings recorded in the late 1930s by the Works Progress Administration,⁴³ which reveal a service that was similar to, but slightly different from, the ones described by Fauset.⁴⁴ Finally, in the early 1940s, the FBI interviewed individuals who had been members of the MSTA during the 1920s and they gave snippets of information about the group's early services.⁴⁵ Generally, the Drew Ali-era meeting—which was typically held during Wednesday, Friday, and Sunday evenings from 8:00 to 10:00 p.m.⁴⁶—began with readings by the temple leader (the 'grand sheik') from MSTA literature, primarily Drew Ali's *Holy Koran*. Then, numerous members of the temple would be given the floor to speak on various MSTA teachings. Usually dispersed throughout the meeting was the chanting of songs—which were most often common Christian hymns or folk songs with the words changed to reflect MSTA teachings—performed by a single member, a choir, or the whole

41 "Prophet's Spirit Routs Enemies from Temple," *Moorish Guide*, September 14, 1928, 1.

42 Wilson, *Sacred Drift*, 30; "Sheiks, Prophets Figure in Great Moorish Drama," *Chicago Defender* (City ed.), May 14, 1927, sect. II, 9.

43 See WPA, *Early Studies*, 21–22; Federal Writers Project Records, 1935–1944, Box 188, Folder Moorish Science Temple, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library.

44 P. Smith-El, "Program of Moorish Science Temple of America No. 12," *Moorish Guide*, September 28, 1928, 3.

45 E.g., MSTA FBI file, Report, 9/21/1943, Chicago file 14–39, 19.

46 However, as noted above, Wednesday meetings were reportedly primarily used for political activities.

congregation.⁴⁷ In addition to the regular services, some temples reportedly held, as has been mentioned, political meetings on Wednesday evenings and sheik meetings, during which leading members of a temple would discuss issues related to the local group, were held intermittently on Tuesday nights.⁴⁸ There were also apparently occasional meetings of the group's governing body, the Supreme Grand Council, which was established at the movement's 1928 convention and was populated by temple heads, most notably Edward Mealy-El, the council's 'supreme grand sheik' and the leader of Chicago's Grand Temple.

It is not known what the exact dress requirements were during the pre-1930 period, but in the pictures from that time MSTA men typically wore dark suits with red fezzes (some with tassels and some without) and buttons with either a 'circle seven' or a crescent and star, and were either completely clean-shaven or had only mustaches. For large gatherings, they would sometimes wear sashes, robes, and turbans. Women, on the other hand, were always depicted wearing robes and hair-covering shawls 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),⁴⁹ but it is widely known that Moors avoided pork and there was in the literature a clear emphasis on having a healthy body: in the "Divine Constitution" Drew Ali admonished his followers to keep their bodies clean through bathing and the *Moorish Guide* ran numerous pieces promoting the use of Moorish Manufacturing Corporation herbs and tonics as health aids.⁵⁰ Sexual conduct was not discussed in great detail, except for the fact that monoracial, monogamous marriage for regular members was officially endorsed by Drew Ali.⁵¹

47 The MSTA songs have been compiled in Willie Bey and [Muhammed] [Al-]Ahari El, eds., *Songs of Salvation* (Chicago: Magribine Press, 1996).

48 "Bomb Blasts Hill Temple," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, November 6, 1929, 1. The FBI's later investigation revealed that holding these sheik meetings continued to be a practice into the 1940s, at least among the largest post-1929 faction; see MSTA FBI file, Exhibit No. 7, 11/19/1942, Flint file.

49 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 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.).

50 See Clark, "Noble Drew Ali's," *passim*.

51 See Noble Drew Ali, "Prophet Sends Marriage Law to all Temples," *Moorish Guide*, February 15, 1929, 1. This proclamation was probably sent out in response to certain local leaders

A word should also be said here about the MSTA's position on 'Europeans'—that is, white people. The full view on the topic held by the Drew Ali-era MSTA is currently not known. Ostensibly, in the publicly-available material and most of the literature that was read by early members, Drew Ali taught love and peace towards all people, including whites, as well as loyalty to the US government and its laws.⁵² However, Drew Ali's catechism implies 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 believed that white skin color was indeed more godly.⁵³ Because Drew Ali, in his other teachings, said that 'slaveholders' made Moors believe both that they were 'negro, black, and colored'—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* whites were essentially Satan/the Devil, a view that seems to be supported by the fact that in his *Holy Koran* Drew Ali paints a history that is dominated by 'Europeans' oppressing Asiatics. But Drew Ali does not explicitly claim in the literature that all whites are indeed 'the Devil': the catechism teaches that Satan/the Devil is also the 'lower self,' and that the lower self is within all people, regardless of race/nationality. Furthermore, in the *Holy Koran*, Drew Ali presents a possible future of all people, including Europeans, living peacefully on Earth. 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, or at least non-published, doctrines concerning whites.⁵⁴ Some reports suggest

sometimes selling to members the right to marry more than one wife; see "\$10 for Wives' Cult Head to Fight Ban," *Pittsburgh Sun-Telegraph*, April 17, 1928, 18; "Moorish Sheik Nabbed Again," *Pittsburgh Sun-Telegraph*, April 21, 1928, 11. However, Drew Ali himself was accused of having polygamous relationships with a number of teenage girls in the MSTA; 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.

52 Drew Ali, "The Moorish Science Temple of America."

53 Drew Ali, *Koran Questions*, questions 93 and 94.

54 It should be mentioned that the MSTA group Fauset studied in the 1940s considered almost all of the MSTA's teachings to be secret, restricted to members only. Therefore, it is unclear to what degree teachings with that group or the Drew Ali-era MSTA were considered exoteric and esoteric.

that many of the early Moors—not just Mosby-El—were actually highly antagonistic towards whites, seeing them, as many of the enslaved had once done, as wicked beings who were constantly tricking African Americans to accept oppression.⁵⁵ Some Moors even transmitted the notion—which was not Drew Ali's official doctrine—that the terms 'black' and 'negro' were given to African Americans *after* the Civil War as a way to continue the Moors' enslavement; for this reason, these racial terms were referred to by some Moors as 'slave names.'⁵⁶ Some of the other unofficial traditions concerning whites were more religious in content, and may represent older folk beliefs. One, transmitted by a female Moorish leader in Georgia, was that whites were the descendants of Hagar and Satan, with the latter being the brother of the biblical Adam,⁵⁷ and another teaching, whose use by early MSTA members has not yet been fully confirmed, was that whites represented the angel of death, the rider of the biblical pale horse.⁵⁸

Interestingly, however, even among those who resented most 'Europeans,' sometimes a few exceptions were made. One teaching, for instance, held 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.⁵⁹ Beyond this, there were at least a few Moors who were not particularly angry towards whites, especially those who strongly believed in following the published words of Drew Ali.⁶⁰ In the end, it is likely that in the MSTA, similar to many if not most religious communities, 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 US government

55 [Frank] Yerby, "Moors," 12/12/38; Benjamin F. Jack, "The Moorish American Church," 1/3/40, 2–3; *idem.*, "Moorish American Science Temple," 2/5/40, 3, in Federal Writers Project Records, 1935–1944, Box 188, Folder Moorish Science Temple, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library.

56 Benjamin F. Jack, "The Moorish American Church," 1/3/40, 2; *idem.*, "Moorish American Science Temple," 2/5/40, 2, *idem.*, "Moorish Science," 1/31/40, 1, in Federal Writers Project Records, 1935–1944, Box 188, Folder Moorish Science Temple, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library.

57 MSTA FBI file, Report, 3/22/1943, Savannah file 100–2447, 4.

58 I have only seen this as being conveyed by Elijah Muhammad's son, W.D. Mohamed, and not an actual MSTA member; see Clifton E. Marsh, *The Lost-Found Nation of Islam in America* (Lanham: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2000), 158.

59 See MSTA FBI file, Exhibit No. 14, 12/17/1942, Flint file. Also see Wilson, *Sacred Drift*, 18–19.

60 See, e.g., [Frank] Yerby, "Moors," 12/12/38, Federal Writers Project Records, 1935–1944, Box 188, Folder Moorish Science Temple, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library.

taken by post-Drew Ali MSTAs 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.

What does appear to have been a very clear and widely accepted concept in the MSTA, however, was the notion that the group was not for non-Moor 'Europeans.' In his *Holy Koran*, Drew Ali emphasizes, just as had many ex-slaves in the years following Emancipation, that all "nation[s]" should "worship under their own vine and fig tree."⁶¹ The MSTA was very much in line with this folk feeling in African American culture—Drew Ali even called his teachings "old time religion"—and the prophet, echoing words that had been printed in the *Negro World* just a few years earlier, asserted that Moors

do not desire to amalgamate or marry into the families of the pale skin nations of Europe. Neither serve the gods of their religion, because our forefathers are the true and divine founders of the first religious creed, for the redemption and salvation of mankind on earth.⁶²

Latinos, however, were accepted in the group as 'Moslems,' due, apparently, partly to the Moorish dominion extending to the Americas and partly to Drew Ali's travels to Cuba and Mexico. A 'Cuban-Americano Headquarters' MSTA nationality card, written in poor Spanish, was even issued from the Chicago temple.⁶³

The Great Schism

Despite the MSTA's rapid early success and its adoption of a constitution by 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.⁶⁴ Then, in October, Drew Ali discovered that there were "incidents in some of the branch temples' prices [for the MSTA's first national] convention" that had been held that month; in response, he announced that 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

61 Drew Ali, *Holy Koran*, chapters XLVI and XLVIII.

62 Drew Ali, *Holy Koran*, chapter XLVIII; Drew Ali, *Koran Questions*, question and answer 18.

63 K. Moore 32°, *Moorish Circle 7* (Bloomington, IN: Authorhouse, 2005), xxvii.

64 See Chapter 5.

code.⁶⁵ Another problem was that, as we have seen, since at least the spring of 1928 some of local temple leaders had been drawing negative attention from authorities because of their preaching anti-American and anti-white ideas.⁶⁶ 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.⁶⁷ In early February, Drew Ali's relationship with his well-connected business manager Claude Greene disintegrated when Greene suddenly resigned from his post.⁶⁸ 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.⁶⁹ Greene had, in addition, begun working with the Detroit temple leader James Lomax Bey to either break off from Drew Ali's organization or to try to wrest control of the MSTA from the prophet.⁷⁰ As a result of Greene's departure, then, on February 15 Lomax Bey, who had been one of the original incorporators of the Chicago temple back in 1926, publicly rejected Drew Ali's authority as the head of the movement,⁷¹ an action that, by early March, had resulted in his temple splitting into two factions and rumors beginning to circulate that some Moors wanted the Detroit leader dead.⁷² On the eleventh of that month, after a charge was brought by a Drew Ali partisan, Lomax Bey was arrested for embezzle-

65 "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.

66 "Moorish-American Arrested as Agitator," *Chicago Defender* (City ed.), Mar 24, 1928, sect. 1, 5; "Pittsburgh," *New York Evening Post*, April 17, 1928, 28; "Negroes Moabites, Says Science Leader," *Pittsburgh Courier*, April 21, 1928, 9; "Police Put 'Prophet' in Jail for Preaching Race Seditious," *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.

67 "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.

68 "Bro. Greene Bey Quits Business Manager Post," *Moorish Guide*, February 15, 1929, 1.

69 "Murder Exposes Moorish Leader's Amours," *Pittsburgh Courier*, March 23, 1929, 10.

70 "Hold Moorish Temple 'Prophet' in Murder Plot," *Chicago Defender* (Ntl. ed.), March 23, 1929, 1, 3.

71 Letter, Nobled Drew Ali to unnamed recipient, March 11, 1929, AMP.

72 "Detroit Followers Riot," *Chicago Defender* (Ntl. ed.), March 23, 1929, 3.

ment; and on the next day, when members of the two factions gathered for a meeting, a leadership dispute led to a shootout at the temple, which resulted in the wounding of two police officers and two Moors.⁷³ This was followed, on March 15, with Greene being murdered by Drew Ali partisans.⁷⁴ Drew Ali was subsequently arrested as a suspect, but the charges were eventually dropped.

Had the infighting ceased at this point, the MSTA might have weathered the storm and held together. But this was not to be. A new leadership dispute erupted in mid-summer when, on July 20, the MSTA prophet ‘passed from physical form,’ most likely, according to today’s Moorish American historians, due to illness.⁷⁵ Almost immediately after learning of Drew Ali’s death, reporters discovered that at least some of his followers believed his spirit would enter the body of the person who would become the new head of the movement, and several Moors had suspected that this individual would be Aaron Payne, a politically-connected attorney who had replaced Greene as the MSTA’s business manager.⁷⁶ Payne, claiming he had possession of the group’s original charter, accepted the role, taking the name Ali and the title of prophet.⁷⁷ But serious challenges to the community’s unity quickly emerged. Payne began receiving death threats and MSTA histories report that at the movement’s annual gathering in mid-September, John Givens-El, purportedly Drew Ali’s former chauffeur, walked into the convention and announced that he was ‘Noble Drew Ali Reincarnated,’ and thereafter began building a following.⁷⁸ Later at the convention, Edward Mealy-El told people that he was at the prophet’s side upon his death, and that Drew Ali had named him as his successor. However, possibly under pressure from the MSTA heads of various states, Mealy-El appointed Charles Kirkman Bey, who, it was rumored, had become head of the faction aligned with Greene and Lomax Bey to be the MSTA’s ‘grand advisor’ in hopes

73 For a more complete account, see the section on Lomax Bey (Ezaldeen) in Chapter 5 and accompanying notes.

74 “Claude Greene Shot to Death in Unity Hall,” *Chicago Defender* (City ed.), March 16, 1929, 1, 2; “Hold Moorish Temple ‘Prophet.’”

75 A rumor that has long been circulated is that Drew Ali died from wounds he received from police when he was arrested for the Greene killing.

76 “Drew Ali, Prophet of Cult, is Buried with Pomp by Members,” *Chicago Defender* (Ntl. ed.), August 3, 1929, 1, 3.

77 Ibid.; “6 Held to Grand Jury for Cult Battle Murders,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 28, 1929, 4.

78 Way-El, *Noble*, 124–25; Edwards-El, *Muqarrabeen*, 44–47.

of quelling desires for a schism.⁷⁹ But Kirkman Bey's followers were not satisfied; they believed he should have had a higher rank than Mealy-El and therefore chose to call Kirkman Bey the 'supreme grand advisor' and treat him as Mealy-El's superior. To resolve the conflict, the issue was put to a vote—and to the surprise of many Mealy-El supporters, this resulted in Kirkman Bey being named as the MSTa's head.⁸⁰ To make the vote 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 Bey—who was probably the same man who had killed Greene and possibly was the same Ira Johnson who had been involved in the UNIA shootout with police in Chattanooga in 1927—a group of men that included Givens-El forced their way into Payne's home to obtain the charter.⁸¹ Johnson Bey, who later revealed that he had desired to be the MSTa's grand advisor, then had several men kidnap Kirkman Bey to try to retrieve his signed certificate.⁸² The police were called and another shootout occurred, this one leaving two police officers killed. Johnson Bey and his gang were subsequently 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 left the movement by 1930, but later joined up with Walton-El's faction in Chicago).⁸³ The factionalism became so intense that over the next several years each group began suing the other over the right to lead

79 It is likely that the title 'advisor' had been used by Kirkman Bey when he traveled with Noble Drew Ali.

80 Way-El, *Noble*, 122–24; Edwards-El, *Muqarrabeen*, 46.

81 See "Aaron Payne Marked for Death by Moors," *Chicago Defender* (City ed.), September 28, 1929, 3. On the UNIA case, see Hill, *Garvey Papers*, 6:578–87; "Association of Negro Radicals Has Huge Fund for Propaganda," *Chattanooga Times*, August 6, 1927, 5; "Chattanooga Case," *Negro World*, March 3, 1928, 3. That Johnson Bey may have been identical with the UNIA's Ira Johnson is suggested by three things besides their both having similar rare names: a) their proclivity for violence; b) the fact that the UNIA's Johnson was sent to Tennessee from Chicago, where Johnson Bey was living; and c) the Tennessee connection: Johnson Bey was originally from Tennessee, as reported in the 1920 census and his prison record from Menard Penitentiary.

82 Previous histories fail to make clear that Johnson had significant support in the MSTa community at the time. See "Five Moors to Face Trial for Murder Next Week," *Chicago Defender* (City Ed.), January 25, 1930, sect. 1, [?].

83 [Frank] Yerby, "Moors," 9/1/39, 2, Federal Writers Project Records, 1935–1944, Box 188, Folder Moorish Science Temple, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library.

the movement,⁸⁴ violence erupted in several temples throughout the country, and in many cases temples simply split.⁸⁵ Both Kirkman Bey and Givens-El's factions called their organizations the Moorish Science Temple of America, the title Drew Ali's group had used since 1928, but Kirkman Bey added an 'Inc.' at the end of the title. Meanwhile, unhappy with the divisiveness that was becoming a significant part of MSTA life, many Moors began to leave the dominant groups to follow the numerous lesser-known individuals who had started claiming Moorish authority. Although the infighting would settle down by 1935, and one particular faction would end up with many more temples than the others, no single faction was universally dominant during the half-decade after Drew Ali's passing.

The period from 1929 to 1934 can be labeled the 'Great Schism'⁸⁶ not only because of the fact that it marks the point at which the MSTA devolved into a seemingly permanent state of factionalism, but also because of the significance the period would have for the rest of the AAIR. As will be seen in the following chapters, it was because of the MSTA'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 that without the Great Schism, then, African American Islam before 1975 would not have

84 Copies of pages of documents from 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). Also see Federal Writers Project Records, 1935-1944, Box 188, Folder Moorish Science Temple, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library.

85 Way-El, *Noble*, 140-47; Edwards-El, *Muqarrabeen*, 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.

86 I began using this term in my notes around late 2011 without any knowledge of others using this term for the 1929 MSTA schism, but several months later I saw it used on a website produced by an MSTA 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 whether 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.

been a deterritorialized ‘renaissance,’ full of diversity and experimentation. The MSTA would have likely remained, without serious contestation, the dominant Islamic group among American blacks, and hardly anyone would have ever heard of movements that emerged from the Great Schism, such as the Nation of Islam. But because of this event, although the MSTA would remain the largest and probably most influential Islamic community for around three decades of the AAIR, it only beat out other popular groups by a small margin. Furthermore, due to its deep factionalism, the post-Great Schism MSTA could not successfully mobilize masses of African American Muslims the way that the NOI later would. In fact, as will be discussed in Chapter 11, the MSTA’s disunity made it, despite it being 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 generally would continue to be very common in Muslim groups throughout the AAIR and would frequently result in significant turns in the development of African American Islam, no other single schism affected as many Islamic organizations and factions as the MSTA’s Great Schism of 1929–1934.⁸⁷

The Factions

Although its repercussions would spread throughout the AAIR, the Great Schism’s impact on the Moorish community alone was tremendous. Prior to 1929 there had been fewer than twenty MSTA temples, but by 1943 there were over eighty. Of these, Kirkman Bey could claim at least fifty-four and Givens-El ten,⁸⁸ the rest were connected to leaders who typically had only one or two temples each. By the next year, the FBI had identified the heads of at least eleven different MSTA factions, most of which only had one or two temples, and about half of these leaders claimed to be Drew Ali reincarnated: Kirkman Bey, Frederick 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), and Joshua Bey (Toledo).⁸⁹ In addition, there is evidence for

87 Of course, Malcolm X’s breaking from the NOI in 1964 had a greater historical impact, but it does not seem to have affected Muslim organization and faction growth to nearly the same degree as the Great Schism.

88 MSTA FBI file, Report, 12/15/1943, Chicago file 61–293; MSTA FBI file, Report, 5/19/1943, Chicago file 14–41.

89 See e.g., MSTA FBI file, Report, MID 201. MSTA, 2/26/1943; MSTA FBI file, Report, 10/26/1944,

at least a half dozen other factions during the 1930s and early 1940s.⁹⁰ It is notable that several of these leaders, probably in an attempt to assert their sole right to lead the MSTA, claimed to have parents or grandparents from North Africa, and/or to have spent time there themselves; however they provided little evidence to support this and in fact, at least in some cases, this was almost definitely not true.⁹¹

As many scholars have observed, the factions differed primarily over the issue of Drew Ali's reincarnation, however they also diverged on multiple other 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 as well as his promotion of an 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, that led by Turner-El, was particularly concerned with both fighting for the Moors' rights in courts as well as with fostering

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, *Noble*, 150-51; on the Mohammed Bey faction, see Abdat, "The Sheiks of Sedition."

90 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; "Self-Styled Moslem Leader Returns from Jail to Fold," *Sun* (Baltimore), October 30, 1934, 9; "Cult Head Is Accused," *St. Louis Argus*, September 27, 1935, 1B; Federal Writers Project Records, 1935-1944, Box 188, Folder Moorish Science Temple, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library.

91 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 Bey, and Ira Johnson Bey. 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 MSTA—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 MSTA members or had at least been influenced by the MSTA. For Akram's claim, see "The Moslems in Cleveland," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, 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 6; and for Johnson's, see the section on the Fahamme in Chapter 8.

ties with politicians, whereas Kirkman Bey's faction was more interested in expansion and the building up of a Moorish American farm. Rules and stylistic elements could also vary from faction to faction, temple to temple, and even individual to individual. In the late 1930s and early 1940s, for instance, some Moors permitted alcohol consumption, card game playing, possessing non-antagonistic views towards whites, and allowing stinking, unbathed bodies to enter their temples, and some preferred speakers who used the fiery passion of 'old time' Baptist preachers—whereas other groups saw all of these elements as completely antithetical to the true Moorish way of life.⁹²

Another 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 would be the cause of the FBI's main investigation of the MSTa in the 1940s.⁹³ Generally, all MSTa factions considered the Japanese fellow 'Asiatics,' but, following Drew Ali, they usually told their members that it was important to support the country in which one resides. Still, because Drew Ali's *Holy Koran*, with its understood connections to the Book of Revelation, had an implicit millennial element, it was relatively easy for individual Moors to believe that a war between the 'European' nations (including the US) and the 'Asiatic' ones was on the horizon. Which branches would take up this view 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, a place where, in the early 1940s, Moors were said to be especially antagonistic to whites.⁹⁴ Michigan 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), which, as will be discussed in Chapters 7 and 8, was an anti-American, black uplift organization that drew many of its members from the MSTa and the Nation of Islam, and

92 On the allowance of alcohol, card games, non-antagonistic views towards whites, lack of bathing, and emotional preaching, see Federal Writers Project Records, 1935–1944, Box 188, *passim.*, Folder Moorish Science Temple, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. The Givens-El faction is the best example of the opposite approach—see the discussion of that faction below.

93 The FBI had briefly investigated the group in 1931 when a lone Moor wrote a letter to the US president. It was determined at the time that the MSTa 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 MSTa meetings. During this second investigation, it was learned that pro-Japanese doctrines had already been prevalent in many MSTa groups in the early 1930s.

94 See MSTa FBI file, Report, 11/12/1942, Detroit file 100–6603; Fauset, *Black Gods*, 43n3.

may have been primarily MSTA-inspired.⁹⁵ 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 break-off groups, 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 prominent in the MSTA, and even where it was (such as in Detroit and Flint, Michigan), the local groups lacked strong enough leadership, organization, and resources to actually pose a threat to the United States.

The weakness of the pro-Japanese stance, however, does not mean that Moorish Americans passively accepted racist conditions in the US. One of the crucial implicit features of Drew Ali's message was that African Americans could gain self-respect and political strength in America if they converted their racial grievances into religious rights issues. The prophet had observed that despite the fact that Islam was the religion that was "the least appreciated and probably, the most misunderstood [...] especially [...] in our western world,"⁹⁶ because the US was dedicated to what he considered the important ideal of religious freedom, and because it had created laws to protect that freedom, the country would permit even the most misunderstood religion to exist without harassment.⁹⁷ Therefore, if African Americans accepted what he claimed about them (that their true heritage was Islamic), they would thus have *legal* recourse for racist attacks, in addition to being able to build up their community through economic and political action.⁹⁸

During the Great Schism, a few trailblazers had begun applying his philosophy, appearing in courts to challenge laws that they claimed violated their religious rights.⁹⁹ After 1934, this became a common occurrence. When, for instance, 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.

95 For a discussion of Takahashi's influence on African American groups, including the NOI, see Allen, "When Japan."

96 Drew Ali, "Historical Message," 2.

97 *Ibid.*, 2, 3.

98 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."

99 "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.

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 and political self-confidence. On other occasions, Moors caused a stir when they protested employment discrimination,¹⁰⁰ refused to use segregated facilities or sign government documents without their MSTA-given names of El or Bey,¹⁰¹ fought in courts to have their children exempt from attending public schools on Fridays (the MSTA sabbath), and when they argued against attempts to force MSTA members to remove their fezzes while in court. Also, starting with Drew Ali's trial in 1929, the group used a related technique that would later be popularized by the NOI: large numbers of Moors filling courtrooms to support a fellow Moor who was being prosecuted.¹⁰²

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. In Philadelphia alone there were seven Moor-run businesses in 1943,¹⁰³ and upon discovering this, 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.¹⁰⁴ It even appears that some individuals with at best only minimal ties to the MSTA capitalized on the popularity of the group by using the 'Moorish' title for their own for-profit enterprises.¹⁰⁵ In addition, it was probably partly due to this similarity with Garvey's economic program that the post-1929 MSTA was also attracting former UNIA members; in fact, in the early 1930s the membership loss that the UNIA was experiencing due to Garveyites joining the MSTA was so significant that the former group publicly complained about it in the *Negro*

100 Arna Bontemps and Jack Conroy, *Any Place but Here* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1966), 313–14.

101 On Moors refusing to use segregated facilities, see "'Moor' Fined for Violation of Segregation," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, April 11, 1943; "'Dark-Sinned Man' Beats Jim Crow," *Carolina Times*, January 24, 1953, 1.

102 See, e.g., Brian Dolinar, ed., *The Negro in Illinois: The WPA Papers* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2013), 203; "Bey of Baltimore"; "Self-Styled Moslem Leader Returns from Jail to Fold," *Sun* (Baltimore), October 30, 1934, 9.

103 MSTA FBI file, Report, 6/18/1943, Philadelphia file 100–1544.

104 MSTA FBI file, Report, 9/22/1943, Newark file 100–14714, 3.

105 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 two older businesses, the Moon Curio Co. and the New Orleans Importing Co.

World and at meetings.¹⁰⁶ This suggests that the Islamophilia from the early 1920s had remained smoldering in the UNIA, and perhaps was rekindled by the MSTA. Interestingly, in early 1930s Cleveland the local MSTA was actually growing bigger than it had ever been under Drew Ali,¹⁰⁷ a phenomenon possibly related to the fact that, as mentioned in Chapter 3, it was during this time that Cleveland's UNIA Ethiopian Club had a president who was most likely a Muslim and who sponsored an annual 'Mohammed Day.'¹⁰⁸

Another reason the attraction to the post-1929 MSTA was growing was that the movement had begun receiving more attention from newspapers than it ever had before. Between 1930 and 1955, well over 500 unique stories about the MSTA ran in various US newspapers, making it the most consistently-publicized African American Islamic group before 1956.¹⁰⁹ In fact, some papers, such as the *Richmond-Times Dispatch*, the *Philadelphia Tribune*, the *Hartford Courant*, Baltimore's *Sun*, and the *Berkshire Evening Eagle* in Massachusetts regularly discussed their local MSTA temples. Far from "retreat[ing] underground," as some have assumed,¹¹⁰ the MSTA was in fact by far the most reported-on and well-known African American Islamic group during the first era of the AAIR. Though the press often picked up on stories that put the MSTA 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 MSTA-hosted events and other public activities were announced and described as well. Occasionally, Moors even wrote letters to various newspapers to promote their groups 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 sharing their teachings on the topic.¹¹¹

106 S.A. Haynes, "Through Black Spectacles," *Negro World*, April 15, 1933; Martin, *Race First*, 80n58; "Convention Continues at Edelweiss Pk.," *Daily Gleaner*, August 15, 1934, 10.

107 MSTA FBI file, Report, 4/22/1944, Cleveland file 100-9536, 4.

108 See Chapter 3.

109 Prior to this time, there were a number of bursts of articles on the NOI, but these generally were concerned with a small number of controversial incidents—they were not reflective of interest in the non-controversial activities of the movement as they often were for MSTA groups. In 1956, however, as will be discussed in Chapter 10, the NOI began appearing in black newspapers with increasing regularity.

110 Dannin, *Black Pilgrimage*, 32.

111 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.

Many Moors during this period, curious about their own identities as Muslims, were also coming into contact with more orthodox versions of Islam. In Detroit, Chicago, and Pittsburgh, for instance, several Moors encountered South Asians—probably mostly Ahmadis—and one Moor was said to have regularly attended Arabic classes at the Chicago Ahmadi mosque.¹¹² In New York, meanwhile, multiple factions had immigrant Muslims from a variety of regions visit and become members of the MSTA; and apparently this contact led to at least one Moor deciding to become an orthodox Muslim.¹¹³ In Philadelphia, Hameed Wahab Bey's Moorish American Islamic Society became the only Moorish group to maintain close relations with the immigrant-majority Federation of Islamic Associations from the late 1950s through at least the late 1960s (see Chapter 11)¹¹⁴ and in Cleveland, the local African American Ahmadi/Sunni mosque piqued the interest of a Moor, though only for a brief moment.¹¹⁵ Beyond these more superficial connections, as we will later see, some Moors even became leaders in orthodox Muslim movements. FBI files reveal, however, that Moorish contact with international forms of Islam occurred only sporadically, and it took unique circumstances and individuals for such contact to turn into something greater than brief encounters. It seems, then, that it was Drew Ali's teachings—not just Islam generally—that were what was fundamentally attractive to the members of the MSTA.

An additional fascinating feature about Moors between 1930 and 1945 is that they were frequently older than the typical religious convert, often in their forties or fifties, and they usually had joined the MSTA while in their thirties or forties.¹¹⁶ This is interesting for two reasons. First of all, it may explain why the

112 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; MSTA FBI file, Report, 5/27/1944, Chicago file 61-893, 3. One of these South Asians in Chicago, however, seems to have been making a living as a traveling 'oriental' mystic.

113 See Bowen, "The Search for 'Islam,'" 272-77; Mayes, "Muslims of African Descent," 47, 77-79.

114 Wahab Bey and his group are mentioned in the FIA convention brochures for 1958 and 1962, and on the cover of the FIA magazine *Muslim Star* for April-May 1967, he is shown as an FIA delegate for the group's current convention. All three of these sources are from the BHL collections.

115 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 (75th and Woodland Avenue), which tells us that this was the mosque led by Wali Akram. For more on this mosque, see Chapter 9.

116 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.

FBI observed that an MSTA member was more likely to be literate than an average African American¹¹⁷—perhaps the older the person was the more likely he or she would have valued and gained literacy skills at some point. Second, these individuals would have had better knowledge of old black folk religion than younger people, and therefore were more likely to see the connections between what Drew Ali taught and the old folk traditions. Indeed, 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 MSTA conversions at an older age suggest that the group's message was deeply appealing to such people. In fact, in the MSTA 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 with their incomes and extremely critical of both whites and Christianity.¹¹⁸ The MSTA's message thus appears to have been, for some, one so meaningful that it caused these mature adults to radically question and change all of their beliefs about society.¹¹⁹

The extant evidence suggests that the MSTA was able to attract anywhere from four to eight thousand members in the generation after Drew Ali.¹²⁰ The

117 MSTA FBI file, Report, 9/22/1943, Newark file 100-14714, 9.

118 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 MSTA 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.

119 Similar dramatic changes occurred during the 'Christ Craze' of 1889; see Armstrong, "Christ Craze of 1889."

120 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 numbers 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.

present section examines the three most prominent factions, beginning with the one that drew the most followers: 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 US—he did not indicate whether this was as an enslaved person—from Morocco and a father who was “a full-blooded Sioux Indian.”¹²¹ 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 for 6½ years. When I was about 23 years of age I returned to the United States and attended Campbell College in Mississippi.¹²²

Kirkman Bey insisted, furthermore—in addition to claiming that one of his sons was currently in the Egyptian army—that 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 would have caused one to look at his claims with some suspicion. The FBI agent who interviewed the Moorish leader in 1942 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 MSTa leaders, but Kirkman Bey’s supposed pedigree is interesting for another reason as well: both Drew Ali and the influential James Lomax Bey, like Kirkman Bey, also reportedly said that at one point they were raised by Native Americans. While it is unknown if this was true for any of these men,

121 MSTa FBI file, Exhibit No. 25, 11/25/1942, Flint 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.

122 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.

it probably enhanced the non-‘negro’ identity that they were likely cultivating and added to the appearance of possessing special spiritual power.

Sometime after Kirkman Bey joined the MSTA in 1926 but before 1928, Drew Ali visited the Detroit temple where Kirkman Bey, who was probably a former Shriner, was a member.¹²³ According to one account, the 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 MSTA message to “foreign lands.” Kirkman Bey indicated that he could do so, and this event apparently led to his ascension in the MSTA organization.¹²⁴ While Drew Ali was alive, Kirkman Bey was his official interpreter and secretary, traveling with Drew Ali throughout the country and to Havana, Cuba in early 1928.¹²⁵ Soon after, he would gain a strong following of MSTA members across the country, and, as we have seen, he was able to use this influence to obtain for himself an official leadership position after Drew Ali’s death.

In the early 1930s, Kirkman Bey’s organization, the MSTA, Inc., began making plans to start a farm on which Moorish Americans could live and be self-sustaining.¹²⁶ Even during Drew Ali’s life, Moorish Americans had been discussing the establishment of “a town owned and completely operated” by MSTA

123 That Kirkman Bey had been a member of the Detroit MSTA temple was a claim of his followers in the 1940s. Interestingly, a Charles T. Kirkman was a member of Detroit’s black Shriner temple in 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 MSTA and his time with the Masons and Shriners may have stimulated his interest in things Masonic, which were emphasized in his movement. 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.

124 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, *Noble*, 65–66, 160.

125 Kirkman Bey, in the FBI interview, claimed that he went with Drew Ali to Havana for “vacation,” but other MSTA 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> and “Trips of the Prophet,” *Moorish Guide*, August 24, 1928, 1. Although I have not been able to find Drew Ali’s name in any document related to the conference, that Drew Ali traveled with Kirkman Bey to Cuba is confirmed by a January 25, 1928 ship manifest available on *Ancestry.com*. Interestingly, the same *Moorish Guide* article asserts that Drew Ali traveled to Mexico in May of that same year.

126 MSTA FBI file, Report, 9/22/1943, Newark file 100–14714, 27.

members where they could live out their dream of having a community built on the MSTA principles.¹²⁷ The prophet promised that in his 1929 tour of the temples he would “fully inform” the Moors of his plans for this town,¹²⁸ 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. Kirkman Bey, however, did not forget this dream; he happily accepted the offer of Ruben Frazier Bey—a recent convert—to deed his farm over to the MSTA, Inc. in 1937, and it quickly became a popular site for Indiana’s Moors to visit.¹²⁹ 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.¹³⁰ 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—migrated 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*.¹³¹ 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.¹³²

Having a strong focus on proselytization,¹³³ the MSTA, Inc. had acquired over fifty active temples and probably over 2,000 followers by the early 1940s, making it the largest MSTA community in the country. Because of its size, researchers and investigators of the MSTA came into contact with this group more often than other factions, and 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, it was learned that the group kept relatively

127 “Moors Endorse Village Idea,” *Moorish Guide*, February 1, 1929, 1.

128 “Detroit, Newark, Philadelphia, are in Order as First Stops,” *Moorish Guide*, February 15, 1929, 2.

129 MSTA FBI file, Report, 2/2/1943, Indianapolis file 100-4094.

130 See MSTA FBI file, Exhibit No. 25, 11/25/1942, Flint file; James Latimer, “Dusky ‘Moors’ Wear Turbans, Farm Nearby,” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, April 11, 1943, 12.

131 MSTA FBI file, Report, 12/15/1942, Richmond file 100-5698; MSTA FBI file, Report, 7/18/1943, Richmond file 100-5698.

132 MSTA FBI file, Report, 9/22/1943, Newark file 100-14714, 27-28.

133 For an account of the spread of the MSTA, Inc. in Chattanooga, which, under the leadership of Princess Besharent Bey, gained two temples in the 1930s, see Tennessee Historical Records Survey, *Collected Church Records of Tennessee, ca. 1785-1942*, roll 6.

lax rules regarding dress and moral behavior and it does not appear that the prophet's restriction on temple leaders drinking alcohol was strictly enforced. With regards to MSTA, Inc. temples, because the faction did not reject the idea that Drew Ali would someday be reincarnated, often there was a crepe paper-decorated chair, which sat in the front of the meeting rooms, that 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 what was called, notably, "the red silk flag of Morocco,"¹³⁴ and, usually, a US flag was also present—as it was in most MSTA factions' temples.¹³⁵ 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.¹³⁶

The Masonic elements of the Drew Ali era were also maintained in Kirkman Bey's group,¹³⁷ 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.¹³⁸ In addition, the FBI files reveal that, like what was reported for the Drew Ali-era MSTA, the MSTA, Inc. had a 'degree' rank system in which members, by demonstrating appropriate behavior and knowledge of the group's doctrines, were bestowed with certain titles and privileges that reflected that member's position and authority in the community. A 1943 FBI report summarizes a Moor's description of 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.¹³⁹ [...] It is a requirement of the organization that one be a member of the Inner Circle before he can hold an office in the organization. [...] Another degree of the organization is the 'Divine Ministry' and

134 MSTA FBI file, Report, 6/17/1943, Newark file 100-14714, 3.

135 On the widespread presence of the Moroccan and American flags, see the many reports in the Federal Writers Project Records, 1935-1944, Box 188, Folder Moorish Science Temple, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library.

136 MSTA FBI file, Report, 6/29/1943, Cleveland file 100-9538, 5.

137 On the use of secret passwords and hand signs, see the various exhibits in the MSTA FBI file, Flint file.

138 See the copies of the *Moorish Voice* in the MSTA FBI file.

139 This Inner Circle is probably an alternative name given to the Adept Chamber, a known element in the Drew Ali-era MSTA.

every minister must have credentials which are issued to him by Colonel C. Kirkman Bey before he is allowed to teach. [...] The highest degree in the organization is that of Sultan and that C. Kirkman Bey is the only person who holds that degree today.¹⁴⁰

Apart from explaining the MSTA, Inc.'s degree system, this description reveals the nature of Kirkman Bey's authority and how the MSTA, Inc. organization was structured. Officially, for the general public, his title was 'supreme grand advisor and moderator,' a position he was reportedly voted into on a regular basis. His job in this capacity was primarily to hold the community together, which, in essence, 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.¹⁴¹ However, the use of titles like 'Colonel' and 'Sultan' suggests that Kirkman Bey's authority was more than simply as a 'advisor and moderator'—he was seen as the organization's military and religious authority and, according to a number of informants, it was generally understood that if (or when) the US government did eventually fall, he would become the country's ruler.¹⁴² 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 regarded neither as a prophet nor as a reincarnation of Drew Ali 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, where their leaders could claim direct divine authority. As has been observed, some local MSTA, Inc. 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 Bey and what MSTA

140 MSTA FBI file, Report, 3/16/1943, Detroit file 100-6603, 3-4.

141 See MSTA FBI file, Exhibit No. 25, 11/25/1942, Flint file.

142 Regarding Kirkman Bey being seen as having superior religious knowledge, he plagiarized other parts of the same book by Dowling that Drew Ali had used for his Moorish religious text *The Mysteries of the Silent Brotherhood of the East* (Chicago: Magribine Press, 2006). As far as his having a superior military position, I have been told that Kirkman Bey's claiming military authority may have been due to some sort of connection with Gavrona Ali Mustapha Abdullah, who, as briefly mentioned in Chapter 4, claimed ties to the Rif army and Moroccan rulers.

principles and practices should be emphasized.¹⁴³ One group of Kirkman Bey followers was even reported as wearing beards and abstaining from meat—practices usually only found in reincarnation factions.¹⁴⁴ The debate and differences were perhaps inevitable: Drew Ali had only been active as the MSTA leader for four years, 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 its new conditions, debate was almost unavoidable. This challenge of negotiating new conditions was reflected in the Moors' frequent repeating of a saying attributed to Drew Ali: "I brought you everything it takes to save a nation; now you save yourself."¹⁴⁵

Because Kirkman Bey's group avoided controversy and rarely put on public events, 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 and, as will be shown with other factions, there was an even greater decrease in interest in Kirkman Bey's faction in the 1950s as the NOI began to become the main Islamic movement in African American culture.¹⁴⁶

The John Givens-El Faction

No information about John Givens-El's pre-MSTA background can be gleaned from the non-redacted portions of the MSTA FBI files, and the existing data about his early years in the movement sometimes conflicts. An example of a conflict can be seen in the Works Progress Administration's (WPA) early 1940s main report about the history of the MSTA, which 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—which was perhaps the result of the fact that the man may have used both

143 See MSTA FBI file, Exhibit No. 42, Flint file.

144 MSTA FBI file, Letter, Lt. Col., G.S.C., Executive Officer, New York, to Director, War Department Intelligence Division, 10/29/1943.

145 MSTA FBI file, Exhibit No. 42, 11/[28?]/1942, Flint file.

146 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 America 1946 Minutes of the Moorish Science Temple of America, Inc.* (Chicago: Moorish Science Temple of America, Inc., 1946), 5, in the Schomburg Center MSTA collection.

names.¹⁴⁷ This report obscures the man's background further with its claims about Givens-El's activities after Drew Ali's death that are not consistent with other evidence. The WPA report holds 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 40th Street in Chicago, he was claiming to be the true leader of the MSTA. A newspaper article from the fall of 1929 tells us that Givens-El was one of the men who had been sent by Ira Johnson Bey to break into the home of Payne,¹⁴⁸ and that it was for this act that he had been initially arrested—although, 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. In any event, 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.¹⁴⁹ 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 40th Street.¹⁵⁰ 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, his 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, leaving off the 'Inc.' used by Kirkman Bey's faction.¹⁵¹

It was said that while in jail Givens-El, probably due to the influence of Ira Johnson Bey, began growing a beard, a practice that his male followers soon imitated. Givens-El's group was in fact known for its numerous rules for appearance and conduct that were not consistently held by either Drew Ali or Kirkman Bey's faction: men could neither shave nor cut their hair and women could

147 Compare the different versions of the WPA piece contained in MSTA FBI file, Report, 12/15/1943, Chicago file 61–293 and MSTA FBI file, Report, 5/19/1943, Chicago file 14–41. 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 MSTA FBI files to date, uncritically accepts that Givens-El and Gibbons El were two different people; see Turner, *Islam in the*, 100.

148 "Aaron Payne Marked for Death by Moors," *Chicago Defender* (City ed.), September 28, 1929, 3.

149 MSTA FBI file, Report, 9/21/1943, Chicago file 14–39, 15.

150 MSTA FBI file, Report, 9/21/1943, Chicago file 14–39, 15.

151 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.

not use cosmetics or hair straightener. Both sexes were required to bathe regularly and 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,¹⁵² 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; nevertheless, monogamy was the official practice.

The community attempted to remain rather isolated. Members were 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, Moors lived either in or in the immediate vicinity of the local temple. Secular dancing, participation in 'European' games, and attending motion pictures were forbidden, and, instead of being passionate and frequent proselytizers as many of Kirkman Bey's followers were, members of Givens-El's group were encouraged to be very reticent to talk to outsiders. The Chicago temple, for example, did not allow uninvited visitors, telling those interested that—using one of the earliest known examples of proto-'sovereign citizen' thinking—this was because the premises were actually the capital of the Moorish American government.¹⁵³ Other cities' temples apparently sometimes allowed visitors, but even then the group was generally unwilling to show non-Moors its *Holy Koran*, which the faction regarded as a secret text, and actual membership remained limited only to those who had been personally invited to join.¹⁵⁴ Reportedly, followers held as much antipathy for non-member African Americans, whom they derisively called 'coolies,' as they held for whites, who were called 'devils.'¹⁵⁵ Furthermore, along with their high degree of social introversion, followers displayed a corresponding level of extreme devotion to their reincarnated prophet as well as a strong belief in an imminent millennial event in which 'Asiatics' would become the planet's rulers—although anti-American radicalism was forbidden, and members were told to obey American laws. Given these numerous traits that might have turned off most potential Moors, somewhat surprisingly the group's exclusivity, millennialism, and profits made from its businesses

152 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.

153 Benjamin F. Jack, "Moorish Am Science," 1/31/40, 1–3, Federal Writers Project Records, 1935–1944, Box 188, Folder Moorish Science Temple, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library.

154 Fauset, *Black Gods*, 51, 45n6.

155 MSTA FBI file, Report, 9/21/1943, Chicago file 14–39, 17, 29, 38.

were very attractive for some, and in a number of cities its temples had a few hundred members, rivaling the numbers at Kirkman Bey's larger temples.

Being rather uninterested in either political activity or proselytization, the group held religious services more frequently and regularly than Kirkman Bey's faction. Although very similar to the Drew Ali-era religious services, the meetings in Givens-El's faction were notable for being extremely punctual, encouraging the use of very low speaking voices, and for allowing children to play while requiring all adults to give the meeting their undivided attention.¹⁵⁶ In a typical meeting, after the sheik read from the *Holy Koran* and gave a brief lecture, an elder read from the Moorish catechism, and then members took turns coming to the front to give testimony about how Noble Drew Ali—both the original and the reincarnated prophet—had helped them in their lives. Quiet chants, which were modified folk Christian songs (as they had been in Drew Ali's time), were interspersed in the meeting. Members were expected to pray facing east with their hands raised every sunrise, noon, and sunset,¹⁵⁷ and the Moors greeted each other by raising their right hand and saying either 'Peace!' or 'Islam!'¹⁵⁸

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 Bey, who had maintained a surprisingly widespread following even after being sentenced to life in prison in 1930,¹⁵⁹ and in the late 1940s and early 1950s, Ira's son George even led a take-over of the reincarnated temples in New Jersey and eastern Pennsylvania.¹⁶⁰ However, both Ira and George had died by 1951, and the group soon fractured into several smaller factions. Most notably, some

156 Fauset, *Black Gods*, 48–50.

157 Fauset, *Black Gods*, 51.

158 Ibid.

159 Debra Washington Mubashshir, "A Fruitful Labor: African American Formulations of Islam, 1928–1942" (PhD diss., Northwestern University, 2001), 87n44; "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; "Augusta Mohammedans Are Urged to 'Nationalize' against War," *Augusta Chronicle*, October 31, 1948, 3; also see Way-El, *Noble*, 140.

160 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 US Moors Had 2 Guns," *Afro-American*, September 17, 1949, 6.

followed Richardson and Timothy Dingle-El, two brothers from Baltimore who claimed to have been designated as leaders by Givens-El in the 1940s.¹⁶¹

The Turner-El Faction

While Givens-El led a highly insular movement, Grand Sheik Frederick Turner-El headed what was probably the most publicly promoted Moorish community of the AAIR. In an interview with the *New Yorker*, Turner-El stated 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.”¹⁶² Further information about his past was added in a 1944 Selective Service hearing,¹⁶³ where he explained that from the ages fifteen to twenty he studied at the “Moslem Divine school,” which was part of the MSTA in Newark, the same temple in which his father, Edward, was one of the heads. Interestingly, according to Frederick, one of the teachers in Newark was from the famous Islamic university in Egypt, al-Azhar, and the transcript of the hearing indicates that 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 MSTA, and sometime in 1933 he received his ‘ordination’ as grand sheik, which was confirmed in the summer of the next year.¹⁶⁴ 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.¹⁶⁵

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.¹⁶⁶ In the early-to-mid-1930s his father was the group’s regional head (grand governor) for the state of New York, and Frederick was eager to become a major leader in the movement himself. In as early as 1935, he

161 Edwards-El, *Muqarrabeen*, 58; Gene Oishi, “Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory of Noble Drew Ali,” *The Sun*, October 31, 1978, B1–B2.

162 “Sheik,” *New Yorker*, September 21, 1940, 15. In a 1950 FBI interview, he said that in 1920 he and his missionary mother went to the “Middle East” where they then spent the next eight years; see Turner-El FBI file, Report, 3/26/1965, New York.

163 See MSTA FBI file, Report, 4/22/1944, Chicago file 100–33742.

164 Ibid.

165 In fact, Frederick’s father, apart from his MSTA suffix of El, had a notably non-Islamic name: Edward. See “Moors Meet in Convention at Becket,” *Berkshire Evening Eagle*, September 26, 1944, 3.

166 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.

was teaching Arabic at the group's Brooklyn temple,¹⁶⁷ and, when his followers faced criminal or civil charges, he showed up in the courts acting as a religious authority for the judge, who usually knew nothing about the MSTA.¹⁶⁸ He also sought out alliances with other African Americans who were promoting racial uplift through alternative religions, and he began setting up new temples in several New England cities, including in Boston and Springfield, Massachusetts and in Bridgeport and Hartford, Connecticut—the latter of which is notable for Turner-El having put in charge there a UNIA member, Edward Countryman-Bey.¹⁶⁹

By late 1938, Turner-El, now an established leader, saw his community as distinct from the MSTA, Inc., and in October he incorporated the Moorish Science Temple, the Divine and National Movement of North America, Inc. (MDNMNA), in both New York and Hartford.¹⁷⁰ Of course, this was not welcomed by Kirkman Bey's group, which filed a complaint against Turner-El in the Brooklyn Federal Court.¹⁷¹ The ruling was in Turner-El's favor, however, and henceforth his following 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.

Turner-El also appears to have shared Kirkman Bey's desire for a Moorish village, as one of his initial efforts was to build such a community. Just months prior to his incorporating the MDNMNA, Turner-El announced that he had received a grant from the newly established Federal Housing Administration, which aimed to stimulate home construction and reduce unemployment during the Depression, and that he was going to use this to construct Moorish 'colonies' in both Woodstock, Connecticut and in Long Island, New York.¹⁷²

167 See page 7, column 4 of the *Moorish Guide*, April 19, 1935 and July 12, 1935.

168 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.

169 See the memorial for Edward Countryman-Bey in *Hartford Courant*, June 2, 1980, 13. There was also a Philadelphia temple affiliated with Turner-El, but it is not clear when this group was established or when it shifted allegiances.

170 Selective Service interview; "Moorish Temple is Sued," *New York Times*, December 20, 1938, 26.

171 "Moorish Temple is Sued"; "Sheiks' Ask Court to Change Name of Boro Moorish Cult," *New York Age*, January 21, 1939, 5.

172 "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,"

Though these sites were originally to be employed as homes for all Moorish Americans, the MDNMNA soon decided that the Woodstock location would be set aside for elderly Moors specifically, much like Kirkman Bey's village in Prince George.¹⁷³

In late 1942, the MDNMNA purchased a 500-acre farm in the town of Becket, located in the western Massachusetts county of Berkshire—an area popularly known as the 'the Berkshires'—and soon obtained another FHA grant to buy livestock and farm equipment for use there.¹⁷⁴ The MDNMNA had many hopes for the Becket site, which had a fourteen-room hotel and an eleven-room farmhouse.¹⁷⁵ 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].”¹⁷⁶ Also, the farmhouse had been converted into a temple, and the MDNMNA hoped to someday establish at the location a university modeled on the Azhar, which would help teach Moorish Americans, in line Drew Ali's mission, “a feeling of pride in their [Moorish] national cultural heritage” so that it would be spread to all African Americans.¹⁷⁷

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—burned down the property's ice house and root cellar.¹⁷⁸ In August 1944, plans for the MDNMNA convention for mid-September to be held

People's Voice, April 17, 1943, 14; “Sheik.” The Long Island colony was at Camp Upton, a former US army training camp that had been abandoned by the early 1930s. In late 1941, as the US 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 US residents and citizens). It is not known if Turner-El's community had to leave Camp Upton at this time.

173 “Will Establish Moorish University in Becket,” *Berkshire Evening Eagle*, February 10, 1944, 11.

174 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.

175 “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.

176 “Will Establish.”

177 “Will Establish.”

178 “Becket: Ice House and Roots Cellar are Burned,” *Springfield Daily Republican*, May 13, 1944, 3.

at Becket were announced,¹⁷⁹ 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 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.¹⁸⁰ 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.¹⁸¹

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 the Berkshires) 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.¹⁸² It was perhaps during or as a result of this outing that connections and plans were 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.¹⁸³ Thereafter, no more was heard about the Becket property, other than a note in a news story from 1945 that indicated the Moors no longer possessed it.¹⁸⁴ Great Barrington, however, would be a location where Turner-El faced many new challenges, and his numerous activities there and in other places after 1944 will be addressed in Chapter 11.

Moorish Legacies

Although it was Garvey's movement that had popularized Islam for African Americans, and it was the Ahmadis and Suleiman who had first begun convert-

179 "Moorish Convention is Scheduled."

180 "Moors Seeking to Prevent Becket Property Foreclosure," *Berkshire Evening Eagle*, September 13, 1944, 17.

181 "Mohammedan Moors Come to the Mountain," *Berkshire Evening Eagle*, September 18, 1944, 5; "Moors Meet."

182 "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.

183 Levinson, *Sewing Circles*, 120; "Moorish Sheik Charges Race Prejudice by Gt. Barrington," *Berkshire Evening Eagle*, August 23, 1945, 1, 2.

184 "Moorish Sheik Charges."

ing significant numbers to the religion, it was not until Drew Ali had created the MSTA that Islam had achieved true prominence and relative stability in African American culture. By masterfully linking black folk traditions with uplift ideas, esotericism, little-known knowledge about North Africans, pre-existing black religious currents, and Garvey's black nationalism, Drew Ali was able to further solidify the reterritorialization of Islam that had begun in 1920. Because of his efforts, from 1925 forward, Islam would have a permanent position in the African American religious market.

The deep connection Drew Ali's movement had with African American community is reflected in the fact that in contrast with the Ahmadis, the MSTA community not only resisted significant decline, but actually grew when its early leader departed from the community. Although it is true that the group experienced deterritorializing factionalism, the ability of multiple multi-state Moorish factions to develop and persist reveals the high degree to which the prophet's teachings appealed to black folk and the markets they inhabited. The Great Schism, surprisingly, may have actually helped ensure this legacy, for it is possible that had a single leader held the organization together after Drew Ali's passing, the numerous interpretations of Islam of the different Moorish factional heads would not have been able to thrive, and the MSTA may not have appealed to so many people. The Great Schism was no doubt responsible for the growth of non-Moorish Islam as well. As we will see in the following chapters, many of the vestiges of Drew Ali's movement, along with African American folk traditions and Garvey's black nationalism, appeared in nearly every new African American Islamic current that developed between 1930 and 1945. And of these new currents, none would have a greater impact than the Nation of Islam.

W.D. Fard

Out of all the Muslim leaders who rose to power in the Great Schism, there was one whose influence would far eclipse that of any Moorish American. Building on both the remnants of the MSTA and the institutional change created by the UNIA, a man named W.D. Fard established an organization that would achieve rapid growth starting in 1930, and later would become the most well-known and important African American Islamic movement of the AAIR: the Nation of Islam. The present chapter looks at the founder of this movement whose teachings suggest the insight of an intelligent but extremely eccentric mind, one that was able to reterritorialize existing religious, esoteric, and scientific concepts in ways never before imagined.

Before the Nation

According to Nation of Islam tradition, W.D. Fard (pronounced far-RAHD), also known as Wallace D. Fard and Master Fard Muhammad, was born in Mecca, Arabia to a black father and white mother on February 26, 1877. Directed by his father—who in some versions of the story was a member of the Prophet Muhammad’s Quraysh family—to search out and teach the ‘lost’ black people in the world, Fard began studying the black diaspora, and in the process mastered all ‘civilized’ educational systems and became fluent in sixteen languages.¹ Around the year 1910, after receiving what was apparently diplomatic service training in London, Fard came to the United States where, while living with a white family, he attended for an unknown period a university in southern California.² Fard’s other activities in the United States over the next twenty years are unknown, but on July 4, 1930, Independence Day, he arrived in Detroit and began peddling raincoats, silks, and other small items door-to-door in the area around Hastings Street, the center of city’s black section. Soon Fard was ingratiating himself with his customers, who invited him into their homes. Once inside, the foreigner intrigued his hosts with his claim that the

1 Elijah Muhammad, *History of the Nation of Islam* (Atlanta: Secretarius MEMPS Publications, 1995), 3–4.

2 Muhammad, *History of the Nation*, 3; Bontemps and Conroy, *Any Place*, 217.

people in their 'home country' were Muslims, and that practicing Islam would improve the Detroit residents' lives.³ Although he also said, like Noble Drew Ali, that African Americans were '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. Instead, he spoke of what he called a new 'knowledge of self': African Americans, Fard insisted, were members of the 'Tribe of Shabazz' and were part of the 'Nation of Islam.'⁴ By late 1931 Detroit's black section was abuzz with Fard's message, and by the next year, he had perhaps as many as 8,000 followers in the city. After having satisfactorily taught one Elijah Muhammad to be his 'Messenger' and carry out his mission, in 1934 Fard felt that the time had come for him to leave, and, except for Muhammad, no Muslim ever saw him again.⁵

Despite the NOI's assertions, practically all of the elements of its claims about Fard's pre-Detroit background have been contested by multiple parties over the last sixty years, the most notable of which was the FBI. In the 1950s, the Bureau investigated Fard and came to the conclusion that, contrary to what NOI tradition taught, he was not in fact a half black, half white man from Mecca, but a white man or a mixed white and Asian 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 late 1920s for a drug conviction. The most significant and direct pieces of evidence presented to support this claim were photographs and fingerprints of a Wallie D. Ford purportedly from San Quentin prison that matched those of the Fard who was arrested in Detroit in the 1930s. However, one of the major criticisms that has been brought up by the NOI 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 counterintelligence activities.

3 Erdmann Doane Beynon, "The Voodoo Cult among Negro Migrants in Detroit," *American Journal of Sociology* 43 (May 1938): 895–96.

4 The use of the term 'Nation of Islam' seems to have been extremely rare in the group's first decades; however, the term was definitely used by Fard himself, as seen in his 1932 letter to the editor; see W.D. Farad, "No Connection between Islam and Robert Harris, Alleged Voodoo Killer," *Baltimore Afro-American*, December 31, 1932, 6.

5 Muhammad, *History of the Nation*, 5–6. In his 1960s discussion of this topic, Muhammad implied that although he had not seen Fard physically, he knew where he was, but that this should not be revealed because "I do think [Fard is] within His rights to stay out of the sight of the people until [...] the time when He can secure the kingdom"; see Muhammad, *History of the Nation*, 5–6.

Still, the FBI's investigation brought to light some information that can be backed up by outside sources, even if they do not explain everything about Fard's past. After discovering the initial lead about the Ford who was imprisoned in California, agents were able to track down a birth record for Ford's son, Wallace Dodd Ford, which listed both the father and the mother, one Hazel Barton. Using this information, in 1957 Los Angeles agents interviewed Barton, now remarried, who confirmed that she had had a relationship with Ford in Los Angeles from 1919 to about 1921, and that this relationship had produced a son who died in 1942.⁶ Barton recalled that during her time with Ford, the man rarely talked about his background, but she believed he was originally from New Zealand, and had moved to Los Angeles in 1914 or 1915 from Oregon where he may have gone by the name of Fred Dodd (whose surname, notably, matched the middle name Ford gave his son) and where he had previously married, but had failed to obtain a divorce after a bitter separation from his Oregon wife. In Los Angeles, Ford, who had poor writing skills, ran a restaurant, and, the FBI discovered, in 1918, eight years prior to his 1926 conviction for selling narcotics, he was arrested for assault. Barton, according to the interviewing agent, added that in the early 1920s Ford "never had any unusual political, economic, social or religious beliefs, and [...] he had never indicated any interest in such things," but in 1932, when he briefly visited Barton and their son,

Ford had white sheets over the seats of the car. He left the sheets with Hazel, saying that he would not need them any more as he was going back to New Zealand. Ford gave no explanation as to why he used white sheets. [He also] advised Hazel and her family that he was only eating one meal a day and that this was his new way of life. Hazel advised that Ford was wearing his hair long and full in the back. Previously he had always had a short conventional haircut.⁷

Barton also indicated that for three years after his release from San Quentin in 1929, Ford moved between Chicago and Detroit. To provide evidence for this, she showed the agent an item Ford had given her: a box of self-threading needles, postmarked April 28, 1930, for "W.D. Ford, General Delivery, Chicago, Illinois."

6 Wallace D. Fard FBI file, Memorandum, SAC, Los Angeles to Director, FBI, 10/18/1957.

7 Ibid., 4.

The best lead the FBI obtained from Barton's interview was her claim that Ford may have previously lived in Oregon, as this corresponded with Ford's San Quentin record, which listed him as having been born in Portland (on February 25, 1891), the son of Zared and Beatrice Ford.⁸ After the interview, then, agents in Oregon checked the state's records for information about both the Ford family and Fred Dodd.⁹ They found no evidence of any of the named Fords, but they did discover a 1914 marriage record for a Fred Dodd and Pearl Allen. At that point, finding no new leads, the FBI's investigation into Fard's background essentially ended, the agency feeling it had enough proof to tie Barton's story to the San Quentin evidence, and therefore enough information to cast doubt on the legitimacy of the NOI's creator.

Recently, genealogical and newspaper websites have brought to light new evidence about Fard's possible past. One can now easily search the 1930 census from Chicago, for instance, which shows that on April 22, 1930—less than a week before Barton's ex-lover received his needles in that city—a “William D. Ford,” originally from Oregon, was living there. Although this Ford is identified as “Mexican,” other evidence suggests that both Wallace/Wallie Ford and Fred Dodd on occasion either identified as Mexican or associated with Mexicans. For instance, Ford's 1924 Los Angeles marriage record—which, interestingly, lists his father again as Zared (Zaradodd), but his mother is here named Babbjie, the same name Fard told the NOI was his mother's name (Baby Gee)—shows that his wife at the time was one Carmen Trevino (or Frevino), a Mexican American.¹⁰ As for Fred Dodd, a search conducted for this book in the digital archives of Salem, Oregon's *Daily Capital Journal* newspaper revealed numerous references to Dodd in the 1910s,¹¹ as he had taken out several advertisements in the paper between December 1911 and January 1915 for a lunch wagon that he ran, which primarily sold “Mexican Spanish chicken tamales.”¹²

8 Fard FBI file, Memorandum, SAC, Chicago to Director, FBI, 10/3/1957.

9 Fard FBI file, Memorandum, SAC, Portland to SAC, Chicago, 10/29/1957.

10 I would like to thank Karl Evanzz, who brought both the 1930 census record and the 1924 marriage record to my attention.

11 This research was done in early 2016. In early 2017 I learned that similar research was also conducted and published by A.K. Arian for his book *Chameleon: The True Story of W.D. Fard* (Danvers, MA: Xis Books, [2017] 2016). Arian's findings, which went much further than my own, will be discussed below.

12 Although some of the earlier advertisements do not mention Dodd's name, I have concluded that these were indeed placed by Dodd for the following reasons: 1) There are several tamale advertisements in the *Daily Capital Journal* that explicitly mention ‘Fred’ and these frequently also make reference to his ‘lunch wagon.’ 2) A number of news-

The *Daily Capital Journal* archives also reveal that Fred Dodd's years in Salem in the 1910s were rather eventful. In 1913, for example, Dodd was embroiled in a few small controversies. That spring, he complained—both to city authorities and in a poorly-written letter published in the newspaper—that police were harassing this “good industrious former Salem citizen [who] wants to make a living,” apparently because he had started selling fruit despite his permit only being for “lunch” food.¹³ Although the issue was soon settled, in September a new problem arose when one Frank Day, possibly a former employee of Dodd, stole some of Dodd's money,¹⁴ and Dodd, in response, pressed criminal charges. The news report about the incident contains information that, as we will later see, suggests this man was both Ford and Fard: here Dodd—who had previously been described simply as a “foreigner” in the press—is identified as a “Greek,” and the description indicates that he was prone to anger, being especially resentful of local authorities. In the following March, Dodd faced more difficulties when he was charged with rape; the evidence, though, was very weak and on April 21 he was acquitted.¹⁵ Additionally, during this time Dodd was apparently waiting to be free from any criminal issues hanging over his head so that he could marry a Native American woman named—as the FBI had confirmed—Pearl Allen; the two were officially united just a few weeks after his acquittal.¹⁶ The marriage, however, was extremely brief; as Barton indicated, the marriage did end, but it appears Ford had lied about the final outcome, as court records indicate that the separation was made official in a legal divorce by the following September.¹⁷ By 1915, the tumultuous past few years had taken their toll; in January, Dodd stopped running advertisements for his business. Then, in November, he announced through the local newspaper

paper articles (cited below) point out that ‘Fred’ was indeed Fred Dodd. 2) Advertisements for tamales in that newspaper at the time were almost exclusively restricted to Dodd's. 3) The earliest tamale advertisement I could find in that newspaper, which dated from December 18, 1911, does mention ‘Fred,’ but does advertise for tamales and a ‘lunch wagon.’

13 Ibid., April 18, April 29, June 17, and June 24.

14 Ibid., September 12, 1913, 8.

15 Ibid., March 5, March 6, March 7, March 23, April 6, April 21, and April 22. Also see *State of Oregon vs. Fred Dodd*, record on file with the Marion County, Oregon Circuit Court.

16 Allen's ethnicity was discovered by Evanzz; see Karl Evanzz, “Nation of Islam's Founder Was Afghani; Suffered from Diabetes,” accessed December 20, 2015, <http://mxmission.blogspot.com/2011/04/four-faces-of-wali-d-fard-muhammad.html>.

17 *Daily Capital Journal*, August 31, September 23, *Fred Dodd vs. Pearl Dodd*, copy provided by Karl Evanzz.

that he was about to take “a vacation” to San Francisco and would spend “some time at Los Angeles and San Diego, besides several eastern cities.”¹⁸ Since, Dodd claimed, it had been six full years since his last vacation, he was going to make this one count, and he did not plan on returning for “several weeks.” Dodd, however, would never return. It appears that it was at this point that he moved to Los Angeles, changed his name to Wallace or Wallie Dodd Ford, and began working as a cook and restaurant owner.

Perhaps the most important piece of evidence that has been uncovered in the digital archives during the last few years is a 1917 draft registration card from Los Angeles for a Wallace Dodd Fard (on the card, “Ford” is put in parentheses next to “Fard,” suggesting that the former was an alternative spelling).¹⁹ The card indicates that this California Fard claimed to have been born in 1893 on February 26—the same day, but not the same year, that the NOI claimed for its founder. This Fard, described here 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 Muslim 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 additional evidence and analysis presented by Karl Evanzz, in his biography of Elijah Muhammad, and Fatimah Abdul-Tawwab Fanusie, in her 2008 dissertation.²⁰ In particular, the connection between this Fard, 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.²¹ 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

18 *Daily Capital Journal*, November 22, 1915, 8.

19 Registration Location: Los Angeles County, California; Roll: 1530899; Draft Board: 17, *Ancestry.com*.

20 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, 244–96. 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.

21 Evanzz, *Messenger*, 409–12; Fanusie, “Fard Muhammad,” 244–96.

taught his son traditions from his homeland, and Wallace might have borrowed from these when creating the NOI's doctrines.²²

Had the evidence stopped here, Fard's possible Pashtun roots would have remained only a plausible theory. However, in 2017 researcher A.K. Arian presented evidence that has all but confirmed the Fard-as-a-Pashtun notion, in addition to more strongly linking Fard with the Wallaces and Wallies of Los Angeles and Fred Dodd of Oregon.²³ Not only does Arian better establish the connection of Fard's unique terminology with South and Central Asia (particularly the words Shabazz and Kallat),²⁴ he reveals important new documentary evidence. His main breakthrough in this regard relies on recognizing that Fred Dodd, due to the tendency of early twentieth-century immigrants and American residents alike to sometimes use different spellings of names, was occasionally listed as Fred 'Dad' and 'Dadd' (both being pronounced the same as 'Dodd'),²⁵ and this, as Arian shows, brings us to two new extremely important interconnecting lines of evidence.

The first line verifies that Fard did indeed use the various aliases with which he has been associated, and it also gives the best evidence of his immigration. In 1915, after Dodd/Dad abandoned his tamale truck in Salem to come to Los Angeles, a newspaper article reported that prior to coming to Oregon, "Fred Dad" had lived in Montana under the name "Walli Dad."²⁶ This by itself is an enormous piece of evidence, as it solidifies the link between the self-employed cook named Fred Dodd/Dad of Oregon and the self-employed cook named Wallie Dodd Fard/Ford of Los Angeles. Although in Detroit and occasionally in Los Angeles he would go under the Americanized name of 'Wallace,' for much of his time in California Fard regularly used the name 'Wallie,' an Americanized version of an Arabic name that would typically be written by Muslims today as 'Wali.' This link also suggests that 'Fred' may have been an Americanizing of 'Fard'/'Ford.' Using this name evidence, Arian located the 1909 naturalization record for one "Wali Fred Dad," a self-described "restaurant keeper" whose physical description matches very well with both Wallie Dodd Fard/Ford and W.D. Fard.²⁷ As Arian points out, besides these more obvious similarities with the various known Dodds, Fords, and Fards, on the form Dad claims that prior to coming to America he had been a subject of "Alphonso XIII King of Spain,"

22 Evanzz, *Messenger*, 411–12.

23 See Arian's *Chameleon*, *passim*.

24 *Ibid.*, 166–74, 264–66.

25 *Ibid.*, 56–57, 180–81.

26 *Ibid.*, 213.

27 *Ibid.*, 329.

which, interestingly, links back to Fard, who told the NOI that his father's name was Alphonso.²⁸ Dad's residence at the time he applied for naturalization was Eugene, Oregon, where, newspaper archives show, he was indeed a tamale vendor who—despite using the name Wali Fred Dad in his naturalization application—typically went as 'Fred Walldad' or 'Wallidad.'²⁹ We therefore now can say with great confidence that Fred Dodd, Fred Dad, Wallie Dodd Fard, Wallie Dodd Ford, Wallace Ford, and Wallace D. Fard were identical. We also now know from the naturalization form that at that time Fard claimed to have come to the United States—from, of all places, Hong Kong—in 1904.

However, Arian could find no record of any variation of the Wali Dad Fard names either entering the country or ever residing in Montana (as the 1915 article had mentioned), so another lead had to be followed—and this is the second line of evidence. Back in Salem, Fred Dodd/Dad was listed as a roommate of a person variously listed as 'Anafulla' and 'Kamfulla,' but whose name was probably best rendered as 'Amanullah.'³⁰ According to Arian, this individual had indeed probably lived in Montana in the early part of the twentieth century—to be exact, it was in Butte, Montana in 1911 under the name 'Ahimulla' Khan.³¹ Prior to that, in 1907, the Butte directory noted that an Alam Khan had moved to Spokane, Washington, and the Spokane directory for that year lists a tamale vender named Kaliahham Khan, a name similar to a Khanialam Kahn, who was once a roommate or alias of another tamale vendor with a name similar to Dad's roommate: Anafulla Khan.³² Although at this point it appears that Arian is just packing assumption on top of assumption about the relationship between similarly named tamale-hawking Khans in the Northwest, the Spokane directory listing provides a few additional pieces of evidence that link us back to Fard. Kaliahham is identified as rooming with two other tamale vendors named Khan, and tracing their footsteps further provides evidence that suggests that Kaliahham and one of the roommates left Asia from Hong Kong—the same place Fard (or rather, Wali Fred Dad) claimed to have been from—and arrived in Washington in 1904—the same date Fard gave.³³ Arian, using a physical description of Kaliahham, suggests that Kaliahham was Fard himself, that Fard had been a roommate of Anafulla in both Spokane and Salem, and that Fard did

28 Ibid., 329, 331.

29 Ibid., 335.

30 Ibid., 180–81.

31 Ibid., 181–82.

32 Ibid., 182–83.

33 Ibid., 184–86.

indeed travel from Hong Kong to the US in 1904. However, because to reach this conclusion Arian has to make several assumptions about the identification of individuals with similar but not identical names and biographical information, his conclusion is not nearly as persuasive as the linking of Fard to the naturalization document. Nevertheless, the links here provide a highly credible theory of Fard's travels, and at the same time help explain how it was that someone so clearly having South or Central Asian roots could claim to be from Hong Kong.

In tracking his activities further, Arian also identifies a tamale vendor in Montana going as Zardad Khan, whose name, as we have seen, was very similar to the name Zaradodd, which during his West Coast phase Fard sometimes told authorities was his father's name.³⁴ Although Zardad's trail seems to quickly run cold, his brother's does not, and Arian shows that he (and thus his brother too) was an Afghan, and in 1908 he was residing in Salem in the exact same building Fred Dodd would later live. The limited information about Zardad suggests to Arian that this was another Fard alias, and that he eventually joined his brother in Salem and changed his name. Again, Arian seems to be more convinced than some of his readers might be, but it certainly adds another tantalizing connection to the wealth of information the researcher has uncovered concerning the tamale-selling Central and South Asian community in the Pacific Northwest during the early twentieth-century—and it was, almost certainly, to this community that Fard belonged.

As for Fard's activities in California, other recently-discovered documents have helped flesh these out as well. A Spanish-language newspaper article, published in Los Angeles at the time of Fard's 1926 arrest for selling drugs, besides confirming the known details of the event, brings to light a fascinating piece of information: Fard was a well-known "street politician."³⁵ This recalls Evanzz's suggestion that Fard may also have at one point gone by the name of George Farr, a person who was an influential UNIA leader and 'agitator' in San Francisco in the early 1920s.³⁶ Because Fard's identity with Farr remains uncertain,³⁷ cur-

34 Ibid., 190–93.

35 "Fueron Confiscados \$5,000.00 Valor de Drogas Heroicas," *Heraldo de Mexico*, February 17, 1926, 8.

36 Evanzz, *Messenger*, 402–405; on George Farr, see Hill, *Garvey Papers*, 4: 233–237, 311–312, 339, 477.

37 Arian, pointing out that Farr's activities were located very close to the residence of one of Wallie Ford's associates, Edward Donaldson, appears to be all but convinced that Farr was Fard. 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

rently the Spanish-language newspaper article is the only strong evidence that Fard held radical views before coming to Detroit. The date of this article is significant when comparing its claims about Fard's views with those of Barton, who insisted that in the early 1920s—a time when George Farr was an outspoken Garveyite—Fard did not adhere to radical ideas. It appears that Fard's frustrating experiences with authorities, women, and even restaurant patrons in Oregon and California, combined with what appears to be a disposition towards anger and a willingness to break the law to sell drugs, slowly molded him into a radical. Perhaps this radical mindset, along with his somewhat Asiatic cast and tendency to associate with non-whites in his personal life, as well as his possible Islamic background, led Fard to, while he was incarcerated in San Quentin Prison, drift into or seek out its UNIA-influenced—and probably somewhat Islamophilic, due to Lucuis Lehman's presence—African American population. It would have been here, in prison, where Fard likely developed the core NOI doctrines and perhaps crafted his future identity. It is notable that several of the biographical details the NOI attributed to Fard, such as his ability to speak over a dozen languages, his having been trained for diplomatic service in England, and his having come from a prestigious mixed-race background, have parallels with the autobiographical claims of Lehman, San Quentin's other famous Muslim inmate that decade.³⁸

and drug dealer—but Hazel Barton, Ford's common-law wife until as late as 1921, never remembered hearing him speak against the government or whites. If Ford was Farr, this would mean that Ford led a double life (as he would have had to establish himself early enough for the government to start looking at him in December 1921) and despite being the owner of a restaurant—an incredibly time-consuming job—he frequently traveled to San Francisco without his common-law wife, who also worked at that restaurant, knowing. 2) Farr was described as “rather small but stout,” whereas 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 (Evanzz, *Messenger*, 403), 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 known versions of his name (see Wallace D. Fard FBI file, Correlation Summary, 1/15/58, 4, 46).

38 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 US. 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

Paroled on May 27, 1929, only two months after the shootout out at the Detroit MSTAs meeting and Claude Greene's murder, Fard, after briefly stopping by Los Angeles, traveled to Chicago, as confirmed by Hazel Barton. The newly-discovered April 1930 census record for the William D. Ford from Oregon verifies that he had taken up a job as a clothing salesman, the same profession W.D. Fard was said to have been involved in when he arrived in Detroit just three months later. Some have claimed that during his stay in Chicago he joined up with the MSTAs and possibly the Ahmadis, and that after Drew Ali's death he was one of the individuals claiming to be the reincarnation of Drew Ali.³⁹ However, there is no known evidence, other than oral tradition, that confirms that a man going as Wallace Fard or Ford was even a member of the MSTAs 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 MSTAs from 1929 to 1930 there is not a single mention of a Fard or Ford, whereas several other MSTAs members are identified.⁴⁰

But whatever his exact activities were during the twelve months after his release from prison in 1929, by the summer of 1930, the man going as W.D. Fard was in Detroit preaching a message that was in numerous ways similar to that of the MSTAs. Like many other leaders of new Islamic groups during the Great Schism, he capitalized on the association of Islam with esotericism, black nationalism, and stories of ancient Islamic greatness. Yet despite these similarities, Fard's teachings were very different from those of the MSTAs: Fard had brought to Detroit's African American community a truly new and unique message.

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, since at least some of the texts that he reportedly used have not been located. For instance, when the Detroit police arrested

Penal Trauma in the Fugitive Origins of the Nation of Islam" (MA thesis, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2004).

39 Evanzz, *Messenger*, 407.

40 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 MSTAs in Detroit, where there was indeed a Ford-El in the late 1930s. However, this claim, like the others, has not been confirmed by any verifiably authentic independent sources and is even rejected by contemporary MSTAs historians.

Fard in 1932 they purportedly found in his possession a book called the *Bible of Islamism*. The police report noted 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.⁴¹

No scholar has claimed to have seen a copy of this book, and there is no other known mention of it in any additional press report, government document, or even in any publicly available NOI materials. The FBI also learned that Fard claimed to have published, under the name W.D. Feraud, a book entitled *5 Guiding Principals* [sic], a copy of which, Fard supposedly said, was in the possession of the Library of Congress.⁴² The FBI was unable to locate a copy and, like the *Bible of Islamism*, neither any scholar nor any NOI member has publicly claimed to have actually seen this book.⁴³ In addition, in 1934, police discovered that several as-yet unidentified books containing what were clearly NOI teachings were being used as textbooks in the group’s school.⁴⁴ Since, in 1932, Fard asserted that he was working on a commission basis for a printing company, these various books would have likely been printed by his employer and therefore Fard would have had the power to keep the number of copies very small.⁴⁵

41 “New Human Sacrifice with a Boy as Victim is Averted by Inquiry,” *Detroit Free Press*, November 26, 1932, 1, 2.

42 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.

43 Wallace D. Fard FBI file, Letter, SAC, Washington Field Office (100-32829), to SAC, Chicago (100-35035), 2/10/1960. This book may have been the book of the same title used by the Development of Our Own. 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. Interestingly, the NOI’s five ‘principles,’ although they were usually equivalent to the five pillars, were sometimes composed of a different set of teachings; see Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism*, 192.

44 “Voodoo University Raided by Police; 13 Cultists Seized,” *Detroit Free Press*, April 17, 1934, 1, 2; “University of Islam,” *Time*, April 30, 1934, 37.

45 “Negro Leaders Open Fight to Break Voodooism’s Grip,” *Detroit Free Press*, November 24, 1932, 1, 2.

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 math-based symbolic questions, or ‘problems’; the *Secret Ritual of the Nation of Islam*, which was a collection of fifty-four questions, split into one part that had fourteen questions and another that had forty, used to teach the group’s core doctrines; a Bible; and an Arabic Qur’an, which he reportedly translated orally for his followers.⁴⁶ Today, the *Teaching* text is known as the “Problem Book” and the *Secret Ritual*, which no outsider has reported seeing since the late 1930s, is very close to what has generally been called since at least the 1950s the “Lost Found Muslim Lessons.” Both are presently included in a book entitled *The Supreme Wisdom Lessons* (not to be confused with Elijah Muhammad’s 1957 book *The Supreme Wisdom: Solution to the So-Called Negroes’ Problem*), which also contains three additional short doctrinal lessons said to have been given privately to Fard’s leading minister, Elijah Muhammad: “Actual Facts,” “Student Enrollment,” and “English Lesson No. c1.”⁴⁷ Together these doctrines are today informally known as the “120 Lessons” or, simply, the “Lessons.” Although the *Teaching* / “Problem Book” appears to have remained unchanged since the early 1930s,⁴⁸ we have three different 1930s sets of excerpts and paraphrases from the *Secret Ritual* and none of these completely correspond either with each other or with the later “Lost Found Muslim Lessons” version.⁴⁹ The differences

46 Beynon, “Voodoo Cult,” 901n17, 900.

47 Fard Muhammad [W.D. Fard], *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). What appear to be early versions of “Student Enrollment” and “English Lesson No. c1,” have been reprinted in A. Mujib Mannan, *A History of the Masjid Malcolm Shabazz—A Cultural Watershed in the Harlem and American Experience* (n.p.: n.p., 2000), 16–20. It should be pointed out here that Hakim Shabazz claims that Fard’s *Supreme Wisdom* contains an uncredited quote from the 1930 book *The Soul and Its Mechanism* by the Theosophist Alice Bailey; however I have never seen any version of Fard’s teachings that contains this quote, so Shabazz’s assertion is highly dubious, in my opinion; see Hakim B. Shabazz, *Essays on the Life and Teaching of Master W. Fard Muhammad: The Foundation of the Nation of Islam* (Hampton, VA: United Brothers & United Sisters Communications Systems, 1990), 29–30.

48 I am making this claim for two reasons: First is that all of the 1930s and 1940s quotes and paraphrases from this text are identical to those in the version known as the “Problem Book.” In addition, the Bentley Historical Library owns an undated copy of *Teaching*, which appears to be a copy of an early printing of the original document—and its contents are, again, identical to those of the version known as the “Problem Book.”

49 Excerpts and paraphrases appear in “Raided Temple Bares Grip of Voodoo in City,” *Detroit Free Press*, November 23, 1932, 1, 3; “Voodoo Catechism Says Heads of Four Devils Are

between these versions of the text are probably a function of the text having originally been transmitted primarily through oral instruction, with only a few manuscripts surviving to 1937, the year that scholar Erdmann Doane Beynon attempted to study the movement.⁵⁰ Another important piece of information is that at the end of the “Lost Found Muslim Lessons” version it is stated that the teaching’s second part was given by Fard to Elijah Muhammad on February 20, 1934, which tells us that at least one earlier, different version existed before 1934.⁵¹ Finally, we also know, from Muhammad’s son Wallace, that around 1950 Muhammad had taken out of circulation all old copies of Fard’s teachings in order to “interpret [them] [...] and put the emphasis where he wanted the emphasis to be”—so, lacking full versions of what have been authenticated as pre-1950 copies of his writings, it is difficult to say what were indeed Fard’s ideas and what were not.⁵²

As for additional texts, according to Beynon, Fard instructed his followers to read the works of Judge Rutherford, the Jehovah’s Witnesses leader; James Henry Breasted’s *Conquest of Civilization*; Hendrick van Loon’s *Story of Mankind*; and “a miscellaneous collection of books on Freemasonry and its symbolism.”⁵³ He also encouraged the Muslims to listen to the radio addresses of Rutherford, a Christian fundamentalist named Frank Norris, and apparently other millennialist preachers.⁵⁴ Beyond these resources, Elijah Muhammad has

Passport to Mecca,” *Detroit Free Press*, April 29, 1934, 13; and Beynon, “Voodoo Cult,” 898, 901, 903. 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 Muslim Lessons.” I should also point out three additional observations with regards to the excerpts: a) the excerpt from part I (from section/number 6) that Beynon gives on page 898 corresponds with the 1950s version of the “Lost Found Muslim Lessons,” but it is number 7 in the latter version; b) an excerpt from part I section/number 10 (which Beynon had only paraphrased on page 903) was published in a Detroit newspaper in 1932 (see “Raided Temple”) and the wording is somewhat different from how it appears in the “Lessons”; and c) the excerpt of the question and answer set corresponding to the “Lessons” part I section/number 9 that appears in “Voodoo Catechism” also contains elements of the answer to the “Lessons” part I section/number 10.

50 Beynon, “Voodoo Cult,” 901n17.

51 In fact, the copy of the *Secret Ritual* that the *Detroit Free Press* looked at in April 1934 had differences from the “Lessons”; compare the “Lessons” with “Voodoo Catechism,” 13.

52 Wallace Deen Mohammed, *As the Light Shineth from the East* (Calumet City, IL: WDM Publications, 1980), 24.

53 Beynon, “Voodoo Cult,” 900.

54 Ibid.

reported that just before Fard left the NOI for the final time, he gave Muhammad two versions of the Qur'an—both were in Arabic, but one had the English translation alongside the Arabic—and told Muhammad to learn Arabic so he could understand the holy book.⁵⁵ On that same occasion, Fard apparently also told Muhammad that he had written a book, although he did not give the title—perhaps Fard was referring the *Bible of Islamism* or the *5 Guiding Principles*.

Finally, Muhammad claimed that at this meeting Fard also gave him a list of 104 books to read on his own.⁵⁶ Although this list has not been made public, we have some clues about what it contained. We know, for instance, that in the late 1940s and early 1950s Nation members were encouraged to read at least certain passages from two books that were published early enough, and reflect enough the themes in Fard's teachings and book suggestions, that it is possible that he had personally assigned them: Woodburn, Morgan, and Hill's *Our United States* and Thomas H. Nelson's *The Mosaic Law in the Light of Modern Science*.⁵⁷ In addition, various individuals have claimed to have either seen the original list or to have identified some of the list's contents through deduction based on their knowledge of the NOI teachings. One former NOI member, Hannibal Ahmed, falls into the former category. According to Ahmed, the majority of the list's books

are written by European scholars and scientists of religion. Several of them are Master Masons. Others are researchers looking for divine guidance in the religious wisdom of the ancient theocratic Black nations, or for the technical knowledge of those ancient civilizations.⁵⁸

In his biography of Sun Ra, John F. Szwed lists, without citing any source, three specific titles that were supposedly assigned by Fard: Geoffrey Higgins's nineteenth-century occult classic *Anacalypsis*, and from the early twentieth century Albert Churchward's Masonry-based *Signs and Symbols of Primordial*

55 Hatim A. Sahib, "The Nation of Islam" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1951), 71.

56 Sahib, "Nation of Islam," 71, 98. Clegg reports that the number was actually 150, but he appears to be the only person to claim this number; see his *Original Man*, 35.

57 Report, 10/22/1951, Milwaukee file 25-2413, 7, Elijah Muhammad FBI file; James 7X Najiy, *The Nation of Islam's Temple #7 Harlem, USA: My Years with Louis Farrakhan and Malcolm X* (n.p.: Min. James 7X Najiy, 2011), 91.

58 Hannibal Ahmed, "The Message of Elijah Muhammad," in *The Harlem Cultural/Political Movements 1960-1970: From Malcolm X to "Black is Beautiful,"* ed. Abiola Sinclair (New York: Gumbs & Thomas, 1995), 33.

Man and Gerald Massey's Theosophy-inspired *Egypt the Light of the World*.⁵⁹ Finally, Hakim Shabazz reports that NOI scholars have suggested that, in addition to the books by Higgins, Churchward, and Massey, Fard's list also included Winchell's *Pre-Adamites* and Washington Irving's *Mahomet and His Successors*.⁶⁰ These texts and the traits described by Ahmed certainly fit with what we know about Fard's teachings and his other reading suggestions—in fact, below I argue strongly for Churchward being an especially important influence on Fard, and I make the case for other texts whose contents are consistent with both NOI thought and the traits described by Beynon and Ahmed.

The most important information about Fard's teachings, however, comes from what his early followers told various police officers, reporters, scholars, and later NOI members. The core of these teachings 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 [ca. 1555]. 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.⁶¹

Fard's teachings, then, were superficially similar to Drew Ali's, but also contained numerous differences. First of all, the Islamic identity promoted by Fard was connected primarily with Arabs and Mecca, not Moors and North Africa, despite the fact that a) Drew Ali did also teach that African Americans were descendants of the first humans and that these humans were from

59 John F. Szwed, *Space is the Place: The Lives and Times of Sun Ra* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1997), 105.

60 Shabazz, *Essays on the Life*, 13.

61 Beynon, "Voodoo Cult," 900–01.

Mecca and b) Fard almost certainly told some in the NOI that he was from Morocco.⁶² Due to this difference, in the NOI, when converts received Muslim surnames—which were referred to as ‘righteous,’ ‘holy,’ ‘original,’ and possibly ‘free’ names⁶³—to replace their current ‘slave names’ (a term borrowed from the MSTA) they were not given the MSTA surname of El, but rather popular Arabic names, such as Karriem (Karim), Muhammad, or Sharrieff (Sharif), and occasionally the name Bey. The process for receiving these names was also different in the NOI; in the MSTA, once a person expressed to a temple leader a desire to join the group, either the new member or the sheik simply chose the name that seemed to resonate with that individual, but in the NOI, a prospective member had to send a form letter formally requesting membership in the organization before he or she could receive a new name. Along these same lines, the promotion of knowing Arabic and Fard’s apparent complete lack of interest in either business development or generating mobilization for democratic political action suggest a radically different perspective on the lifestyle African Americans should be following in the US.

There is also in the NOI a far greater stress on learning scientific or ‘mathematical’ knowledge and information about the universe, what Fard called Islamic ‘culture.’ Although the ‘science’ in the MSTA’s name suggests there might have been more discussion of technical areas of knowledge, the word primarily reflects the group’s hoodoo/esoteric influences, and may have been chosen because of its resonance with Garvey’s ‘scientific understanding of religion.’ In Fard’s organization, on the other hand, members were required to perform actual mathematic word problems and learn astronomical facts. The following is an example of a word problem from the *Teaching/“Problem Book”*:

The wife of Mr. W.D. Fard’s uncle, in the wilderness of North America, weighs other than herself, therefore, she has rheumatism, headaches, pain in all joints, and cannot walk up to the store. She is troubled fre-

62 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.

63 I have not seen direct evidence that the term ‘free name’ was used by the NOI in the 1930s. It was, however, the subject of an essay reprinted several times in *Muhammad Speaks* starting on May 2, 1969. Because this term is so similar to the MSTA’s ‘free national name,’ this raises the possibility that the term was an early borrowing from the MSTA.

quently with high blood pressure and registers more than thirty-two. Her pulse is nearly eighty times per minute and she died at the age of forty-seven. How many times did her pulse beat in forty-seven years.

Although clearly symbolic and didactic in content, Muslims were still expected to do the calculations demanded by the question. Part II of the “Lost Found Muslim Lessons,” meanwhile, contains several questions and answers about the universe:

2. What is the Circumference [of the Planet Earth]?
ANS. 24,896 miles; (approximately 25,000 miles).
3. What is the diameter of the Planet?
ANS. 7,926 miles; (Seven thousand, nine hundred twenty-six miles).
4. What is the total square mileage?
ANS. 196,940,000 square miles; (One hundred ninety-six million, nine hundred forty thousand square miles).
5. How much is the land and water?
ANS. 57,255,000 square miles of land. 139,685,000 square miles of water.
6. What is the total weight of our planet?
ANS. 6-sextillion tons—(a unit followed by twenty-one ciphers).
7. How fast does our Planet travel per hour?
ANS. 1,037 $\frac{1}{3}$ miles per hour.

Nothing similar to this was taught in the MSTA or other Islamic groups.

However, the greatest difference between the NOI's teachings and those of other African American Islamic movements was its narrative for the origins, actions, and destinies of the races. Fard held, first of all, that black people are direct descendants of the creative dark, divine ‘atom’ of the universe—they themselves, then, are the divine ‘Original Man’ and Islam is their true, divine way of life. Indeed, because in the NOI there is no afterlife, following an Islamic lifestyle in peace is, essentially, ‘heaven’; ‘hell,’ then, is merely the condition under which black people live when they cannot follow Islam in peace. And for trillions of years, Muslims lived in their heavenly state on the planet.

According to Fard, furthermore, the history of humankind runs in 25,000-year cycles, each of which has its own unique history that is written and calculated by twenty-four god-scientists and a supreme God whose identity changes every cycle. Today, the world is in the sixteenth millennium of the current 25,000-year cycle, and it is also at the end of a 6,000-year dark period. Sixty-six hundred years ago, a rebellious, big-headed scientist named Yacub,

unsatisfied with his position on Earth, set into motion events that would cause Muslims great pain and suffering. Yacub had learned that all Muslims—that is, all black people—possessed two ‘germs’ in their genetic makeup: a black one and a brown one, with the black having much more divinity than the brown. Having also learned the powers of magnetism, which enabled him to separate germs from each other, he 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. After 600 years, he was successful; in the year 9,000 (i.e., around 6,000 years ago) he created the white race. Because these white people lacked divinity and its accompanying traits, such as the desire for freedom, justice, and equality for all people, they were ‘devils’—wicked people—and they were made to rule, enslave, and oppress Original Man for 6,000 years, culminating in their most egregious act: the enslavement of millions of Africans in ‘the Wilderness of North America.’⁶⁴

The devils’ domination relied significantly on their ‘tricknollegy,’ or tools of deception, the most potent of which was their convincing the black race to accept the submissive doctrine of Christianity. According to Fard, who went much further than Drew Ali in condemning the religion, Christianity was created 550 years ago, and its Bible, although it had originally been written by Muslims specifically for blacks in North America, had been ‘diluted’ by whites when they translated it from the Greek and included within it the false notion that God is a ‘spook’ that cannot be seen with the physical eye.⁶⁵ By accepting whites’ grand illusion—their ‘spook civiliation’⁶⁶—Africans had become ‘savage’ and ‘dead’; in other words, because they had lost the knowledge of their people, they had become ‘uncivilized’ and were not truly living the divine life that was their destiny. In 1914, however, the white era of rule had

64 Elijah Muhammad, *The Theology of Time (The Secret of the Time)* (Atlanta: Secretarius M.E.M.P.S., 1997), 86–89.

65 W.D. Farad, “No Connection between Islam and Robert Harris, Alleged Voodoo Killer,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, December 31, 1932, 6; Elijah Muhammad, “A Warning to the Black Man of America [chapter 11],” *Final Call to Islam* 1, no. 2, August 18, 1934, 2. Michael Muhammad Knight has pointed out that it is possible that the NOI dating of Christianity, if one connects its 550 years to a window of 1379 to 1383, was a reference to one or both of the following major events in Christian history that took place at that time: the first English translation of the Bible and “the birth of Pope Eugene IV, who is seen today as having contributed to the church’s theological and political support for the transatlantic slave trade. Together, such events could be seen as creating the particular Christianity that Elijah [Muhammad] would encounter as an African man in America”; see his *Why I Am a Five Percenter* (New York: Tarcher/Penguin, 2011), 102–03.

66 Dolinar, *Negro in Illinois*, 207.

begun coming to an end, as indicated by the eruption of the white-on-white violence of the First World War, and the darker races would soon rise to take their rightful position on Earth; Fard insisted that a flying 'Mother Plane' would arrive and release both bombs and smaller bombing airplanes that would destroy all whites and save 144,000 believing Muslims.⁶⁷

Possible Sources

For decades, researchers have speculated on how and why Fard came up with these ideas. Because it has long been rumored that he was a former member of the MSTA, many have suspected that the Moorish movement was Fard's main source of inspiration, yet this cannot explain all of the many, and often strange and unique features in his teachings. Indeed, the same could be said about Fard's theorized Pashtun Muslim heritage, his possible contact with Islamophilic black nationalists in San Quentin, and even a possible influence from Gurdjieff—these may have been influences, but they alone cannot fully account for all of the parts of his complex mythology. On the other hand, given the seeming uniqueness of many of his doctrines, one might suppose that Fard's notions were the product of pure creative imagination and were not directly based on specific models. However, while this is possible, it is extremely rare for a successful religious leader to have not modeled his teachings and activities on what were used in previous works and communities. It seems that the best path for trying to discover Fard's sources, then, is to attempt to match some of his rarer ideas with examples of those same ideas being used by other individuals and groups, all the while keeping in mind both the information we have about which books Fard possibly told his followers to read as well as Fard's other doctrines as later communicated by Elijah Muhammad.

Given that the Jehovah's Witnesses had been the group that originally popularized the belief in 1914 being the end of the reign of a large group of evil people—a doctrine that clearly corresponds to Fard's use of the 1914 date⁶⁸—

67 On the First World War-based explanation for the 1914 date, see the facsimile of a July 2, 1933 NOI document in Joint Legislative Committee on Un-American Activities, State of Louisiana, *Activities of "The Nation of Islam" or the Muslim Cult of Islam, in Louisiana* (Baton Rouge: Joint Legislative Committee on Un-American Activities, State of Louisiana, 1963), 97.

68 Although the above-mentioned 1933 NOI document reveals that the 1914 date was strongly connected with the First World War, it might be worth noting that 1914 was also a very traumatic year for Fred Dodd personally, as explained above, and the emotional distress

and that Fard had explicitly encouraged his followers to read and listen to the Witnesses' leader Rutherford, it seems that the Witnesses are the most obvious non-Islamic source for his teachings.⁶⁹ Two studies have previously enumerated several of the Jehovah's Witnesses teachings shared by the NOI besides the 1914 date: a belief in a coming battle of Armageddon; a belief—stemming, as we have seen, from the Book of Revelation—in the idea that only 144,000 true believers would survive the battle and enter the new civilization on Earth; a belief in the non-immortality of souls; criticism of certain elements of the capitalistic system; being against miscegenation; rejecting the authority of the government; and rejecting the legitimacy of all other religions.⁷⁰ To this list we might add a few other concepts: Rutherford, for instance, had a tendency to refer to all who opposed him as 'devils'; the Witnesses had from their early years labeled modern churches as 'Babylon' (the NOI sometimes used that word for American society);⁷¹ like Fard, the Witnesses' founder, Charles Taze Russell, showed an interest in knowing the distance from the Earth to the sun; and both groups adhered to the popular premillennial view that the six 'days'—in other words, 6,000 years—of oppression had passed and they were now living in the seventh 'day.'⁷²

he must have felt that year could have led to him becoming convinced, upon hearing the Jehovah's Witnesses' teachings and news about the war, that his difficult experiences that year were part of a greater transformation in human history.

- 69 For an overview of the Jehovah Witnesses' history and an in-depth discussion of how their doctrines developed, see M. James Penton, *Apocalypse Delayed: The Story of Jehovah's Witnesses*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002).
- 70 William A. Maesen, "Watchtower Influences on Black Muslim Eschatology: An Exploratory Story," *Journal of the Scientific Study of Religion* 9, no. 4 (1970): 321–25; Nathan Joseph Saunders, "White Devils and So-Called Negroes: Jehovah's Witnesses, Southern Baptists, and the Early Nation of Islam in Detroit" (MA thesis, University of South Carolina, 2002).
- 71 See, e.g., Elijah Muhammad, *The Supreme Wisdom: Solution to the So-Called Negroes' Problem* (Newport News: National Newport News and Commentator, 1957), 48.
- 72 Penton, *Apocalypse Delayed*, 29–30, 47–48; Charles Taze Russell, *Studies in the Scriptures*, series III (Brooklyn: Watch Tower Bible & Tract Society, 1909), 326–27; *idem.*, *The Divine Plan of the Ages* (Brooklyn: Watch Tower Bible & Tract Society, 1886), 47, 75; Najiy, *Nation of Islam's*, 47; Maesen, "Watchtower Influences," 322; Elijah Muhammad, "Significance of the Moon," *Muhammad Speaks*, January 31, 1969, 3. The idea that biblical 'days' were actually years or thousands of years was based primarily on Num. 14:33–34 and Ez. 4:4–6; see Timothy P. Weber, *Living in the Shadow of the Second Coming* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 15, 188n7 and Penton, *Apocalypse Delayed*, 19, 21, 341n27, 341n28. It is worth mentioning, however, that some medieval Islamic sects also believed in a 7,000-year 'week' that ended with an apocalypse; see Marshall G.S. Hodgson, "A Note on the

But Rutherford and the Jehovah's Witnesses were not the only conservative premillennialists who seem to have influenced Fard. As Arian has shown, during his Fred Dodd days Fard was an acquaintance of a Christian healer-prophet-separatist named David N. McInturff,⁷³ who may have been an early model for Fard's leadership, as well as his original inspiration for encouraging his followers to take heed of the words of conservative preachers like the Baptist fundamentalist Frank Norris, who himself shared several of the same views as Fard on the government, capitalism (which both criticized), and outside churches.⁷⁴ Fard also advised the Muslims to follow a strict dietary regimen that appears to have been based largely on the instructions found in the writings of Thomas H. Nelson, an obscure early twentieth-century fundamentalist who preached about the 'doom of modern civilization.'⁷⁵ The fact that Nelson's little-known 1926 book, *The Mosaic Law in the Light of Modern Science*, was suggested reading for Muslims by the early 1950s suggests that Fard had originally endorsed it. Although its dietary prescriptions do not completely correspond with Fard's, Nelson's work, interestingly, still contains a number of ideas that would appear in the NOI. First of all, the book, as its title implies, recommends avoiding eating the foods proscribed by biblical law, including swine, which the NOI prohibited.⁷⁶ Like the NOI diet, Nelson's diet also encourages eating many vegetables and fruits, although, unlike the NOI's, it does not prohibit the specific vegetables that were associated with the Southern black lifestyle.⁷⁷ Still, there is a strong emphasis in Nelson's book on the physical and psychological effects of food, which is consistent with the NOI teaching that Muslims should avoid traditional black Southern cuisine, which Fard asserted mentally enslaved African Americans. We see in Nelson, furthermore, the notion that God's law is in fact a 'science,' and that Moses, therefore, was a great 'scientist'; Fard's teachings similarly present Islam as a science and the wisest men in ancient times were also said to be scientists.⁷⁸

Millennium in Islam," in *Millennial Dreams in Action: Essays in Comparative Study*, ed. Sylvia L. Thrupp (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1962), 218–19.

73 Arian, *Chameleon*, 338–41.

74 See Saunders, "White Devils."

75 Thomas H. Nelson, *The Doom of Modern Civilization or The Great Tribulation and the Millennial Kingdom that Follows* (n.p.: n.p., [1914?]).

76 Thomas H. Nelson, *The Mosaic Law in the Light of Modern Science* (Philadelphia: John C. Winston, 1926), 38–41.

77 Nelson, *Mosaic Law*, 44–46.

78 Nelson, *Mosaic Law*, 7, 31, 70; see "Lost Found Muslim Lessons" part I, question and answer 4; and part II, questions and answers 18 and 21.

Another interesting connection is Nelson's stressing the concept that six is the "imperfect number," whereas seven is the "perfect number."⁷⁹ This notion strongly correlates with a prominent theme in NOI ideology, wherein whites are consistently associated with the number six—their creation took 600 years; their rule was to last 6,000 years; and their role in history was associated with the Mark of the Beast, 666, which explains why early NOI members sometimes referred to whites as 'beasts'—and blacks with the number seven, which is regarded in the NOI as the number of 'perfection.'⁸⁰ Possibly related to this stress on certain numbers is the NOI practice of using mathematic tricks to reach spiritual conclusions, what is classically associated with the esoteric field of specialty known as 'magic numbers,' which had been especially prominent in Jewish mysticism. The only apparent evidence of a direct source for the NOI's use of this particular practice is Nelson, whose book gives several examples of how one could reveal truths by multiplying and dividing key numbers—especially six and seven—with other biblical numbers. The NOI's use of such tricks would become popular in the 1980s and 1990s after the group became deeply interested in the work of the controversial Muslim numerologist Rashad Khalifa, but such tricks were being employed by the Muslims as early as the late 1940s when the NOI was instructing its members that by counting, adding, subtracting, and multiplying in a certain way the number of letters in President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's name, "you get 666."⁸¹

Even some of the other relatively minor concepts in Fard's doctrines may have had specific sources as well. Fard taught, for instance, that after being

79 Nelson, *Mosaic Law*, 23–24, 149.

80 Clegg, *Original Man*, 60; Gardell, *In the Name*, 155; Elijah Muhammad, "Significance of the Moon," *Muhammad Speaks*, January 31, 1969, 3. In his "Theology of Time" lectures, Muhammad asserted that "The [white] man's number is six, *because* he rules [...] for 6,000 years" (emphasis added); Muhammad, *Theology of Time*, 87. A 1936 lesson for student ministers in the NOI teaches that "seven is important, and plays a prominent part in the whole Universe" and it is pointed out that seven repetitions are made in two different parts of the Muslim hajj pilgrimage ritual; Elijah Muhammad, *Ministry Class Taught by the Most Honorable Elijah Muhammad in the 1930's Volume 1* (n.p.: n.p., 2011), [3]. Another teaching was that "Allah forgives 77 times 7"; see Correlation Summary, 1/15/1958, 41, Fard FBI file. On whites being called 'beasts,' see Dolinar, *Negro in Illinois*, 205. It might be worth recalling that members of the early hoodoo and New Thought-influenced Jewish sect led by Hickerson had members who referred to others—possibly whites—as 'beasties.'

81 Nelson, *Mosaic Law*, 22–26; Report, 4/12/1951, Baltimore file 25–12085, notebook page 11, Elijah Muhammad FBI file. For other examples of these tricks, which seem to have gained prominence in the 1970s, see Gardell, *In the Name*, 176–81.

created, whites were expelled from Arabia and lived in caves in Europe, an idea he had probably derived partly from Job 30:5–6 and partly from Van Loon's book.⁸² Breasted's work, meanwhile, apparently served as the main basis for Fard's lessons on classical Islamic history, ancient Egypt, and the Crusades.⁸³ Interestingly, although both Van Loon and Breasted were white American writers, Fard had probably also been influenced by British authors. For example, one of Fard's private teachings to Muhammad was that the Earth's moon had originally been part of the Earth prior to the two being separated by a great explosion—a tale that was used as an allegory for the separation of blacks from their true home—and this was most likely a reworking of the fission theory of moon formation, first formulated by George Darwin, Charles Darwin's son, in the late nineteenth century.⁸⁴ Around the same time that the moon fission theory began receiving circulation, the English science fiction writer H.G. Wells released his famous *War of the Worlds* in which he explicitly compared a Martian invasion of the Earth to European invasions and eradications of indigenous people—Fard's claiming a Mother Plane would come to eradicate whites is strikingly similar to Wells's story.

One notion that was popular among certain whites on both sides of the Atlantic was the idea that history takes place in 25,000-year cycles. The estimate of approximately 25,000 to 26,000 years for repeating cycles in world history is associated primarily with what was long known as the procession of the equinoxes—the slowly-changing position of the Earth relative to the twelve major astrological constellations, a phenomenon that is produced by the rotating of the Earth's axis.⁸⁵ Interest in this topic was taken up by nineteenth and early twentieth-century writers on esotericism who applied it to their theories about world history passing through various phases; in fact, it is from this current that the notion of the 'Age of Aquarius' came to gain popularity, first among Theosophists, then among those influenced by Levi Dowling's *Aquarian Gospel*. Interestingly, although most estimates for the precise length of the procession do not give the exact number of 25,000—medieval estimates were 25,200 and 25,770, and starting in the nineteenth century the common sci-

82 Hakim A. Jamal, *From the Dead Level: Malcolm X and Me* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1971), 166; Clegg, *Original Man*, 300m19.

83 Clegg, *Original Man*, 26.

84 See Elijah Muhammad's "The Significance of the Moon" articles, which ran in *Muhammad Speaks* on January 17, 24, and 31, 1969.

85 On this topic, see Joscelyn Godwin, *Atlantis and the Cycles of Time: Prophecies, Traditions, and Occult Revelations* (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 2011), 336–56.

entific estimate was 25,920—a number of esotericist writers, particularly those who were influenced by Theosophy, did indeed claim that it was exactly 25,000 years.⁸⁶

Black authors may have found their way into Fard's teachings too, particularly in a small, but very distinct doctrine contained in "Lost Found Muslim Lessons" part II. Here, Fard breaks down the world's population into three percentage groups. There is, first, the eighty-five percent, who are

uncivilized people; poison animal eaters; slaves from mental death and power, people who do not know the Living God or their origin in this world, and they worship that they know not what—who are easily led in the wrong direction, but hard to lead into the right direction.

Next is the ten percent;

the rich; the slave-makers of the poor; who teach the poor lies—to believe that the Almighty, True and Living God is a spook and cannot be seen by the physical eye. Other wise known as: The Blood-Suckers of the Poor.

And, finally, there is the five percent, who are

the poor, righteous Teachers, who do not believe in the teachings of the 10%, and are all-wise; and know who the Living God is; and Teach that the Living God is the Son of man, the supreme being, the (black man) of Asia; and Teach Freedom, Justice and Equality to all the human family of the planet Earth. Otherwise known as: Civilized People. Also are: Muslim and Muslim Sons.⁸⁷

86 See, e.g., Sampson Arnold Mackey, *The Mythological Astronomy of the Ancients Demonstrated: Part the Second, Key of Urania, the Wards of Which Will Unlock All the Mysteries of Antiquity* (Norwich: R. Walker, 1823), 73, 95, 141, 175; William Q. Judge, *Echoes from the Orient: A Broad Outline of Theosophical Doctrines* (Point Loma: Aryan Theosophical Press, 1921), 11; W.J. Colville, *Short Lessons in Theosophy* (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1892), 54; KHEI, *Rosicrucian Fundamentals: An Exposition of the Rosicrucian Synthesis of Religion, Science and Philosophy* (New York: Flame Press, 1920), 178; John Yarker, *The Arcane Schools a Review of Their Origin and Antiquity; with a General History of Freemasonry, and Its Relation to the Theosophic, Scientific, and Philosophic Mysteries* (Belfast: William Tait, 1909), 2.

87 This teaching would serve as the ideological foundation for an NOI -offshoot, the 'Five Percenters,' which would develop in the 1960s; see Chapter 7.

Some have proposed that Fard invented these three categories by modifying W.E.B. DuBois's famous concept of the 'Talented Tenth,' which was a reference to the ten percent of the African American population that represented the leadership class in the black community.⁸⁸ However, given Fard's apparent awareness of black nationalist thought, it is possible that he borrowed the specific notion of a super-elite five percent from Rev. Fitz Balintine Pettersburgh's black nationalist-themed *The Royal Parchment Scroll of Black Supremacy* (see Chapter 2). Pettersburgh's book claims—in addition to containing other references that would resonate with the NOI, such as those to 'black supremacy,' trillions of years, Jehovah's Witnesses, and the physical inferiority of whites—that only five percent of all people "know what they say or do."⁸⁹

Although we cannot say with certainty whether Fard was responsible for the NOI's late 1940s use of the book *Our United States*, because the book was published in 1930, it is technically old enough for Fard to have read and used it before he departed the NOI in 1934. Moreover, the way that it was employed by the NOI later suggests it may have been behind one of the NOI's doctrines that would lead to the group's metamorphosis in the 1940s. The single known mention of this book is in a 1949 FBI interview with a former member of the NOI who claimed that earlier that year Elijah Muhammad had encouraged Muslims to check the book out from their local library and look on page 408.⁹⁰ The former member was obviously impressed by the passage, as he remembered it almost verbatim, and quoted it for the federal agents:

"No negro whose ancestors were brought as slaves to this country can be a citizen; the constitution and the Declaration of Independence did not mean to include the negro. He was a mere piece of property that could be bought and sold." This page in this book also says that the courts in the United States have decided that only white men can be citizens.⁹¹

Apparently neither this former member nor Muhammad recognized (or acknowledged) that this section in the book was not discussing the present offi-

88 E.g., Gardell, *In the Name of*, 18.

89 In Pettersburgh, *Royal Parchment Scroll*: trillions of years: 17; five percent: 17; Jehovah's Witnesses: 18; white physical inferiority (as lepers): 13, 15.

90 Report, 10/22/1951, Milwaukee file 25-2413, 7, Elijah Muhammad FBI file. The correct page was actually 409; 408 has a map on it; see James Albert Woodburn, Thomas Francis Moran, and Howard Copeland Hill, *Our United States: A History of the Nation* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1930).

91 Ibid.

cial view of the US government towards African Americans, but was instead summarizing the 1857 US Supreme Court Dred Scott decision, which was later superseded by the Fourteenth Amendment and the Civil Rights Act of 1866—both of which were also discussed in *Our United States*. It appears, then, in an intellectual move very different from the one taken by Noble Drew Ali (yet foreshadowing the various later Moorish and ‘sovereign citizen’ movements in which individuals claim to not be US citizens), the NOI, by ignoring the full context of this nineteenth-century Supreme Court case, was insisting that this history book proved that African Americans were not allowed to be citizens of the country. It may have been partly on this ground, then, that the NOI taught that when African Americans became Muslims, they also automatically became citizens of Mecca, and therefore were not required to register for the draft—a teaching that later led to the imprisonment of many of the group’s members.

Another distinctive doctrine in Fard’s teachings that gives us yet another important clue about his sources is found in the ninth question and answer pair in “Lost Found Muslim Lessons” part I, which references white members of the Ancient Arabic Order of the Nobles of the Mystic Shrine—the paramasonic group popularly known as the Shriners. Fard does not explicitly name this group, but its identity is clear from the assertions he makes. Fard explains, for example, that whites (“the devil”) study

from thirty-five to fifty years before he can call himself a Muslim son [...] And he must add a sword on the upper part of the Holy and Greatest Universe flag of Islam [...] ⁹²

Admittance to the Shriner order, which employs numerous Islamic references in its dress, rituals, and writings, was traditionally restricted to individuals who had already passed through all thirty-three degrees of mainstream Masonry. Because of this, Shriners tended to be older men, and a few may have indeed been involved with Masonry for up to half a century by the time they joined the order. The “Holy and Greatest Universe flag of Islam” is a reference to the symbols of the Sun, crescent moon, and star which appeared on both the fez early NOI members wore—which was referred to as ‘the Universe’—as well as on the Shriner fez;⁹³ however the latter fez also includes, as Fard’s statement indicates, the image of a sword.

⁹² It should be noted that an excerpt from what appears to be a slightly earlier form of this teaching (in “Voodoo Catechism,” 13) does not include the reference to the “sword on the upper part of the Holy and Greatest Universe flag of Islam.”

⁹³ “Voodoo Catechism,” 13; Nathaniel 10X, “Muslim Pioneers Remember the Early Years of

The most interesting part of Fard's teachings on the Shriners is his insistence that although NOI members do "not love the devil regardless to how long he studies," after joining the Shriners a white man "can call himself a Muslim son." Here, Fard is implying, by saying that white people can call themselves, essentially, Muslims after progressing through all the levels of Masonry, that Islam's—the NOI's—teachings were in fact related to Masonic teachings. Fard, then, most likely also provided the Nation's additional oral instructions on the subject, such as the claim that the most knowledge a white person or non-Muslim could obtain was either thirty-two or thirty-three 'degrees'—depending on what system one was using, each could be considered the highest degree in mainstream Freemasonry—whereas Muslims possess "360 degrees, which never runs out. A Muslim is greater than a Mason."⁹⁴ Another related oral teaching that Fard may have added is the notion that Prince Hall, the famous eighteenth-century founder of African American Freemasonry, was actually spreading in his lodges Islam, not whites' limited Masonry.⁹⁵ Elijah Muhammad himself would, in his own discussions on "the secrets of Freemasonry," in addition to providing esoteric interpretations of the meaning of the Sun, Moon, and star, explicitly state that the NOI teachings were the "highest degree" in Masonry, and thus NOI Islam was higher than what he calls the "Moslem Shriner" group.⁹⁶

What is perhaps most noticeable in all of this is the emphasis on Shriners being the highest form of white Masonry. For most Masons—whites and blacks alike—the Shrine is not regarded as a superior organization, and has in fact long been referred to as the 'playground of Masonry' because it focuses on fraternal fun, relaxation, and work for charitable activities—not on teaching esoteric lessons or identifying with Muslims.⁹⁷ Indeed, since sincere insistence that the Shriners taught elite Masonry and should be taken very seriously was very rare by the twentieth century, generally being restricted to small non-

Islam," *Muhammad Speaks*, March 16, 1973, 4. The sun is said to be represented by the red background of the fez and flag of the NOI.

94 Elijah Muhammad FBI file, Report, 4/12/1951, Baltimore file 25-12085, notebook page 2; Jamal, *From the Dead Level*, 166.

95 Elijah Muhammad FBI file, Report, 4/12/1951, Baltimore file 25-12085, notebook page 5.

96 Elijah Muhammad, *The Secrets of Freemasonry* (Atlanta: Secretarius MEMPS Publications, 2002), 8-10, 24, 25, 30-32, 37; Muhammad, *Theology of Time*, 41. Muhammad's interpretation of the sun, moon, and star was published in multiple issues of *Muhammad Speaks* starting in the September 18, 1970 issue.

97 However, some early Shriners seem to have had a sincere interest in Islam; see Bowen, *HCTIUS*, 1:119-23, 148.

mainstream lodge leaders like Abdul Hamid Suleiman,⁹⁸ it is noteworthy that one of the only books from the early twentieth century that promoted such an idea also contains esoteric interpretations of the Shriner fez symbols as well as many other esoteric ideas that found resonance with those of the NOI. This book, *Three Master Masons: A Scientific and Philosophical Explanation of the Emblems of Masonry Proving It to Be the Great Constructive Principle of the World*, written by one Milton A. Pottenger, was published in 1916, which means it would have been available to Fard. Besides containing the claim about the Shriners and interpretations of the Shriner symbols, *Three Master Masons* also discusses measurements of the earth, the speed of travel and rotation of planetary bodies, the existence of alien life, the importance of the atom and magnetism as a fundamental elements in the universe, the prevalence of deception and false belief in society, the importance of esoteric teachings called ‘mathematics,’ an explanation of time as a measurement of moving bodies, and the mastering of the Sun, Moon, and stars—all of which were concepts included in Fard’s teachings.⁹⁹

Three Master Masons was probably not the only book by Pottenger that Fard had read. Since, as Beynon reported, some of the book suggestions Fard had made were for those dealing with “Freemasonry and its symbolism,” it is probably not a coincidence that Pottenger also happened to be a respected authority on Masonic symbols, and his 1905 *Symbolism* was one of the few full-length books providing an esoteric reading of biblical, Masonic, and natural symbols.¹⁰⁰ *Symbolism* contains, in addition to its discussions of symbols, several in-depth treatments of ideas discussed briefly in *Three Master Masons*, including the notion that there are white and black atoms, which are said to be ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ and ‘attracted’ to each other, but like all things tend to go back to their original states—concepts reminiscent of the NOI’s doctrines on the behavior of atoms and ‘germs’ and its notion of ‘unlike attracts’ (the latter

98 Given that Fard was primarily on the West Coast before starting the NOI, it is unlikely that he ever had direct contact with the East Coast-based Suleiman. However, it is possible that Suleiman’s ideas were transmitted as esoteric doctrines by some members of the MSTA.

99 Milton A. Pottenger, *Three Master Masons: A Scientific and Philosophical Explanation of the Emblems of Masonry Proving It to Be the Great Constructive Principle of the World* (Montana: Kessinger Publishing, 1916). Most of these topics in Fard’s teachings can be found the “Lost Found Muslim Lessons,” but see also Muhammad’s *Theology of Time*, esp. 120–21.

100 “Masonic Notice,” *Ogden Standard*, October 8 and 9, 1917; Milton A. Pottenger, *Symbolism: A Treatise on the Soul of Things; How the Natural World is but a Symbol of the Real World; the Modern Church, with its Spire and Cross, and the Bible Account of Noah’s Ark Symbols of the Phalic Religion* (Sacramento: Symbol Publishing, 1905).

being a NOI concept frequently used to explain why African Americans treated whites as superior to other blacks). Pottenger, it seems, had learned many of his ideas from the Oriental Order of the Magi, a Masonry-influenced occult group that became popular in Chicago in the 1890s, and was one of the only esoteric organizations known to have taught the knowledge of the distances between the planets and the Sun and to have called all of its teachings ‘mathematics’—again, concepts that were relatively rare in American esotericism but appeared in the NOI.¹⁰¹ After leaving Chicago to go to California, where he would begin to teach esoteric ideas on his own,¹⁰² Pottenger initially promoted himself as a member of the OOM, and his narrative for the *Three Master Masons* borrowed heavily from the story that the OOM’s founder, Olney Richmond, gave about his own initiation into occult teachings.¹⁰³ Since the OOM remained in existence until at least the 1930s, it is possible that Fard himself had come into contact with the group in California, Chicago, or some other place.¹⁰⁴

Interestingly, besides promoting these specific teachings, the OOM encouraged the combining of all esoteric knowledge—including the messianic and millennial teachings of the Baha’i faith¹⁰⁵—so it is not surprising that Pottenger sometimes also promoted yoga,¹⁰⁶ and therefore it may be Pottenger who was

101 This group is discussed in some detail in Bowen, *HCTIUS*, 1:192–97. Also see Arline L. Richmond’s *Yenlo and the Mystic Brotherhood* ([Chicago]: n.p., 1946) and Iain McLaren-Owens, ed., *Articles on the Order of the Magi & Its History*, 3rd ed. (Scottsdale, AZ: Astro-Cards Enterprises, 2007).

102 Searches using *Ancestry.com* and various digital newspaper resources place Pottenger in Chicago in the by the late 1870s and through the early 1890s; by 1895, however, he had moved to Denver, and soon after made his way to Utah and then California. Pottenger promoted his activities in the classified advertisements section of the *Salt Lake Tribune*, the *Salt Lake Herald*, the *San Francisco Call*, the *Los Angeles Herald*, and the *Ogden Standard*.

103 For a summary of this narrative, see Bowen, *HCTIUS*, 1:193–94.

104 Interestingly, one of the promoters of the OOM in the early 1930s was Prof. William Estep, a yoga-teaching esotericist who was ousted from Detroit in the late 1920s; see the brief discussion of Estep in the following chapter as well as his advertisement in *New York Sun*, May 9, 1931, 37. The OOM seems to have mostly petered out by the 1940s, but there is at least one account of the group existing into the 1960s, and this particular account fascinatingly suggests that the OOM may have played some role in the development of modern American witchcraft; see Aidan A. Kelly, *A Tapestry of Witches: A History of the Craft in America, Volume 1, to the Mid-1970s* (Tacoma: Hierophant Wordsmith Press, 2014), 19–24.

105 See Bowen, *HCTIUS*, 1:192–97.

106 See his classified advertisement, under the name ‘Dr. M.A. Pottenger,’ in the May 28, 1899 issue of the *San Francisco Call*.

responsible for providing Fard with the inspiration to add what seems to be a yogic power mentioned in his teachings. In the second part of the “Lost Found Muslim Lessons,” the eighth question and answer set asserts that the “Son of Man”—a term used in the teachings to refer to all black people—“causes [...] rain, hail, snow and earthquakes,” apparently through the manipulation of the Earth’s gravitation and rotation and the effects of those on water in the atmosphere. Claims for controlling the weather are fairly rare European-based esotericism, and while they do appear in non-European cultures (including in African American hoodoo), they are almost never conjoined with the clarification that the magician should control the Earth’s gravity and atmospheric moisture. However, similar concepts were indeed transmitted to the United States in some English-language yogic texts, such as Pandit Rama Prasad Kasyapa’s *Occult Science, The Science of Breath*, a book that received moderate circulation in the 1880s and 1890s among American occultists, particularly those involved with the Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor, a group that seems to have had some connection with the Oriental Order of the Magi.¹⁰⁷ Kasyapa’s book, meanwhile, also keys us into a possible source for another aspect of Fard’s ideas: the notion of the ‘germ.’ The term ‘germ’ was rarely used in Fard’s sense in either scientific or Western esoteric writings in the early twentieth century, but it could be found in South Asian works on Hinduism and yoga, such as Kasyapa’s book.¹⁰⁸ Kasyapa identifies, moreover, both germs that give life to natural objects and an “original germ” in the universe, out of which all life rose, a notion similar to Fard’s black atom.

Fard’s racial theories may have had other sources as well, which are suggested by Fard’s teaching that members of the Tribe of Shabazz, the specific group of black people that African Americans belonged to, were the Original Man and were from “the best part of the planet Earth,”¹⁰⁹ which Fard identified

107 Pandit Rama Prasad Kasyapa, *Occult Science, The Science of Breath*, 2nd ed. (Lahore: R.C. Bary & Sons, 1892), 16, 18. See Patrick D. Bowen, “The real pure Yog’: Yoga in the Early Ts and H.B. of L.” in *The Theosophical Society and the East (1875–1900)*, ed. Tim Rudbøg (Oxford University Press, forthcoming at time of writing). The magical ability to make or prevent rain was, of course, not limited to yoga, and was in fact known in both slave conjure and anti-colonial millennialist sects around the world, although in most cases the magic made no reference to controlling the unseen moisture in the atmosphere; see, e.g., Bryan R. Wilson, *Magic and the Millennium: A Sociological Study of Religious Movements of Protest among Tribal and Third-World Peoples* (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1973), 73, 132, 242.

108 Kasyapa, *Occult Science*, ii, iii.

109 “Lessons,” part 1, question and answer 1.

as being both Mecca and, as Elijah Muhammad would later report, the “Nile Valley of Egypt”—in fact, the members of the Tribe of Shabazz were said to have been the builders of Egypt’s pyramids.¹¹⁰ There had been a few previous theories, based on both myths and archeological research, that asserted that black people were the first—i.e., ‘original’—humans. Higgins’s *Anacalypsis*, for example, made this argument, and archeological research about the topic had recently made its way into the black press.¹¹¹ We also know that the MSTA taught that the Canaanite ancestors of African Americans were from Mecca, which was said to be the location of the Garden of Eden—claims that, when taken together, suggest both that the black Canaanites were the original people and that Mecca was indeed at one point ‘Paradise’ or the ‘best part’ of Earth—but, given what we know about Fard’s reading patterns, it is likely that he was mostly influenced in this topic by another early twentieth-century work dealing with Masonic symbols: Albert Churchward’s 1910 *The Signs and Symbols of Primordial Man*.¹¹² In this and his other books, Churchward argues that “primordial man” was black and his “original home” was the Nile Valley.¹¹³ Churchward adds, furthermore, that true Freemasonic symbols developed from these people, and that these symbols reached their ultimate expression in the pyramid-building ancient Egyptian civilization—the great society that influenced all other major civilizations and their symbols.¹¹⁴ This black biological primacy and symbolic influence even impacted, according to Churchward, the indigenous people of the Americas and their Mayan civilization—a notion that would be of importance when, decades later, the NOI emphasized its connections with Native Americans and the Mayans in particular.¹¹⁵ By reading Churchward, then, one could easily come to the conclusion that black people from the Nile Valley of Egypt were indeed Original Man, and that they also created and possessed the

110 Muhammad, *Supreme Wisdom*, 33; Gardell, *In the Name*, 152–55; “Lost Found Muslim Lessons” part 1, question and answer 1. It should be pointed out that the specific claim about the Nile Valley is not contained in any of Fard’s known writings, but was taught by Elijah Muhammad as if Fard had told him this.

111 See, e.g., “Skeleton Called That of Earliest Modern Man Is Dug up in Africa and Is Removed Intact,” *St. Louis Argus*, January 18, 1929, 8.

112 As was mentioned above, this was one of the books Szwed has claimed (without citation) that Fard had assigned to Elijah Muhammad in 1934; see his *Space is the Place*, 105.

113 Albert Churchward, *The Signs and Symbols of Primordial Man: The Evolution of Religious Doctrines from the Eschatology of the Ancient Egyptians*, 2nd ed. (London: George Allen & Company; New York: E.P. Dutton & Company, 1913), 133.

114 Churchward spends more time discussing the pyramids and their Egyptian builders in his *The Arcana of Freemasonry* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1915).

115 See Chapter 8.

original, complete, and highest form of Freemasonic knowledge, which was employed when they constructed the pyramids.

An additional Fardian concept that may have been influenced by Churchward—a man who, like both Fard and Pottenger, was devoted to exposing the “truth” that had been deceitfully hidden behind “false” knowledge—is the notion that the germ is a *component* of the atom.¹¹⁶ In his 1920 book *The Origin and Evolution of Freemasonry Connected with the Origin and Evolution of the Human Race*, Churchward proposes that within atoms there are smaller elements called ‘corpuscles,’ which have either a positive or negative magnetic polarity.¹¹⁷ Since Pottenger also discussed magnetic elements of atoms, we cannot be certain that Fard was exclusively influenced by Churchward on this topic; nevertheless we can see how by reading “books on Freemasonry and its symbolism” one could have easily appreciated some of the specific theories Fard had proposed. Similarly, if Fard had been involved with Aleister Crowley’s Masonry-derived Ordo Templi Orientis, which happened to have several Freemason members in Detroit and Chicago in the 1920s, he would have been exposed to one of the only early-twentieth-century Anglophone organizations promoting teachings used to create artificial humans, the homunculi—who either lack ‘souls’ completely or have special souls inserted into them—a concept that seems very close to Yacub’s creation of white people.¹¹⁸

Despite showing clear divergences from the mainline MSTA doctrine, Fard’s teachings on race also share a few notable similarities with those of some specific MSTA sects. As will be demonstrated in Chapter 8, a group known as

116 Albert Churchward, *The Origin and Evolution of Freemasonry Connected with the Origin and Evolution of the Human Race* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1920), 16.

117 *Ibid.*, 15–33.

118 On O.T.O. being in Detroit and Chicago at this time, see Richard Kaczynski, *Panic in Detroit: The Magician and the Motor City* (Royal Oak, MI: Blue Equinox Oasis, O.T.O., 2006) and *idem.*, *Perdurabo: The Life of Aleister Crowley*, rev. ed. (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2010), 335–54; on the O.T.O.’s homunculus teachings, see Francis King, ed., *The Secret Rituals of the O.T.O.* (London: C.W. Daniel Company, 1973), 231–39; on the homunculus in medieval magical thought—in both the European and Islamic worlds—see William R. Newman, *Promethean Ambitions: Alchemy and the Quest to Perfect Nature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), esp. 164–237. Since students of Crowley were dispersed throughout the country in the 1920s, and Crowley—who focused his proselytization on Masons—was publishing a journal, the *Equinox*, in the United States, it is possible that Fard encountered Crowley’s teachings at some point. Indeed, the known contents of Fard’s *Bible of Islamism* seem to have a Crowley ring to them. For more on Crowley, including discussions of his Islamic influences, see Kaczynski, *Perdurabo*.

the MSTIAM had NOI influences in its views on whites, but the most interesting connection is probably with Givens-El's faction. By the early 1940s, the Givens-El group was claiming that the formation of the NOI was the result of a "split in the organization"—it is probable that "organization" here refers to the original MSTA, but it might have been referring to Givens-El's group specifically.¹¹⁹ Indeed, Givens-El's faction—which appears to have been the only MSTA faction that put as much emphasis on personal cleanliness and avoiding 'European' entertainment as the NOI did—held two doctrines, apparently nearly unique in the MSTA community,¹²⁰ that were similar to ones in the NOI. These were a) identifying whites as 'devils' (in the plural form) and b) the belief that members should cut off the heads of 'devils.'¹²¹

As was explained in Chapter 5, in the MSTA under Noble Drew Ali, whites could be associated with the Devil precisely because they called themselves 'white' and African Americans 'negro,' which was equivalent to falsely claiming that whites were godly and African Americans were devilish. However, Drew Ali said that the Devil is also the 'lower self,' and that the lower self is within all people, regardless of race/'nationality.' 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"; indeed, whites who were raised by black people in black communities might not even turn out to be devils.¹²² What is distinct about Drew Ali's MSTA, 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 singular 'Devil,' and, even then, such references were extremely rare, as 'European' was the preferred term for pale-skinned people who lacked African or Asian descent. Givens-El's group, on the other hand, did use the plural 'devils,' and used this exclusively for whites, as it called African Americans who were not in that particular faction 'coolies,' the derogatory term from the period for unskilled laborers from Asia.

119 MSTA FBI file, Report, 9/21/1943, Chicago file 14-39, 29. However, at least one additional independent source made a similar claim—Jack Conroy, who studied the NOI in the late 1930s and early 1940s reported that the NOI was a secessionist group from the Detroit MSTA temple, which almost certainly did *not* have a Givens-El faction at the time; see Jack Conroy, "Memories of Arna Bontemps Friend and Collaborator," *American Libraries* 5, no. 11 (1974): 603.

120 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 MSTA.

121 MSTA FBI file, Report, 9/21/1943, Chicago file 14-39, 29.

122 "Girl Recounts Lore of Islam," *Detroit Free Press*, April 26, 1934, 1; Mohammed, *As the Light Shined*, 29-30.

As for the NOI's infamous doctrine that whites should be decapitated, it needs to be made clear, first of all, that there have been no known cases before the 1970s of either an MSTA or NOI member actually cutting the head off of any person. Second, it should be noted that this specific call was not always in the official NOI literature. When Detroit police found Fard's *Secret Ritual* in 1932, it told followers to simply "gain a victory from a devil[.] Four victories and the [Muslim] son will attain his reward" (emphasis added).¹²³ But by 1934, the ritual had been rewritten using more explicit language:

Q.—Why does Mohammed and other Moslem [*sic*] murder the devil and what is the duty of each Moslem in regards to four devils? What reward does he receive by presenting the heads of the four devils to the prophet at one time?

A.—Each Moslem is required to kill four devils and by presenting the four heads he receives his reward of a button for his button-hole and transportation to Mecca to pass a visit with his brother Mohammed.¹²⁴

Then, when reprinted as the "Lost Found Muslim Lessons," the teaching implied that Muslims should merely "murder"—not necessarily decapitate—four devils for the rewards of a button to wear on the lapel of one's coat as well as a free trip to Mecca.¹²⁵ In any event, whether using the language of general murder or decapitation, Elijah Muhammad claimed that Fard did not actually believe that a literal killing should take place; his only intention in using this command, Muhammad insisted, was to "take fear of the white man out of the hearts of the followers."¹²⁶ Admittedly, however, there is some evidence to suggest that in addition to the figurative interpretation of the command, it was also at least sometimes orally transmitted that members had the right to literally decapitate, or physically kill in other ways, devils.¹²⁷ Still, this phrase was primarily understood metaphorically; one common NOI interpretation was that 'killing' or 'cutting off the head' meant bringing a non-NOI African

123 See "Raided Temple Bares."

124 "Voodoo Catechism," 13.

125 See "Lost Found Muslim Lessons" part I. For an excerpt from the *Secret Ritual* version, see "Raided Temple Bares"; we unfortunately do not have the entire question and answer set for that question to see if the word 'murder' appears anywhere else.

126 Sahib, "Nation of Islam," 76n1.

127 "Girl Recounts Lore"; Pauline Williams FBI file, Report, 7/12/1957, Cincinnati file 100-10668, 5 and Report, 7/17/1958, Cincinnati file 100-10668, 7; Wallace Muhammad FBI file, Summary Report, 3/21/1957, Chicago file, 100-32090, 9.

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 ‘waking up’ (that is, converting) African Americans to the NOI teachings, they are effectively decapitating the Devil/devils.¹²⁸

In the MSTA—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 eighty-four states that the “head of Satan”—i.e., the Devil’s head—was “taken off [in] 1453 (Byzantine),” a reference to the Ottoman conquest of the Christian Constantinople. Satan/the Devil, as was shown above, 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 frequently talked about cutting off the heads of ‘devils,’ individuals, in the present day.¹²⁹ 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.¹³⁰ It seems possible, then, that these well-known expressions and ideas were originally in Givens-El’s MSTA faction—creatively derived from the MSTA catechism, and, as we will see in the next chapter, probably partly informed by black folk beliefs—and that they were passed on to the NOI from former MSTA members, or even Fard himself.

Who was Fard?

Unfortunately, the new evidence about Fard does not bring us significantly closer to answering key questions about his background. Although now it is almost certain that he had at least one Pashtun Muslim parent and that Fard himself was from some part of Asia, we still do not know his parents’

128 See FBI file on Joseph Gravitt, Report, 11/19/1954, Philadelphia file 100-40130, 5; Marable, *Malcolm*, 106.

129 MSTA FBI file, Report, 9/21/1943, Chicago file 14-39, 17, 38.

130 I should admit that I cannot say this with certainty because the group was not known to the FBI to use the term ‘devils’ for African Americans; see MSTA FBI file, Report, 9/21/1943, Chicago file 14-39, 17, 38.

specific origins or what occurred in Fard's life before 1904. We also still do not know where, when, why, and how exactly Fard came to read and synthesize the texts that he used for the NOI's teachings, even if we know that it is likely that this occurred in the mid-to-late 1920s after he went through several frustrating experiences in Oregon and California, and had probably encountered Islamophilic black nationalists in San Quentin.

We also now have the question of what we can learn from the fact that Fard's teachings are traceable to their wide variety of sources. At the very least, this fact suggests that Fard was a unique person. His strange mix of interests would have been extraordinarily rare at the time; in fact, there is no other known figure from the period who could claim to have in-depth knowledge of all the various topics with which Fard was familiar. Very few esotericist Masons were knowledgeable of the details of white Christian fundamentalists' ideas; probably fewer Christian fundamentalists knew in great detail white esotericist Freemasonic concepts; it was extremely rare for people who did not have South or Central Asian roots to be familiar with the word 'Shabazz' and other regionally-unique terms used by Fard; almost no white people and relatively few black people knew anything about the MSTA; and, although we do know that some MSTA members were familiar with white esoteric ideas, we know of no evidence that any MSTA member had in-depth knowledge of white fundamentalism. This suggests that Fard was probably a highly intelligent person with an appetite for books on esotericism and Christian millennialism who, having probably come from a mixed Central or South Asian background, readily moved across the color line, and possibly had been a member of more than one of the various movements with which his teachings were associated. Nevertheless, despite eighty-plus years having elapsed since Fard left the NOI for the final time, we still can say with certainty very little else about this very eccentric man and what led to him creating his influential Islamic organization. All that we know is that, as we will now see, in the early 1930s he personally, with the help of his leading minister, Elijah Muhammad, was able to convince hundreds—possibly thousands—of African Americans that his odd, eclectic doctrines were true.

The Nation of Islam

When a person hears a very strange teaching, if he or she does not automatically reject it, the person will tend to compare the new teaching with information that he or she already possesses. This seems to have been the process that occurred among black Detroiters who encountered Fard's teachings in the 1930s. Many of these people had not known the claim that prior to being slaves African Americans had been Muslims, and few had heard anything as eccentric as the numerous esoteric and science fiction-like ideas Fard had interwoven in his doctrines, yet they still found something very convincing in what he said. Some early NOI Muslims have reported that what drew them to Fard was that he gave black folk a history for which they could be proud—yet Drew Ali and others had done this too without obtaining the kind of popularity and influence over black culture that the Nation would eventually achieve.¹ It seems, then, that there was something else helping to unite African Americans with Fard's message. In this chapter it is proposed that Detroit's African Americans were primed to receive Fard's teachings by three related phenomena: their experience of and response to racism in the North and South; the religious reterritorializations of the UNIA and the MSTA; and, most importantly, knowledge of black folk traditions, including certain key hidden transcripts, that had similarities with Fard's stories. Without these three phenomena, the NOI doctrines, like those of many other Islam promoters from before and after 1920, would not have sufficiently penetrated—that is, reterritorialized—the African American religious market to create a powerful new movement.

Black Detroit *circa* 1930

When Fard arrived in Detroit's African American slums, he encountered a population under oppression and in distress. Despite Michigan having set as law its own Civil Rights Act in 1885, prejudice was rampant and violent. A 1926 study of the condition of the city's African American community discovered, for instance, that local blacks were being killed much more often and being

1 Mary'yam T. Muhammad, Tauheed B. Muhammad, and Burnsteen Mohammed, *A Step in the Right Direction: The Missing Link* ([Detroit]: Pioneers Publishing Committee, 1993), 28.

treated much more brutally by police than whites, even though, despite what the officers thought, African Americans were generally less violent towards the police than white people.² Detroit's police force, the study further showed, was in fact more violent towards blacks than the police forces in most other major cities, killing almost five times more African Americans in 1925 than the police in New York, where the black population was over twice as large.³ This clear bias had taken its toll; by 1926 it was a common belief among African Americans in Detroit that the officers assigned to black areas were largely made up of racist Southerners, and even Ku Klux Klan members.⁴ In spite of the local government's attempts to curb this and other forms of discrimination, police violence and blatant prejudicial acts in business and housing continued through the rest of the 1920s and into the 1930s.⁵

Tensions in the city were running very high generally. In the second half of the 1920s, Detroit had dozens of bombings and attempted bombings—committed largely by white perpetrators—and, perhaps in response, residents

2 Detroit Bureau of Governmental Research; Detroit Mayor's Interracial Committee, *The Negro in Detroit* ([Detroit]: Detroit Bureau of Governmental Research, 1926), Section IX Crime, 22–38.

3 *Ibid.*, 38.

4 *Ibid.*, 38.

5 Because the topic of Detroit police discrimination during this period has not been thoroughly studied before, I am listing here several relevant newspaper articles to document this claim: "Thug Suspect Shot Trying to Elude Police," *Detroit Free Press*, January 20, 1926, 1, 2; "Officer Kills Drug Suspect," *Detroit Free Press*, January 21, 1926, 5; "Detective Shoots Captures Suspect," *Detroit Free Press*, February 15, 1926, 8; "Negro Is Killed in Liquor Raid," *Detroit Free Press*, February 18, 1926, 7; "Policeman Slays Suspect in Alley," *Detroit Free Press*, February 25, 1926, 9; "Police Discrimination under Fire in Detroit," *St. Louis Argus*, April 23, 1926, 1; "Detroit Police Slay Innocent Colored Man," *St. Louis Argus*, May 7, 1926, 1; "Detroit Police Shoot Negroes," *Chicago Enterprise*, August 7, 1926, 2; "Officer's Victim Had Police Record," *Detroit News*, January 29, 1927, 11; "Paul Dennie Comments on Inter-Racial Committee," *Detroit Independent*, June 10, 1927, 4; "Read and Think," *Detroit Independent*, October 7, 1927, 5; "Suspect Slain by Policemen," *Detroit News*, February 25, 1928, 16; "Officer Kills an Auto Thief," *Detroit News*, March 1, 1928, 48; "Driver Slain; Thugs Blamed," *Detroit Free Press*, December 21, 1929, 4; "Detroit Hurt by Police from So.," *St. Louis Argus*, January 24, 1930, 13; "Policeman Kills Thug During Gun Battle," *Detroit Free Press*, June 7, 1930, [9?]; "Patrolman Kills Escaping Suspect," *Detroit Free Press*, July 7, 1930, 7; "Thug Suspect Shot Fleeing," *Detroit Free Press*, August 11, 1930, 4; "Police Brutality Keeps Detroit Negroes in Fear," *St. Louis Argus*, October 24, 1930, 3. One of the reasons the police had a more negative attitude towards blacks was that some whites who committed crimes dressed up as African Americans to hide their identity; e.g., "Trailed, Thug Is Found Removing Negro Disguise," *Detroit Free Press*, December 21, 1929, 4.

were arming themselves more heavily than any other city populace in the country.⁶ It is not surprising, then, that more overt forms of anti-black organizing and violence were also part of life for African Americans in Michigan during this period. In April 1927, two black churches in the Detroit suburb of River Rouge were burned down in response to those churches' having taken active roles in recent election campaigns.⁷ In May 1928, a bomb exploded in New Mount Zion Negro Baptist Church, which had recently moved into a white neighborhood, and a year later another bombing attempt on the church was made.⁸ Then, in the following October, a nine-family black apartment house was bombed, apparently motivated, again, by anti-black political views.⁹ It is likely that at least some of these crimes were committed by members of the KKK or similar groups. The Klan had gained a major presence in the city by the time of the Ossian Sweet race riots in 1925, and although the group soon lost thousands of members after a failed election campaign that year, desire for racist organizing remained.¹⁰ In 1928, as remnants of the order tried to rejuvenate their movement in the city,¹¹ 4,000 former Klansmen established a local branch of a new group, the Knights of the Great Forest, which forbade the wearing of masks but was still committed to carrying out, as one news report relayed, "the spirit and principles of the Ku Klux Klan."¹² By the early 1930s additional KKK-connected groups had been formed, such as the SYMWA club and the notorious Black Legion, which was verifiably responsible for multiple murders of

6 "Figures Given on Terrorism," *Detroit Free Press*, April 16, 1928, 1, 2; "Detroiters Are Heavily Armed," *St. Louis Argus*, December 23, 1927, 9; "35,000 Pistols Listed by the Detroit Police," *Detroit News*, February 16, 1928, 41. So many Detroiters were getting guns in the mail that the city had to put a ban on the phenomenon; see "Mail Ban on Guns Is Effective Tonight," *Detroit News*, May 9, 1927, 2.

7 "2 Negro Churches Burn in River Rouge," *Detroit News*, April 8, 1927, 2.

8 "Bomb Shatters Church; Rocks Neighborhood," *Detroit Free Press*, May 29, 1928, 1; "Church Blast Quiz Is Futile," *Detroit Free Press*, May 30, 1928, 11; "Jurors to Probe Church Bombing," *Detroit Free Press*, June 2, 1928, 9; "Church Blast Plot Is Nipped," *Detroit Free Press*, August 1, 1929, 1.

9 "Detroit Bomb Drives Tenants into Streets," *Afro-American*, October 19, 1929, 5.

10 Kenneth T. Jackson, *The Ku Klux Klan in the City 1915-1930* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), 142; "Police Invade Headquarters of Ku Kluxers," *Detroit Free Press*, January 7, 1926, 1, 10; "Bills Unpaid; Lions Are Held," *Detroit Free Press*, January 10, 1926, 7; "5,000 Kluxers Stage Parade and Barbeque," *Detroit Free Press*, June 1, 1926, 15.

11 "Klan again Meets, Reporters Not in," *Detroit Free Press*, August 22, 1928, 4.

12 "Klansman Unmask and Join New Order," *Detroit News*, February 23, 1928, 39; "Klan Unmasks to Reorganize," *Detroit News*, February 22, 1928, 1.

Detroit blacks; at the same time, other racist activities in the state, including a lynching party in Ann Arbor in 1931, continued to make headlines.¹³

Fed up with this treatment, and perhaps inspired by the local UNIA division's militarization in the early 1920s,¹⁴ Detroit's African Americans began to fight back. In September 1927, when a plainclothes policeman pulled a black woman out of her Hastings Street house for merely yelling at him from a window, an enraged crowd gathered and started beating the officer.¹⁵ Then, in the following March, as we have seen, one of the MSTA members had a shootout with police when they attempted to enter the group's temple after they heard reports of guns in the building.¹⁶ As the Depression set in, more and more clashes with police and other whites were erupting. July 1931 saw two black-led eviction riots, one near-riot, and an interracial melee; and in August there were two more interracial fights, including one in which 150 whites battled with fifty blacks at a playground baseball game.¹⁷ Frustrations smoldered until late August 1932, when yet another riot erupted after police tried to serve a court case judgment to a black candy store owner; the ensuing brawl left one dead and two injured.¹⁸ Then, just days later, when an unarmed black man was fatally shot by

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- 13 "Judgment against Klan Body Upheld," *Detroit Free Press*, July 17, 1930, 5; "3 Killers in Prison for Life: Tear Gas Routs Lynching Party," *Detroit Free Press*, August 14, 1931, 1, 2, 3; "US Men Can't Eat in Local Restaurant," *Tribune-Independent* (Detroit), April 28, 1934, 1, 3; "P.O. Workers Denied Food in Cafeterias," *Tribune-Independent* (Detroit), May 5, 1934, 1, 5; "Café Owner Must Serve Negroes or Be Prosecuted," *Tribune-Independent* (Detroit), May 12, 1934, 1, 8. On the Black Legion, see George Morris, *The Black Legion Rides* (New York: Workers Library Publishers, 1936); Black Legion FBI file; B.J. Widick, *Detroit: City of Race and Class Violence*, rev. ed. (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989), 66; Morris Janowitz, "Black Legions on the March," in *America in Crisis: Fourteen Crucial Episodes in American History*, ed. Daniel Aaron (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1952), 305–25; and the numerous newspaper articles on the group that ran in the *Detroit Free Press* in late May 1936.
- 14 See Marcus Garvey FBI file, Report, 3/2/1923, Philadelphia file.
- 15 "2 Shot as Mob Beats Officer," *Detroit News*, September 28, 1927, 1; "Police Battle Negro Rioters," *Detroit Free Press*, September 28, 1927, 14.
- 16 See Chapter 5.
- 17 "Hurled Brick Hits Officer," *Detroit Free Press*, July 10, 1931, 1; "15 Are Arrested in Eviction Riot," *Detroit Free Press*, July 18, 1931, 2; "Trio Wounded, One May Die after Knife, Gun Battle," *Detroit Free Press*, July 22, 1931, 1; "Near-Riot Jails Seven," *Detroit Free Press*, July 25, 1931, 4; "200 in Riot; 8 Injured," *Detroit Free Press*, August 6, 1931, 1; "Riots Rock Detroit," *St. Louis Argus*, August 14, 1931, 1.
- 18 "Constable Kills Rioter in Store," *Detroit Free Press*, September 1, 1932, 1; "Officials Move to Avert Riots," *Detroit Free Press*, September 2, 1932, 5; "Seeks Inquest in Riot Death," *Detroit Free Press*, September 3, 1932, [8?].

a policeman—an act for which, although he was later acquitted on the criminal charges, the officer was successfully sued in civil court—tensions escalated even more.¹⁹

The stress of their situation disillusioned Detroiters so much that many began looking for solutions to their problems outside the church, their traditional outlet. Some African Americans at the time were considering emigration, either to Africa or through what was known as the ‘back-to-farm’ movement,²⁰ but several other Detroiters—blacks and whites alike—looked to the realm of non-mainstream religious beliefs and practices. The city’s millennialist Christians, for instance, were making strides among both races,²¹ but in the late 1920s and early 1930s Detroit was particularly notable for being flooded with various types of mystics and leaders of esoteric sects. As a major metropolitan center, the city hosted some of the most popular esoteric and non-Christian movements of the era, such as those of Theosophy, Rosicrucianism, the Baha’i faith, and Aleister Crowley’s Ordo Templi Orientis.²² There were, in addition, several small, mostly local groups, like Rev. Eli J. Forsythe’s Cosmic Temple; Mr. Ross’s

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- 19 “Wound Kills New Police Gun Victim,” *Detroit Free Press*, September 4, 1932, 2; “‘Third Degree’ Inquiry Called,” *Detroit Free Press*, September 7, 1932, 1; “Police Slaying Probe Sept. 16,” *Detroit Free Press*, September 8, 1932, 1; “Inquest in Fatal Riot to Be Held on Monday,” *Detroit Free Press*, September 8, 1932, 2; “Detroit Has a Racial Flareup after Slaying and Beating by Officer,” *St. Louis Argus*, September 9, 1932, 8; “Third Degree Curb Ordered,” *Detroit Free Press*, September 15, 1932, 1; “Jury Supports Police Slaying,” *Detroit Free Press*, September 17, 1932, 4; “Murdered Man’s Widow to Get \$5,000 from Killer Cop,” *Tribune-Independent* (Detroit), April 7, 1934, 1.
- 20 “Another Back to Africa Movement Starts in Detroit,” *Negro World*, June 25, 1932, 2; “Race Gets Wealth in Its Farms,” *St. Louis Argus*, June 20, 1930, 12; “Sees Negro Jobless Aid in Back-to-Farm Move,” *St. Louis Argus*, August 29, 1930, 6; “Back-to-Farm Movement Seen as Only Hope for Negro by ‘Gloomy’ Dean,” *St. Louis Argus*, September 9, 1932, 6; “Start Movement to Get Negro Back to Farm,” *St. Louis Argus*, September 9, 1932, 6; “The Negro Turns to Cooperative Farming,” *St. Louis Argus*, June 23, 1933, 6; “Back-to-the-Farm Movement Is Seen as Sentimentalism,” *St. Louis Argus*, May 11, 1934, 6; “Mo. Farm Project Points to Success,” *St. Louis Argus*, August 26, 1938, 1, 14.
- 21 One can see occasional references to the Armageddon in the Saturday church sections of Detroit’s newspapers. For Detroit’s black Jehovah’s Witnesses, see Saunders, “White Devils,” 34–35.
- 22 Over the years, Theosophy was frequently, if erratically, mentioned in the Saturday religion sections of the *Detroit News* and the *Detroit Free Press*. The Rosicrucian Fellowship held lectures in March 1927 (see its advertisements in the *Detroit News* that month) and AMORC advertised at least once in the *Detroit Free Press*, on June 7, 1930. On the Baha’i faith, see “Bahai Representative Lectures Here Tuesday,” *Detroit News*, February 18, 1928, 10. On Crowley’s group, see Kaczynski, *Panic in Detroit*.

millennial Astrological Studio; and Prof. William Estep's Super Mind Science Temple, which, before its Oriental Order of the Magi-promoting leader was charged with insurance fraud, sold rare books on Indian yoga.²³

Yoga and Indian mysticism generally were in fact fairly popular in Detroit at the time, with numerous white and South Asian men—or at least men claiming to be South Asian—coming into town to lecture on the topics.²⁴ These individuals were joined by a wide array of healers, fortune tellers, 'gypsies,' and conjure doctors,²⁵ most of which, as far as is known, focused on white clients, although some apparently were tied to the African American community. There was, for instance, the white fortune teller Madame Wonder, who employed the conjure formula of nine days and nights for magical practices; the black hoodoo doctors Doctor K.W. Pace and Professor DeWitt, who were both arrested for attempting to vend their conjure cures; Mme. Marie E. Speedwell, who led the Occult Science Temple that was featured in Detroit's black press; and George R. Wilson, who founded the local branch of the Universal Brotherhood, which supposedly taught the spiritual practices of Mahatma Gandhi and claimed to have 300 Detroit members, among which were South Asians, Greeks, Arabs,

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- 23 Cosmic Temple: *Detroit Free Press*, June 14, 1930, 8. Astrological Studio: *Detroit Free Press*, February [9?], 1929, 9 and May 17, 1930, 13. Super Mind Science Temple: Advertisements for Estep's lectures in Detroit initially ran in the *Detroit Free Press* from February through March 1927, and began appearing again in May 1930, at which time it was announced that he had set up the headquarters of his movement in Detroit the previous year (see "Temple to Have 1st Anniversary," *Detroit Free Press*, May 31, 1930, 8) and had started 'schools' in Chicago and Minneapolis ("Prof. Estep Returns for Lecture Series," *Detroit Free Press*, May 17, 1930, 13). In July, a warrant was issued for Estep and the rest of the temple's leadership, and the Detroit group seems to have collapsed ("Supermind Cult Head Accused as Racketeer," *Detroit Free Press*, July 4, 1930, 1, 3); by 1931 Estep would reappear in New York, where he promoted the OOM, and he appears to have remained active there at least through 1933; see his advertisements in the *New York Sun*, e.g. on May 9, 1931, 37. The rare yoga book Estep sold was the little-known 1884 book by Swami Sabhapaty, entitled *OM: The Cosmic Psychological Spiritual Philosophy and Science of Communion with and Absorption in the Holy and Divine Infinite Spirit or Yedhantha Siva Raja Yoga Brumha Gnyana Anubuthi*—which Estep published as *Esoteric Cosmic Yogi Science or Works of the World Teacher*.
- 24 See the advertisements for the following individuals: R. Sitarama Rao (*Detroit News*, March 10 and 17, 1928), Yogi Wassan (*Detroit News*, April 14 and 16, 1928), A. William Goetz (*Detroit Free Press*, May 31, 1930), and Rishi Gherwal (*Detroit Free Press*, August 2, 9, 15, and 22, 1930). The famous Yogananda even had a Yoga Center in Detroit; see "Hindu to Initiate," *Detroit News*, March 26, 1927, 10.
- 25 Numerous stories about these individuals, usually when they were arrested for something, ran in the local papers during this period.

and African Americans.²⁶ African Americans may have even heard a speech by the famous Swami Yogananda when he was hosted by Dusé Mohamed Ali's Universal Islamic Society in 1926 for that year's Muslim holiday (*eid*) festivities.²⁷

Occasionally, Islamic or near-Islamic themes popped up in the city's mystical scene. For example, Crowley's infamous Ordo Templi Orientis occult order transmitted several Islamic-like elements—the outcome of multiple Islam-linked influences on the organization's creators.²⁸ The most popular of the Islam-themed mystic organizations in America in the 1920s—the Sufi movement of Inayat Khan—also had a Detroit branch and ran in the city a Metaphysical Book Shop, one of the only stores of its kind in the region.²⁹ Although the Sufis do not seem to have had any black followers at the time, their popularity in the press,³⁰ the work of other mystics, and Dusé probably having

26 “Planets, the Made-to-Order Variety, Very Expensive,” *Detroit News*, August 7, 1928, 5; “‘Doctor’ Admits Fraud by Mails,” *Detroit Free Press*, January 31, 1926, 4; “Incense Incenses Inhalers; 3 Held,” *Detroit Free Press*, July 14, 1931, 5; “Occult Temple Plans Demonstration,” *Tribune-Independent* (Detroit), June 9, 1934, 1; “Local Group Teaches Mahatma Ghandi [*sic*] Methods,” *Tribune-Independent* (Detroit), April 29, 1933, 1.

27 “Universal Islamic Society” (advertisement), *Detroit Free Press*, June 19, 1926, 4.

28 Crowley himself had apparently taken an interest in Islam during the early 1900s while in Egypt and he was also associated with the prominent white British Muslim Mason William Quilliam, who, with Crowley, was a member of the Islam-influenced Ancient and Primitive Rite. Besides this, the O.T.O.'s possible founder, Karl Kellner, had his own Islamic influences, having apparently been a student of the Islam-influenced Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor/Light, a traveler through Asia and the Middle East, an initiate of ‘Eastern’ adepts, and a believer in the Eliphaz Levi-promoted theory that the medieval Knights Templar—whose teachings the O.T.O. claimed to be reviving—had received their occult knowledge from Muslim followers of Saladin. It was primarily because of the latter reason that the O.T.O.'s ritual contained references to Saladin, an ‘Emir,’ and a ‘Wazir,’ as well as a number of Arabic phrases and other references to Islam-themed figures and images. On Crowley's connections to Islam, see Kaczynski, *Perdurabo*, *passim.*; on the Hermetic Brotherhood's Islamic elements, see Bowen, *HCTIUS*, 1:51–87, 97–105; on Quilliam and the Ancient and Primitive Rite's ties to Islam, see *idem.*, “Quilliam and the Rise”; on Kellner and the O.T.O., see Kaczynski, *Forgotten Templars*, esp. 243–51 and King, *Secret Rituals*, *passim.*; on the Templars' possible connections to Muslims, see Michael James Alexander Stewart and Walid Amine Salhab, *The Knights Templar of the Middle East: The Hidden History of the Islamic Origins of Freemasonry* (San Francisco: Weiser Books, 2006).

29 On Inayat Khan's movement in during this period, see Bowen, *HCTIUS*, 1:213–24. The group's bookstore was mentioned in an advertisement in the *Detroit News* on March 12, 1927, 11.

30 Several articles about the Detroit movement ran on March 10 and 11, 1923 and in late January/early February 1926.

built a relationship with the group, almost certainly helped spread its mystical Islamic ideas to the local African American community.³¹ But beyond Inayat Khan, there was also the ‘spiritualist’ Elias Mohammed Abraham who, as will be shown in Chapter 8, brought Islamic influences to Father Hurley’s Detroit-based spiritual church; the Prophet A. Levi, who ran his fortune telling business on Hastings Street in 1928 and claimed to have come from the “mystic caves of Africa, India, and Egypt”; a Madame Shetonika Beera, who referred to Allah in her mystical prescriptions; the ‘Great Koran,’ a crystal seer who performed primarily for white audiences; the white psychic Madam Flora, who set up her Arabic Village Tea Room to cater to local African Americans; and a Sufi Akbar, who advertised his magic, oils, and blessings in the city’s black newspaper.³² The intention of most of these latter individuals was rarely to start an actual movement; indeed, one newspaper from the period reported that Detroit’s several “high priestesses and priests of Allah, [who were] clad in pseudo Oriental costumes” and claimed to be able to read fortunes, were focused solely on swindling African Americans.³³ Still, black Detroiters were also occasionally coming into contact with sincere Muslim leaders like Dusé, members of the city’s large Muslim immigrant population, the small groups of Ahmadi and Sunni converts, and the hundreds of dispersed local Moors. Increasingly, then, Islam was gaining prominence in black Detroiters’ minds.³⁴

The Reception of Fard’s Teachings

It was within this context that Fard, a dark-skinned, but non-African-looking clothing peddler arrived on the scene preaching his strange mix of esoteric,

31 My comment on Dusé is based partly on the fact that his group and the Sufis advertised in the local newspapers at the same time; see the *Detroit Free Press*, June 19, 1926, 4. Dusé probably also knew of Inayat Khan’s movement because the Sufi had been a prominent figure in the London Muslim community in the 1910s—even Quilliam, a man who was undoubtedly a friend of Dusé, was recorded as knowing Khan.

32 “Prophet Knows All—Except about Jail,” *Detroit News*, August 9, 1928, 21; “And They Evict Parole Convicts Sans ‘Gats!’” *Detroit Free Press*, January 31, 1926, 10; Ella H. McCormick, “The Reel Players,” *Detroit Free Press*, November 15, 1928, 30; “Mystic Fails among Whites; Tries Negroes,” *St. Louis Argus*, February 14, 1930, 8; and see the “Spiritual Meetings” advertisements in the *Tribune Independent* from October through December 1934.

33 “Voodoo Slayer Admits Plotting Death of Judges,” *Detroit Free Press*, November 22, 1932, 1, 3.

34 On African American conversion to Sunni Islam and contact with Dusé, see Chapter 9.

millennialist, race-focused Islamic doctrines. Yet, despite what appears to have been a favorable environment, Fard did not have immediate success. For the rest of the year after his appearance in July 1930, Fard only gained a small following for what was called at the time the 'Allah Temple of Islam,' and he did not have a regular meeting place.³⁵ A number of pieces of evidence tell us that Fard, perhaps in an attempt to boost interest in his ideas, started portraying his movement as in line with Drew Ali's MSTA. We know, for instance, that he used the term 'Asiatic,' and, just as Drew Ali had done, he made Mecca a significant place in African American history. Fard also sometimes claimed, like several of the MSTA leaders under Drew Ali, a North African connection, and apparently told at least some that he was from Morocco specifically.³⁶ Male members in the NOI under Fard wore, just as they had in the MSTA, red fezzes, although Fard's fezzes were somewhat different from the Moors' because they had on the front a star and crescent moon—this symbol was important for the MSTA as well, but whereas the MSTA's version had a right-facing crescent moon, the NOI's faced left, plus the MSTA did not put this symbol on its fezzes.³⁷ Another important clue that Fard was intentionally appealing to the Moors is that although to replace their 'slave names' (another MSTA concept) NOI members were often given as 'original names' traditional Arabic-Islamic names, many early NOI members possessed the MSTA surname of Bey.³⁸ Furthermore, when,

35 Wallace D. Fard FBI file, Report, Chicago 100-9129, 9/30/1942, 11. That Fard did indeed obtain some followers that year is confirmed by several personal testimonies in Muhammad et al., *Step in the Right*.

36 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.

37 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.

38 "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 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.

after a few years, the movement was brought to Chicago, ground zero of the MSTA, some NOI members explicitly identified themselves as ‘Moors,’ and, as we will see, the group there may have even used Drew Ali’s *Holy Koran of the Moorish Science Temple of America*. As for the Detroit group, it is relatively well-documented that many of Fard’s early followers, including the first people Fard appointed as his ministers, Abdul Mohammed and Othman Ali, were former MSTA members, and, according to some reports, the Detroit NOI was originally a secessionist faction from the local MSTA temple.³⁹ The evidence strongly suggests, then, that former MSTA members served as the main membership foundation of the Nation. Indeed, since, as was pointed out in Chapter 2, as a general rule it is fairly difficult for new organizations to develop without having their core membership come from preexisting organized communities, all evidence points to the MSTA being that core membership for the early NOI.

Still, Detroit’s Moorish population alone, which probably came to, due to the Great Schism, no more than one thousand, cannot account for the phenomenal growth that Fard’s movement appears to have achieved in the city, where by late 1932 the NOI was said to have gained four to eight thousand registered members.⁴⁰ Interestingly, according to Beynon, former Garveyites were probably not as significant of a source of recruits as they seem to have

39 MSTA FBI file, Report, Detroit 100–6603, 4; “Nation of Islam Deserted,” 41; Beynon, “Voodoo Cult,” 898; Lincoln, *Black Muslims*, 22, 259n40; Sahib, “Nation of Islam,” 91, 96; MSTA FBI file, Report, 9/21/1943, Chicago file 14–39, 29; Conroy, “Memories of Arna Bontemps,” 603. It is likely that 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. Another early leader with a possible MSTA background was Cornelius Bey; see “500 Join March to Ask Voodoo Kings’ Freedom,” *Detroit Free Press*, November 25, 1932, 1.

40 “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

been for many of the Islamic movements that gained followers in the 1920s.⁴¹ Neither were the creation of voting blocs or businesses attractive aspects for potential members, as the early NOI was apparently not involved in either of these programs that had been so beneficial for the growth of the MSTA and the UNIA. Nevertheless, NOI converts did see some practical benefits of conversion. Many discovered, for instance, that by joining the movement they gained a deep sense of personal happiness and improved health,⁴² and others apparently appreciated having access to black-led education after the group set up its 'University of Islam' elementary schools—an institution reminiscent of Garvey's Liberty University—in Detroit in 1932 and Chicago in 1934.⁴³ Evidence suggests, furthermore, that after embracing Islam and starting to follow its dis-

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- Detroit Police estimated 5,000; see Beynon, "Voodoo Cult," 897n10. It should be noted, too, that one FBI memorandum states that the NOI only had 700 members at the time (see Memorandum, [redacted] to SAC, Detroit, 12/11/1957, 3, Fard FBI file), and a search of Detroit's 1932 city directory for NOI surnames produces few than one hundred; although we cannot take this as representative since we know that there were numerous members of the MSTA in Detroit, but only thirty-two total Els and Beys appear in the same directory.
- 41 Beynon makes this claim in "Voodoo Cult," 898; Lincoln (in *Black Muslims*, 22, 259n40) challenges this claim, but he is basing his assertion on his observations made in, apparently, mostly Atlanta and Chicago in the late 1950s, where and when the NOI was a very different movement. It is worth noting that out of the hundreds of conversion testimonials that appeared in the NOI's newspaper *Muhammad Speaks* and its successor, the *Bilalian News*, fewer than half a dozen of the writers claimed to be former Garveyites (I only spotted three—Hubert X, in the June 5, 1964 issue; Carl 2X Acker, in the February 13, 1970 issue; and Abdul Azeez, in the March 26, 1976 issue—but I may have missed a few). It should also be mentioned that there is a rumor that Fard found his first large and attentive audience when he preached outside of a Detroit UNIA meeting hall that Elijah Muhammad was attending; however the veracity of this claim is unconfirmed; see Adeyemi Ademola, "Nation of Islam Deserted," *African Mirror* (August–September 1979): 37. In addition, the contested claims about Muhammad himself being a former member of the UNIA, I have only found one reliable reference to an ex-Garveyite who joined the early NOI in Detroit; see SA [redacted] to SA, Detroit, 11/6/1959, 2, NOI FBI file.
- 42 John Mohammed, "A Happy Moslem," *Final Call to Islam* 1, no. 3, August 25, 1934, 4; John Mohammed, "To the Young Asiatics of North America," *Final Call to Islam* 1, no. 4, September 1, 1934, 2; John Ali, "Editorial [IV]," *Final Call to Islam* 1, no. 4, September 1, 1934, 3; Burnsteen Sharrieff, "The Dangerousness of Overweight," *Final Call to Islam* 1, no. 4, September 1, 1934, 3; Wali Mohammed, "Health through Proper Living," *Final Call to Islam* 1, no. 4, September 1, 1934, 6.
- 43 For detailed information on the early Universities of Islam, see Ayesha Nadirah Rashed, "The Role of the Muslim School as an Alternative to Special Education for Bilalian Children Labeled as Deviant" (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 1977), 51–62.

ciplined lifestyle,⁴⁴ many Muslims obtained relatively good jobs, purchased nicer homes, and bought higher-quality clothing, furniture, and automobiles.⁴⁵ In addition, the NOI's men were involved in a paramilitary auxiliary, the Fruit of Islam (FOI), in which they were trained, apparently by Muslims who were army veterans, in military tactics and were assigned to guard the temple and its members.⁴⁶ It is likely that the FOI was modeled directly on the UNIA's African Legions and police force and, just as the Legions had been for Garvey's movement, this part of the NOI was especially attractive for African Americans who feared anti-black violence from whites.⁴⁷

There is, however, another factor that may help to explain the enormous popularity of the early NOI—a level of popularity that the NOI's practical benefits alone may not have been able to secure. Fard's teachings, particularly as interpreted by his 'Minister of Islam,' Elijah Muhammad,⁴⁸ resonated deeply with many African Americans—so much so that it is likely that many saw his

44 The WPA discovered that there was a long list of requirements for the Muslims and their temples; see Dolinar, *Negro in Illinois*, 206.

45 Beynon, "Voodoo Cult," 905–06.

46 Beynon, "Voodoo Cult," 902; Medina Mohammad, *The Pathway of Islam in North America* (n.p.: n.p., 2014), 8; Patrick Griffin, *Philadelphia's 'Black Mafia': A Social and Political History* (Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2003), 183–85. Beynon reports that the group used firearms in its early days, but this may be inaccurate given that in all of the battles with police in the early years, guns were not reported to have been used by the Muslims. In any case, by the 1950s the FOI was known precisely for the fact that it did not carry firearms and Elijah Muhammad was claiming that Fard himself had instructed the Muslims not to use any weapons. On the latter point, see Elijah Muhammad, *Police Brutality* (Atlanta, GA: Messenger Elijah Muhammad Propagation Society, [1993?]), 6–8.

47 A former Garveyite who joined the NOI provided one of the rare accounts of African Legion members running 'patrols' that were similar to what the FOI did; see Omar, "Former Garveyite."

48 According to Clegg (in his *Original Man*, 23), Fard made Muhammad the NOI's 'Supreme Minister.' However, in the NOI's 1934 newspaper, the *Final Call to Islam*, while Muhammad is clearly the group's leading minister, his title is listed in the masthead as "Minister of Islam in North America," which is consistent with what Beynon ("Voodoo Cult," 902) reports as the title of the head minister. In fact, it seems that Muhammad is the only NOI official with a title of 'minister.' The other officials in the Temple People seem to have been called 'Laborers,' 'Investigators,' and other titles. Prior to the schisms, for instance, Othman/Ugan Ali—who is referred to as a 'minister' in historical writings from the 1950s and later—was officially referred to only as 'teacher.' Because, however, I have not found evidence from the pre-1935 period that the word 'minister' was *not* used for anyone else, I have retained the use of the term 'minister' for Othman Ali, which helps maintain conceptual consistency with previous scholars.

doctrines as confirming beliefs they already held. In fact, it seems that Fard or Muhammad had probably, like Noble Drew Ali, intentionally shaped the teachings to emphasize their connections with black folk traditions, especially those traditions that emphasized protest against white oppression.⁴⁹ Indeed, some of these traditions, as we will see, were deeply reflective of the slave folk perspective, and most likely had been transmitted to the Muslims from their formerly-enslaved grandparents and other relatives; and in the case of older converts—we know of at least a few Muslims who were born as far back as the mid-1880s—their own parents may have raised them with these teachings.⁵⁰ But even when new converts could not consciously identify the precise similarities between the Nation's doctrines and the folk knowledge they had received in their childhood, Fard's concepts had, as one prominent Muslim would later put it, "the ring of truth."⁵¹

It is noteworthy in this regard that Fard rarely converted members of the city's black middle class, who would have looked down on many traditional folk beliefs. According to multiple sources, most early NOI members were recent migrants from the rural South who were now unemployed and living on public welfare, most had very little education, and some were completely illiterate.⁵² They were, in other words, the true urban folk, former peasants who had become the *lumpenproletariat*, and as such, they were the members of the Northern black population most likely to have retained black folk traditions, especially those that communicated protest against both white supremacy and black middle-class social ambitions. And, as explained in the introduction to this volume, even African Americans who were not consciously aware of the black folk tradition would have been almost naturally attracted to such themes,

49 After leaving the NOI, Malcolm X, who was very close to Muhammad, insisted that Muhammad had knowingly crafted his teachings to reach the black masses, and that Muhammad was not naively convinced of the truth of Fard's message; see Malcolm X, *The Diary of Malcolm X El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz 1964*, ed. Herb Boyd and Ilyasah Al-Shabazz (Chicago: Third World Press, 2013), 77.

50 See Muhammad et al., *Step in the Right, passim* and *Muslim Journal*, June 22, 1990, 14, 15; May 22, 1992, 14.

51 Thomas Hauser, *Muhammad Ali: His Life and Times* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991), 91.

52 Beynon, "Voodoo Cult," 900, 905; Elijah Muhammad, "Nation of Islam Offers Hearst \$100,000 to Prove Charge: Beware of Phony Claims," *Muhammad Speaks*, August 16, 1963, 1, 3; Wali Mohammed, "The Educational Department of Islam," *Final Call to Islam* 1, no. 1, August 11, 1934, 2; Burnsteen Sharrieff Mohammed, *I Am Burnsteen Sharrieff Mohammed Reformer and Secretary to Master W.D.F. Mohammed ... and These Are Some of My Experiences* (n.p.: n.p., 2011), [2]; Miram S. Dillon, "The Islam Cult in Detroit," *Compass Needle* 2 (October 1935): 11–14, 35; Muhammad et al., *Step in the Right*.

as the black folk tradition developed out of a mix of the shared experiences and cultural knowledge to which most African Americans, but especially the lumpen, would have had access. Once a critical number of individuals had accepted the NOI teachings—and these were most likely Moors, who were themselves often from the lowest ranks of the black community—then Fard's doctrines would have been legitimized among Detroit's black folk, leading to many people looking at his teachings through their folk lenses, which Fard and Muhammad probably encouraged through their molding of the Nation's doctrines in their lectures.

One of the major elements of the NOI's teachings that has clear parallels with some of the beliefs we know to have been held by African Americans since at least the late decades of the slave era is the theme of whites using deception to enslave and oppress blacks in North America. In fact, as pointed out in Chapter 1, this belief was held by many slaves specifically with regards to whites' use of Christianity and the Bible. A number of enslaved people, and at least some of their descendants—particularly after Garvey, who may have himself been influenced by old slave traditions, latched onto this idea—looked upon the Bible in a way very similar to that which the NOI endorsed: the Bible was, in their view, a slaveholding document. As will be recalled, there were three different perspectives on the issue during slavery: some slaves believed that the Bible had absolutely no divine connection; some believed that there was a true Bible, but that this was not the book whites were using; and others adhered to the idea that the majority of the Bible was true, but the slaveholding parts should be rejected. The last of these views was probably the most typical, and seems to have perhaps even been the mainstream opinion among the Christian slaves, who almost universally identified with the Israelites and put their faith in Revelation while rejecting the book's seeming acceptance of the institution of slavery. The early NOI's approach to the Bible seems to be largely consistent with this predominant folk view; the group's ministers regularly referenced passages from the Bible to prove their claims and were even sometimes known to explicitly endorse the 'old time' idea that African Americans were the real Children of Israel, while at the same time teaching that whites had 'diilted' the Bible to 'trick' Africans.⁵³ Such a practice is highly consistent with what had been believed in the Ahmadi movement and the MSTA—that Islam was a continuation of the *real* (that is, the black, not white) Christianity.

53 Rubin A. Bashir, ed., *Top of the Clock: Exclusive Interview 1997 Minister Jeremiah Shabazz* (Philadelphia: First Impressions Group Inc., 1997), 209–10. See also Jamal, *From the Dead Level*, 167–68.

Some slaves, like the NOI, also pointed to whites' deception in the initial act of enslavement, and—fascinatingly—in its early years the Nation appears to have explicitly taught the red flag tradition. Benyon had learned that the NOI believed Africans had been 'stolen' from Africa, which was one element of the traditional story, and it was an elaborated version of this theme that by the 1950s had become the official explanation for the Africans' enslavement, as contained in lines twenty-seven through thirty-four of "English Lesson No. C1," one of the lessons Fard is said to have taught Elijah Muhammad privately.⁵⁴ Although, besides the general concept that whites lured Africans onto the slave ships, there are no clear links in this version with the slave story about the red flag, in the early 1970s one early Muslim convert from Chicago recalled that in 1933 Elijah Muhammad was explicitly teaching people

about this white man (JOHN HAWKINS), and how he brought our forefathers here.

[Muhammad] said that John Hawkins anchored his ship [named *Jesus*] down on the Nile River, he was flying our Flag—he was sailing the banks of the Nile, where our people were doing trade. He had nude women on the ship, and our people had never seen anything like this, so they crowded on the ship.

OUR FLAG was flying, our Flag was a red flag. Freedom, Justice and Equality. When he got out to sea, they lowered our flag.⁵⁵

Note that this version of the story, in addition to having a general structure and elements that are very similar to the slave narrative, describes "our Flag" as simply being red, which makes it identical to the flag in the black folk and MSTA versions of the narrative and not identical with how the NOI flag actually appeared, as it contained a white (or, in the 1940s, yellow) crescent and star,

54 The version of "English Lesson No. C1" that appears in Mannan's *A History* (pages 18–20), which is nearly identical with the current version, contains next to the document's title the date 1931. However, we cannot confirm that this is accurate—and given that we know several of the other lessons taught by Fard went through changes before they reached their current versions, it is likely that this early lesson did as well. Furthermore, since we do not have explicit references to this being used before the 1950s, it is possible that it is one of the sets of teachings that Elijah Muhammad crafted in the late 1940s, and therefore that Muhammad by that time left out original elements of the teachings that were being orally transmitted in the 1930s.

55 Nathaniel 10X, "Pioneers Remember Early Years of Islam," *Muhammad Speaks*, April 20, 1973, 19.

as well as the letters F, J, E, and I—which stood for ‘Feedom,’ ‘Justice,’ ‘Equality,’ and ‘Islam’—on a red background.⁵⁶ However, even if the Muslim’s mentioning of “Freedom, Justice and Equality” was a reference to the actual NOI flag, his identifying it as a “red flag” suggests that he, and probably many others, understood the NOI flag as essentially the same flag from the folk tradition.

Since, by all accounts, Fard was responsible for emphasizing both the role of the famous slave trader John Hawkins and the NOI’s use of a flag with a red background, it is possible that he had crafted this particular story, and therefore that he knew of its similarities with the black folk tradition, the MSTA tradition, or both. However, it is also possible that it was Elijah Muhammad, Fard’s best evangelist, who added the tale. It was, after all, probably Muhammad who was responsible for solidifying another link between the Nation’s account of the slave trade and black folk religion by claiming that the popular song “That Old Ship of Zion” describes slaves’ desire to return to Africa on Hawkins’s ship *Jesus*.⁵⁷ Whatever the original source, though, the red flag story, or at least modified versions of it, would continue to be transmitted by NOI Muslims throughout the twentieth century.⁵⁸

56 However, it is possible that originally the NOI flag was plain red; in any case, by 1934, the flag had the characteristics described above; see “They Haul Down the ‘Flag of Islam,’” *Detroit Free Press*, April 17, 1934, 1. On the color yellow being used instead of white (which was used from the 1950s onward), see “US Seizes 84 Here in Big Jap Plot,” *Chicago Herald-American*, September 22, 1942, 1, 2; “How the American Traced Jap Plotters,” *Chicago Herald-American*, September 23, 1942, 5.

57 Muhammad, *Supreme Wisdom*, 16–17; James x (Bingham), “Black Christian Minister Invites Islam to Church,” *Muhammad Speaks*, July 24, 1974, 16.

58 A modified version of the story can be found in an early 1990s magazine produced by the Five Percenter, an NOI offshoot that developed in the 1960s. Below is an excerpt for which I have not corrected most of the punctuation or grammar errors, but have added in brackets comments and letters that should help its clarity. It is very likely that this version, which contains elements from the other versions, was at one point taught by at least some members of the NOI and then later transmitted to the Five Percenter. Here, John Hawkins, Jr. is said to have, prior to his arrival in Africa, studied the history, language and custom’s of the Original People for 20 year’s, he learned how to live a life of a Muslim, and studied Islam. Now within the year’s of stud[y]ing, he learned that there was a God Tribe [the Tribe of Shabazz], who were very wise and humble people. Because they are the God Head’s which mean’s Divine Nature, and the Father’s of All Race’s. It is this tribe, that he wanted to deceive. He know if he could take the Head Tribe, the other’s would follow. And this would make him a great man, even greater than his father [also a slave trader].

So around 1545, John Hawkins Jr. went to Queen Elizabeth in England, and explained his plan’s to her. Then he asked for ship’s, men and supplie’s, to go into the interior of Africa,

While the story about the *Jesus* and other NOI teachings would have been perceived as similar to Christian-influenced elements of black folk culture, others, like the story of the red flag, appear to have had more of a non-Christian resonance. Indeed, the early NOI's emphasis on the color red for the group's flag, fezzes, ties, and robes may reflect the focus on the color red in traditional African American folk culture, as it appears to have been the case in the MSTA, and it almost certainly helped link the NOI and the MSTA in the minds of many Moors.⁵⁹ The same could be said, of course, for the NOI's emphasis on the number seven (which was associated with 'perfection' in both groups) as well as its later use of the 'x' for new members' surnames—since the x and the ⊕ have very similar meanings in hoodoo.⁶⁰ In fact, it is likely that the Nation's flag, with its single letters in each corner, was designed with black

as we know it today. He went to the Gold and Ivory Coast of Africa. There he settled a trading post and presented himself, as a Muslim. So the elder's accepted him, as a brother. He went in and out of Africa, for about 10 year's. He asked the elder's of other tribe's about the God Tribe, but no one would tell him.

Then one day around the Rich Nile River, he came across a Beautiful People, who were wearing long robe's, and golden crescent's around their neck's, and they had on slipper's, Trimmed with gold. These people were truly the God's, he had searched so long for. He greeted the edler's, "he was an explorer and He had heard, that they were very good explorer's." He asked them, "to come with him on his journey to discover the New World.["] The first time, the elder's said, "No", to him. So John Hawkins Jr. went back to England and told Queen Elizabeth That he needed plenty of Wine, Gold, and Low-Class White-woman. So he could trick them. He also told her, that he had found the God Tribe.

So the Queen gave him everything he asked for and he went back to Africa. He was sailing under the Muslim Flag, the Sun, Moon, and Star. There was plenty of music and half naked women dancing on the ship's. [After attracting the Muslims onto the ship and traveling] a distance from shore, he took down the Muslim Flag, and put up the Skull and Cross Bones.

See God Understanding Allah, "John Hawkins Jr.," *The Sun of Man*, [no. 6] ([1991?]): [3–4], Miscellaneous Publications from the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture (hereafter, MPSRC), reel 27.

59 Red, which in the NOI represents the sun, was apparently the preferred color for women's robes in the early NOI; see "Islam Hearing Delayed; Hunt More Cultists," *Chicago Daily News*, October 14, 1942.

60 As noted above, the 'x' was reportedly used by some members in the 1930s; see Fard FBI file, Report, Milwaukee 14–4, 6/1/1942, 4; Arna Bontemps and Jack Conroy, *They Seek a City* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1945), 180. Later, different explanations were given for why the 'x' was used, but one of the main ones was tied to the same type of millennial expectation that the 'x' had traditionally represented: the 'x' symbolized the expectation of the return of the messiah (Fard) at Armageddon.

folk religion's four points in mind, a conclusion suggested by another piece of early NOI art in which four points were not just highlighted, but were explicitly linked with the black folk interpretation of the divine redemption of African Americans. This piece of art—a poster in which Fard is standing in front of a map of the US and from each of the cardinal directions are guns that are labeled 'Asia' and which are pointed towards America—was entitled "Calling the Four Winds," a reference to both the 'four winds' that Ezekiel saw breathe life into the underground nation and the 'four winds' mentioned in John's prophetic vision in Revelation.⁶¹ The giving of Muslim surnames in the group's early years was probably also embraced through a folk perspective. Beynon noted that, like in the MSTA, these names were valued by the NOI Muslims as "their greatest treasure"; indeed, as one early NOI member put it, "That name is my life"—suggesting that such a name change was regarded as perfectly in line with the traditional folk worldview about the importance of new names for new phases in life. The word that Fard used to describe white deception, 'tricknollegy,' meanwhile, may have been chosen for its folk resonances as well. The word 'trick,' for example, was understood in black folk culture as both a mundane act of deception and as a magical spell that was employed by both humans and the Devil to harm people. Furthermore, the very act of using such portmanteaus, including words that contain the suffix 'ology,' was common in black folk speech.⁶² Folk themes would have also been recalled by many of those who heard the Nation's emphasis on receiving magical protection and the group's practice of fasting (both of which will be discussed below), as both phenomena were present in hoodoo.⁶³

Although we do not see an exact predecessor to Fard's racial origins theories in black folk culture, African American folk stories, as we saw in Chapter 1, contain numerous explanations for the origins and natures of the races, some of which do indeed claim, as the NOI story would, that black people were either the first people or God-connected—that is, 'heavenly'—people. As for whites, Fard reportedly transmitted a variety of claims about them that would have felt familiar to many black folk, including the idea that Adam was not the first man, but rather that he was the first white man, and that some white people had tails—fascinatingly, there is a black folk tradition that says that Adam and the first people possessed tails.⁶⁴ Black folk discourse also occasionally referred

61 Arian, *Chameleon*, 21–22.

62 Recall, for instance, the use of the term 'swimology,' as mentioned on page 61n159.

63 In hoodoo, receiving protection is a very common goal; see Hyatt, *Hoodoo, passim*. On hoodoo fasting, see Hyatt, *Hoodoo*, 835, 948–50, 1164, 1806, 3091, 3516, 3567.

64 Evanzz, *Messenger*, 76, 393; Stoney and Shelby, *Black Genesis*, 26.

to whites as evil or even and 'devils,' and the related theme of white evilness and violence towards blacks was widespread in black folk culture, where it developed into whole subgenres of African American folktales—the stories of slave patrollers, night riders, and the mad scientists. Interestingly, Fard's character of Yacub, who could be viewed as a mad scientist who experimented on black victims, may have found resonance with the Muslims precisely because of the popularity of the mad scientist tales among migrants to the North, and undoubtedly recalled for some the old stories of slave breeders as well. At the same time, he was also similar to the folk conjurer character King Buzzard who was responsible for putting Africans on slave ships, and some might have noticed the correspondence between Yacub separating human body colors and the biblical Jacob—whose name in Arabic is in fact 'Yacub'—separating the different colors of goats and sheep in Genesis 30:35. Of course, many if not most African Americans had personally observed white violence, and such violence was a common topic of discussion in the African American community, so it would not have been difficult for African Americans, even if they were not familiar with folk stories, to conceive of whites as evil incarnate. Therefore, whether it resonated with actual folktales, family narratives, or the less stylized personal stories, Fard's insistence about blacks' historical primacy, their natural divineness, and the devilish nature of whites were by no means foreign concepts for his audiences in Detroit.

Many African Americans also surely found the millennial aspects of Fard's teachings to be highly familiar. Given the great importance placed on Moses, the Book of Revelation, and a millennial event in traditional black folk religion, as well as the MSTA (and apparently Ahmadi) belief that black Islam was directly linked to the New Testament's final book, there should be little doubt that Fard's heavy reliance on themes from Revelation, such as the concept of 144,000 souls being saved after an Armageddon, the 'four winds,' and twenty-four wise men accompanying a supreme God,⁶⁵ caught the attention of many. As we have seen, despite the belief in an imminent Armageddon losing popularity in middle-class black churches after Emancipation, it remained a potent element of black folk religious life, as did the strong interest in the Book of Revelation—all of which was associated with the 'old time religion' for which many poor African Americans of the period were yearning. Indeed, Fard's insistence on the black identification with the 'perfect' number seven, as we have seen with the MSTA, was simultaneously associated with both

65 This is a reference to Fard's twenty-four god-scientists (see Muhammad, *Theology of Time*, 85), which parallels the twenty-four elders who surround God in Revelation 4:1–5.

hoodoo and folk ideas about Revelation and its various seals. Since the Mark of the Beast, 666, is mentioned in Revelation too, Fard's associating whites with the number six may have also automatically resonated with his listeners as well. In fact, for some, the pairing of six and seven was itself something with which they would have been familiar, as these were the numbers emphasized in the title of the preeminent hoodoo text *The Sixth and Seventh Books of Moses*.⁶⁶

In terms of the concept of an imminent Armageddon, it is especially telling that on the front page of one of the issues of the NOI's short-lived 1934 newspaper, the *Final Call to Islam*, African Americans are repeatedly and explicitly identified with the 'Dry Bones' of Ezekiel.⁶⁷ As it turns out, the Dry Bones story, particularly in the forms of the spirituals and folk sermons that popularized it among African Americans in the late 1800s and early 1900s, contains numerous elements that would appear in the NOI. For example, as the folk sermon explained, the revival of the dry bones came with their release from Babylon, as foretold by the biblical Daniel when he interpreted Nebuchadnezzar's dream of a great tree not being allowed to grow for seven 'times'—and it was this very story that served as the basis for the Jehovah's Witnesses, and thus the NOI's, belief that the righteous would be restored on the seventh 'day'.⁶⁸ Dry Bones sermons also incorporated references to Ezekiel's famous vision of the wheel—which was an old black folk religion image that was seen as being a sign of both God's imminent retribution for the enslaved and the passage of cyclical, not linear, time. Fard would latch on to both of these themes when he taught that time functioned in 25,000-year cycles and that Ezekiel's wheel did in fact exist in the modern world—as the Mother Plane. Fard preached, moreover, that non-Muslim blacks were 'dead,' just like the people whose 'dry bones' laid in the valley, and who, in the folk sermons, were usually identified with African Americans. In fact, as has been pointed out, in some versions of the folk narrative the dead black Americans are identified as 'nations underground'—a term clearly similar to 'Nation of Islam'.⁶⁹ Furthermore, since it was implied

66 I would like to thank Nate Miscall for bringing this connection to my attention. On *The Sixth and Seventh Books of Moses*, see Hayes, *Folklore and Book Culture*, 14–27; Davies, *Grimoires*, *passim*.

67 *Final Call to Islam* 1, no. 4, September 1, 1934. The 'Dry Bones' theme was used in three elements on the front page: the large illustration, Elijah Muhammad's sermon-like front page column, and a reprinting of Ez. 37 under the headline "Dry Bones."

68 Penton, *Apocalypse Delayed*, 21. However, it should be mentioned again that such a concept also existed in some medieval Islamic sectarian movements.

69 Alho, *Religion*, 89.

that Fard alone—a single person—had the power to ‘bring back to life’ the ‘dead’ and, in so doing, lead African Americans out of the modern-day Babylon, the NOI’s use of the imagery of the dead could be interpreted in two ways simultaneously: as the dry bones of Ezekiel’s story and as the New Testament character of Lazarus whose dead body was also resurrected by a single figure: Jesus. Early on, then, Fard must have been sometimes seen as a kind of modern Jesus—an interpretation that would, as we will see, later be exploited. Finally, even the valley setting in the sermon can be linked to the NOI, for in the black folk tradition the ‘valley’ was also sometimes called the ‘wilderness,’ which was the very term Fard used to describe North America. The notion of the dead, dry bones of African Americans was thus one of the most powerful themes for the NOI view of the world; Muslims would come to it again and again throughout the NOI’s pre-1975 history and for many the ‘x’ surname that they were given was surely a constant reminder that the NOI was in many ways like the ‘four winds’ that Ezekiel had commanded to breathe life into the underground nation.⁷⁰

Although the NOI’s teachings employed numerous elements that had parallels in black folk belief, one particular type of folk tradition that Fard’s teachings almost certainly reminded African Americans about stands out as particularly important for understanding the later development of the Nation: those dealing with the personal identity of black people. The key for the NOI’s sense of the black self lies in the assertion that Muslims are ‘gods’ and that they should ‘murder’ ‘devils.’ The first part of this assertion, that black people are gods, as has been mentioned, shows resonances with various currents in black religion. There was of course the notion that black conjurers were themselves divine and several early twentieth-century black sects had, by combining this notion with New Thought concepts, claimed non-conjurer black people were divine as well. Beyond this was the more widespread concept that African Americans

70 For later Nation references to the Dry Bones story, see, e.g., Lestre Brownlee, “Elijah’s Theme—Hate Whites,” *Chicago’s American*, February 23, 1960, 12; Bayyinah S. Jeffries, “‘Raising Her Voice’: Writings by, for, and about Women in *Muhammad Speaks* Newspaper, 1961–1975,” in *Africana Islamic Studies*, eds. James L. Conyers, Jr. and Abul Pitre (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2016), 3. The story of Ezekiel’s vision of the bones was a very powerful tale that, fascinatingly, was also used in the nineteenth century’s white Anglophone, Masonry-based revival of Islamophilia led by Kenneth R.H. Mackenzie; indeed, the parallels between Mackenzie’s Islamophilic occult revival and the AAIR are numerous, and are reflective of the importance of Freemasonry for reterritorialized intellectual space that could be capitalized on by visionary thinkers like Mackenzie, Drew Ali, Fard, and Elijah Muhammad. See Bowen, *HCTIUS*, 1:esp. 131.

were 'heavenly' people, a notion that seems to assume the related folk tradition that named Africa as both 'home' and 'heaven,' and identified it as the place where the convert or the dead received a 'starry crown,' which confirmed his or her 'heavenly' status. The early NOI appears to have institutionalized these traditions. As will be recalled, in the Nation, Africa was referred to as the 'home country' of African Americans and Fard taught that upon embracing Islam's teachings they would return to 'Paradise,' which was associated with both Africa and Mecca—later, Elijah Muhammad would explicitly identify those places as 'Heaven.'⁷¹ The group's fez, then, with its star and crescent, was undoubtedly seen by many as the starry crown that signaled the Muslims' having returned to their original, heavenly state. In the 1960s, even after the Nation ended the use of fezzes for most members, Elijah Muhammad continued to wear a personalized version of the headpiece that was even more 'starry' than the early versions, as it was jewel-encrusted, containing multiple star shapes.

The NOI's doctrinal use of the concept of murder may have been understood as having a related connection to black folk thought. As discussed in Chapter 1, traditionally salvation through conversion to Christianity generally occurred in the African American context after an individual was the victim of a sort of spiritual murder. The slave Christian conversion experience tended to come after a 'sinner'—who as we have seen was sometimes referred to as a 'dead' person—driven by mental and spiritual anguish, travels to the 'wilderness' and cries out for help from God. He or she is then 'killed' by a 'little man' from the 'East' who takes that person on a journey first to hell and finally to heaven, where he or she obtains a starry crown and converses with God, ancestors, and biblical figures. Since we know that in the NOI the notion of 'killing devils' was often interpreted as convincing non-Muslim African Americans of their 'dead' state in 'the Wilderness of North America' and then bringing them to Islam, the true religion of 'Heaven,' early Nation Muslims may have understood this process as similar to that of the black folk conversion. The sinner-dead person who goes to hell would be roughly equivalent to both the NOI's 'dead'/'devil,' and Islam-preaching leaders like Fard and Elijah Muhammad—both of whom were rather small in stature—would be the equivalent of the 'little man' who came from the 'East.' Indeed, Muhammad, apparently partly due to his light skin and small—what some considered 'oriental' or 'Asiatic'—features, was almost cer-

71 Elijah Muhammad, *The True History of Master Fard Muhammad*, ed. Nasir Makr Hakim (Phoenix: Secretarius MEMPS Ministries, 1996), 1–24.

tainly looked upon as such, and was sometimes even explicitly referred to as ‘a little Black man from the East.’⁷²

Interestingly, there is one well-known NOI conversion narrative that has Fard playing a role very similar to that of the traditional ‘little man.’ During the protracted 1940s conversion experience of the famous Malcolm X, he at one point was struggling with his commitment to the Nation due to the fact that his brother Reginald had recently been expelled from the group, a punishment Malcolm felt was unjust. So, despite having already nominally accepted Elijah Muhammad as his leader, Malcolm attempted to defend Reginald by writing a letter to Muhammad arguing against the latter’s decision to expel his brother—but this was an act that caused even more mental anguish for Malcolm. As he recorded in his *Autobiography*:

I was in torment. [...] The rest of that night, I prayed to Allah. I don’t think anyone ever prayed more sincerely to Allah. I prayed for some kind of relief from my confusion.

It was the next night, as I lay on my bed, I suddenly, with a start, became aware of a man sitting beside me in a chair. He had on a dark suit, I remember. I could see him as plainly as I see anyone I look at. He wasn’t black, and he wasn’t white. He was light-brown-skinned, an Asiatic cast of countenance, and he had oily black hair.

I looked right into his face.

I didn’t get frightened. I knew I wasn’t dreaming. I couldn’t move, I didn’t speak, and he didn’t. I couldn’t place him racially—other than that I knew he was a non-European. I had no idea whatsoever who he was. He just sat there. Then, suddenly as he had come, he was gone.

Soon [...] I knew that Elijah Muhammad was right, and my blood brother was wrong. Because right is right, and wrong is wrong. [...]

I would later come to believe that my pre-vision was of Master W.D. Fard, the Messiah, the one whom Elijah Muhammad said had appointed him [...].⁷³

72 Mahal Ar-Rahman, “Nation of Islam Pioneers’ Day,” *Bilalian News*, March 5, 1976, 10–12; “How the American Traced Jap Plotters,” *Chicago Herald-American*, September 23, 1942, 5; William A. Anderson, “A Sociological Analysis of the Black Muslim Movement” (MA thesis, Kent State University, 1961), 32, 56, 94; Evanzz, *Messenger*, 137, 184. One therefore wonders whether the slightly Drew Ali had similarly been seen as a ‘little man.’

73 Malcolm X and Alex Haley, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1965), 188, 190.

Although a murder is not noted as having taken place, Malcolm's connecting this "pre-vision" to his final step towards obtaining full faith in the NOI gives this event—with its mental anguish, calling for God, and the visit of a dark suit-wearing man from the East—a structure strikingly similar to the typical slave conversion experience.

Scholar Michael Gomez has proposed that Malcolm's inclusion of this incident in his book—despite the fact that a) he had already left the NOI by the time the *Autobiography* was being finished and b) he was frequently willing to leave out of the book mention of other important events in his life—suggests that either Malcolm was sincere in claiming that this experience happened, and possibly that he had inherited from his parents "a metaphysical residual of [African] ancestor [worship] orientation," or that "such a residual permeated the rank-and-file of the Nation's membership" to such a great extent that Malcolm knowingly took advantage of this in order to gain an authoritative position.⁷⁴ Although Malcolm's narrative of his conversion does not seem to have been entirely contrived, according to his brother Wilfred, it would be a few more years before Malcolm became truly committed to the NOI—which suggests that the story was not as completely true as we are led to believe.⁷⁵ It is also the case that we do not have testimonies from other rank-and-file members concerning their having had similar experiences. Nevertheless, because many African Americans at the time would have been well aware of the 'little man' folk tradition and Malcolm himself—who was the son of a Baptist preacher and once referred to Muhammad as the "little man's little man"—more than likely knew it as well, it is reasonable to conclude that Malcolm's conversion story was neither entirely invented nor unique within the NOI.⁷⁶ Moreover, considering what we know about what NOI Muslims believed 'killing devils' meant, it is probable that, after converting to Islam, many rank-and-file Muslims—who upon conversion considered themselves gods—thought of themselves as

74 *Black Crescent*, 342.

75 Elaine Latzman Moon, *Untold Tales, Unsung Heroes: An Oral History of Detroit's African American Community, 1918–1967* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1994), 275–77.

76 In Malcolm's "little man's little man" statement, the first "little man" is clearly meant to refer to what was also called the 'common man' or 'working man,' who was usually contrasted with powerful politicians and wealthy business owners—a meaning that was popular among whites who used the phrase 'little man.' The meaning of the second "little man," however, is far less clear, but the context of its use certainly lends itself for understanding it as conveying the black folk figure, and in my opinion this is indeed how Malcolm was using it. See Malcolm x, "Malcolm x Says ...," *Salaam* (July 1960): 34, MPSRC, reel 47.

taking on the role of ‘little men’ who were responsible for ‘killing’ other ‘dead’ non-Muslim African Americans to bring them to the this-worldly ‘Heaven’ of Islam.

There are of course other interpretations of the Nation’s teachings on righteous violence that early NOI Muslims, who were probably familiar with the black folk tendency to combine seemingly unrelated religious stories, may have recalled when they listened to Fard. Undoubtedly, many of the Muslims were familiar with the African American folktales about militant gods, prophets, messiahs, and men battling and killing the devil, a figure who was often equated with racist, violent whites. During the slave era, these stories tended to depict Jesus and Moses—who were interchangeable in slave folktales—as armed and violent redeemers of the oppressed. During the Civil War, this messianic-militant identity was sometimes placed on President Lincoln and Union generals, as they were seen as prophet-messiahs coming to subdue the Pharaohic-gentile South.⁷⁷ In the Jim Crow period, such narratives continued to appear, like in the “De Sun Do Move” story of Joshua’s redemptive battle. The imagery of divinely-guided figures doling out a violent retribution for contemporary African American oppression was therefore far from a novel concept in African American folk religion. At the same time, such stories were understandable cultural and psychological responses to the omnipresent anti-black violence of slave times and Jim Crow America. In fact, judging from essays written by NOI members in the early 1930s, it seems that such racist violence had a profound, traumatizing effect on the people who had joined the NOI; these public writings contain numerous references to white-perpetrated lynchings, beatings, and rapes, whereas the known writings of other early African American Islamic groups have relatively few.⁷⁸ In the face of violent terror, then, it is easy to see how the notion of God sending a defensive or retribution-like violent response was attractive for such people.

These righteous, divinely-sanctioned heroes, however, were not the only—and perhaps were not even the most prominent—violent figures in black folk traditions to whom early NOI members could relate. There were the various songs and poems about common black Christians who slayed the Devil with their ‘gospel gun’ and, as we saw in Chapter 1, after the Civil War, with the rise of Jim Crow and despair and pessimism beginning to set in, black folk

77 Alho, *Religion of the Slaves*, 222–23. Interestingly, in at least one version of the militant divine redeemer narrative, the hoped-for liberator of the slaves was said to be a man who, like Fard, came from a mixed parentage.

78 See Patrick D. Bowen, “Propaganda in the Early NOI,” in *New Perspectives on the Nation of Islam*, eds. Herbert Berg and Dawn-Marie Gibson (New York: Routledge, 2017), 135–53.

culture saw the emergence of a new, non-divine man who could also best the devil. This black 'badman' or outlaw folk hero rejected all authority, especially that of whites, and was powerful and smart enough to slay the devil. As we have seen, despite the fact that in most versions of the story the badman is entirely self-centered, he is often generally viewed as a hero because of his fearless protest of white society and, in some versions of the story, particularly in the popular rhymed toast "Shine and the Titanic," he uses his rebelliousness to stand up for his fellow African Americans. Since, as Elijah Muhammad explained, Fard's intention in discussing the murder of devils was to "take fear of the white man out of the hearts of the followers,"⁷⁹ it seems that identification with the badman was indeed intentionally cultivated in the Nation. By claiming to have the ability to kill devils, then, the NOI had effectively encouraged the simultaneous identification with the 'little man,' the righteous militant heroes, the common black Christians with their 'gospel guns,' and this strong, 'bad'—that is, 'bad' in the eyes of white society—black folk hero.

It needs to be made clear here that the 'bad' outlaw element of the NOI identity was understood in NOI psychology in a fairly narrow, if not innovative way. Indeed in one sense the NOI put a greater emphasis on identifying with righteous heroes, not outlaw heroes; the story of African Americans suffering in the 'wilderness of North America' and their eventual triumph and return to their true peaceful home fits very nicely into the traditional story arc of righteous heroes like Jesus, Moses, and the Israelites in Babylon. The insistence that Muslims are 'gods' is further confirmation of the identification with such stories. The Muslims' identification with the 'bad' outlaw hero, then, may seem inaccurate at first glance. However, two things must be remembered. First is the tendency of black folk traditions to combine multiple, often very different stories and interpretations. Second is the fact that within the black folk tradition, it is only the 'bad' outlaw character who is perceived as opposed to white society to the same degree as the NOI. Because Christianity had still not yet freed blacks from oppression in America, in the eyes of many African Americans the traditional righteous heroes, Jesus and Moses, had probably lost some of their status as representative of full opposition to oppressive white culture—for many, only the outlaws were the true rebels who were willing to kill the Devil. Yet, at the same time, it is generally understood that the righteous hero is often himself an outlaw when, during the low point in the typ-

79 Sahib, "Nation of Islam," 76n.

ical hero myth, he is residing in an unwelcoming land where he must fight a great enemy—a theme that is obvious in the stories of Jesus and Moses, both of whom are persecuted as criminals. By resonating with the theme of the outlaw hero, then, the NOI teachings not only provided a means to psychologically break free from traditional African American identification with Christian heroes—Jesus and Moses—whom many Muslims may have felt had failed to live up to their salvationist duties, they also allowed for identifying more strongly with the embattled stage of the righteous heroes' (especially Moses's) journey and therefore the necessity of active resistance to a dominant culture. As we will see, this deep connection between the NOI teachings and the folk image of the 'bad' black man would later, in the second era of the AAIR, serve as an important connection that would help spread Islam to a younger generation of African Americans who were often far less familiar with the more religious 'old time' folk traditions, but were increasingly identifying with the badman.

Other folk elements, particularly those elements that discussed features of the natural world, may have also shaped the lenses through which early NOI members saw themselves in Fard's doctrines. For instance, his teachings about controlling the weather were similar to powers known in black folklore and hoodoo. At the same time, the NOI emphasis on the 'Sun, Moon, and stars' was reminiscent of both the hoodoo tradition and Christianity since several folk Christian stories, sermons, and spirituals also referred to this triad of heavenly bodies, which was usually understood as representative of divine power in some form—probably the Trinity for many people. There was also a strong emphasis in Fard's teachings about the Sun specifically, and Fard was remembered for putting great stress on the notion that the Sun does not move—a concept that seems to have had a strong impact on those who had been taught the 'old time' message that the 'Sun *do* move.'⁸⁰ The NOI teachings about the physical dimensions and speeds of movement concerning the Earth and the Sun, meanwhile, may have suggested to the Muslims that they were obtaining the knowledge of the 'astronomers,' important characters in the Dry Bones folk tradition. The astronomers in this story are said to represent the most learned of the gentiles, who are, despite their education, far inferior intellectually to the divinely-inspired Ezekiel.⁸¹ Memorizing Fard's astronomical teachings, then, gave the Muslims the confidence that they had indeed mastered the greatest

80 Bontemps and Conroy, *Any Place*, 218–19.

81 Watkins, "De Dry Bones," 147.

knowledge of their oppressors and could legitimately identify themselves with divinely-inspired, extremely intelligent biblical prophet-liberators. It was perhaps partly based on this concept that whites were said to have only thirty-two or thirty-three 'degrees' of knowledge whereas Muslims had three-hundred and sixty 'degrees.'

Whether or not they were originally or intentionally designed for this purpose, Fard's teachings contained enough elements that could be interpreted—particularly when this interpretation was aided by the instruction of Elijah Muhammad, who appears to have had great command of African American folk traditions—through the lens of black folk thought. Indeed, as one NOI historian would later assert, Fard's doctrines were, essentially, preexisting African American myths in which their terms and other superficial elements were simply substituted with Masonic and Islamic elements.⁸² By mixing, reframing, and presenting in a new way concepts they already believed in along with a few foreign elements, Fard, perhaps even more than Drew Ali, enabled his black followers to grasp onto important psycho-cultural tools that would enable them to believe that they possessed the power to withstand the physical, cultural, and psychological impacts of violently-imposed white supremacy.

Early Growth

The early NOI's growth seems to have developed along lines very similar to those of the UNIA and the MSTA, and to an important extent it built on the work of those two movements. Garvey's organization had been able to thrive by first recruiting a core, disciplined base—in Garvey's case, this was usually church leaders, but also included black business leaders, unions, and minority ethnic groups—and then bringing in the less disciplined masses through the promotion of identification with various religious and Masonic themes, promises concerning liberation from white oppression, and programs that offered real improvements in their lives. Noble Drew Ali's movement was built first on his spiritual healing followers, as well as on the remnants of the UNIA and possibly Suleiman's Caananites Temple and the Ahmadis, and was able to expand through his teachings' connections with elements of conjure and 'old time' religion as well as with his numerous UNIA-inspired economic and political projects. Fard's NOI, meanwhile, after gaining MSTA members as a core, stable foundation, brought in Detroit's masses by appealing to a wide variety of black

82 Mannan, *A History*, 41.

folk beliefs and further enticed them with prospects of better living through Garvey- and Drew Ali-inspired practices and, as we will see, improved physical health.

However, although he was clearly a skilled teacher, organizer, and leader, Fard's success cannot be solely attributed to some sort of master-vision designing of a successful new religious movement. Not only did he make adjustments along the way, as the changes in the *Secret Ritual* and his appeals to Moors suggest, he also had significant help in disseminating—perhaps we might even say translating—his hodgepodge of strange teachings for Detroit's black folk. In this, the growth of Fard's Nation was greatly assisted by the Georgia-born seventh son of a Baptist preacher named Elijah Poole, who would become the early NOI's Minister of Islam. Poole may have heard of Fard as early as 1930,⁸³ but he was not actively seeking information about the movement until the spring of the following year when his father had met and told his thirty-three year-old son about an NOI minister named Abdul Mohammed. Poole—who later claimed to have once been a Prince Hall Mason and rumors suggest he had possibly also been in the UNIA and MSTA—visited Mohammed to ask questions about the NOI's teachings.⁸⁴ Having seen throughout his life multiple acts of white racist violence in the South and the North—including that

83 Wallace D. Fard FBI file, Report, Chicago 100-9129, 9/30/1942, 11.

84 On his Masonic background, see Sahib, "Nation of Islam," 90 and Elijah Muhammad, *The Secrets of Freemasonry* (Atlanta: Secretarius MEMPS, 1994), 15. On his possible membership in the UNIA, see Jeannette Smith-Irvin, *Footsoldiers of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (Their Own Words)* (Trenton: Africa World Press, Inc., 1989), 15, 49, 72; Mannan, *A History*, xvii. (The latter source cites the author's interviews with Yusuf Shah, who became a high-ranking NOI official in the 1950s, and Wallace Muhammad, Elijah's son. Because both men were only small children in the early 1930s, neither could have known about this firsthand.) 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 MSTA 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, *Noble*, 153. However, in 2012 I was informed by the main group of MSTA historians, ALI'S MEN, that they rejected 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 MSTA documents from the period, it was not written on official MSTA stationary. 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 only to Elijah's travels to various MSTA groups in the late 1930s, but the specific mention of meeting Drew Ali should at least leave

committed by Detroit's police force—Poole, unemployed and struggling with alcohol abuse, already possessed a very critical view of white society.⁸⁵ What Mohammed had to say, then, greatly impressed him, so he decided to attend Fard's meetings.⁸⁶ Soon, possibly after being encouraged by his wife, Clara, a former member of the Holiness movement who had yearned for 'old time' religion herself, Poole introduced himself to the strange clothing salesman.⁸⁷ In a short time, he became convinced of the truth of Fard's message and joined the temple, where he was initially given the Muslim surname Karriem, which was later changed to Muhammad. Having always wanted to be a minister, Elijah Muhammad started preaching Fard's teachings in the streets of his city, and in August 1932, Muhammad was officially made the Minister of Islam for the group.⁸⁸

While Muhammad was rising through the ranks of the movement, Fard established a stable headquarters on Hastings Street and several branches in nearby areas.⁸⁹ He had accomplished this apparently through several means: his own street and lecture-hall preaching; the preaching of his ministers like Abdul Muhammad; and through the help of female Muslims who, taking the title 'Mission Sisters,' traveled door-to-door inviting people to the temple meetings and collecting money to support impoverished Muslims.⁹⁰ According to early members, the group's growth was also assisted by its offering a deep feeling of racial pride. Visitors reportedly felt a great sense of admiration for their race when they heard the history of black people according to Fard,⁹¹ and members' self-esteem was often further lifted when they learned that Fard did not

open the possibility that Elijah had actually met the MSTA 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.

85 Sahib, "Nation of Islam," 90; Steven Barboza, *American Jihad: Islam after Malcolm X* (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 272.

86 Sahib, "Nation of Islam," 91.

87 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, *Messenger*, 71. Also see Mohammed, *As the Light Shineth*, 27.

88 Muhammad, *Ministry Class*, [5].

89 The address was 3408 Hastings Street; see "Voodoo Killer Tries to Flee from Police," *Detroit Evening Times*, November 23, 1932, 2; Sahib, "Nation of Islam," 91; Wallace D. Fard FBI file, Report, Chicago 100–9129, 9/30/1942, 11.

90 Ula Taylor, "As-Salaam Alaikum, My Sister, Peace Be unto You: The Honorable Elijah Muhammad and the Women Who Followed Him," *Race & Society* 1, no. 2 (1998): 179, 182; Muhammad et al., *Step in the Right*.

91 Muhammad et al., *Step in the Right*, 28.

allow either whites or non-white people who were not African Americans (such as Latinos and Asians) to officially join the movement, explaining that the NOI was not for the ‘free-born’—that is, people who were not descendants of slaves.⁹² This rule enabled African Americans to look at their and their ancestors’ oppression under slavery and Jim Crow not as a mark of shame, but rather as something that made them special, even superior to whites and other non-white people who had not suffered as much. Although this rule sometimes meant turning away non-black spouses of Muslims,⁹³ it was a powerful tool for helping to overcome the negative self-image that slavery had given African Americans.

With the assistance of his Minister of Islam, by late 1932 Fard had also expanded his mission into the black ghettos of Chicago.⁹⁴ Although it did not gain there the thousands of members that Detroit apparently had, the Chicago group was very enthusiastic. New Muslims of both sexes began spreading Islam wherever they could—in addition to going door-to-door, they talked with people on streetcorners, in alleys, and at parks and playgrounds—and in August 1933 Muhammad would formally open in the city the NOI’s second temple, which would attain 400 members by the following summer.⁹⁵ Here, again, former Moors seem to have made up a significant part of the original membership, although there were also some ex-Ahmadis, ex-Garveyites, and perhaps a few former members of other black nationalist groups, such as the P.M.E.W.⁹⁶ Another temple was opened in Milwaukee in late 1933, though,

92 Muhammad et al., *Step in the Right*, 15.

93 Muhammad et al., *Step in the Right*, 15. Despite not being allowed to attend meetings, the Mexican immigrant Henry Almanza accepted the teachings of the NOI and encouraged his African American wife and children to follow the Muslims’ teachings. His children, then, can be considered the first Latino members of the NOI.

94 Sahib (in “Nation of Islam,” 78–79) reports that Fard had sent Muhammad to Chicago by late 1931. However, a 1934 document written by Elijah Muhammad indicates that Fard made him a minister only in August 1932; see Muhammad, *Ministry Class*, [5]. Fard, in any case, was also personally promoting Islam in the city by 1932; see Donald Mosby, “Muslim Wages 20-Year Struggle for Justice,” *Muhammad Speaks*, July 5, 1974, 21.

95 John X. Lawler, “Sees New Day Rise in Islam,” *Muhammad Speaks*, September 27, 1963, 5; Nathaniel 10X, “Muslim Pioneers Remember the Early Years of Islam,” *Muhammad Speaks*, March 16, 1973, 4. Karriem Allah, “The Early Days of the Messenger’s Mission: The Glorious Past,” *Muhammad Speaks*, August 10, 1973, 15; Sahib, “Nation of Islam,” 81. In addition to sending out proselytizers, the group also put up posters to advertise; see Fard FBI file, Memorandum, Correlation Clerk to SAC (100–33683), 7/3/1957, 7.

96 Chicago Moorish evidence will be discussed below. One early Chicago member, Captain

apparently because it did not receive frequent visits from Fard or Muhammad, its membership was relatively small.

Certain characteristics distinguished early members of the NOI from other African Americans. In 1935, after learning that a large proportion of the NOI members were on public assistance, the Detroit Department of Public Welfare attempted to identify those distinct traits in a study that compared NOI members, the vast majority of whom were born in the South, with ninety-nine non-NOI Southern-born African Americans also on welfare in Detroit.⁹⁷ The agency discovered that prior to converting, NOI members tended to have less education and less interest in education, were more irregularly employed, performed cruder forms of labor, and seemed to have personalities that—although they did not show criminal or anti-social tendencies—were less well-adjusted compared to their non-NOI counterparts.⁹⁸ Overall, it was concluded, these were the city's African Americans who, even if they were attending church (which it seems most were), were the least able to, as the report put it, “cope with” their position in Detroit's racist social and economic system. However, by embracing the Nation's teachings, the study showed, these individuals experienced a radical transformation. There was, for instance, increased family stability: Muslim spouses now worked in total agreement and, when only one partner converted, the Muslim spouse was quick to smooth over quarrels, a phenomenon that was partly due to the Muslims' willingness to cut out of their lives any adult relative who rejected the NOI, including spouses and their own adult children.⁹⁹ Young children also now received special attention at home, as the Muslims took great interest in obtaining education for their families. Beynon's study from a few years later showed that, in addition to improved family life, members of the movement became better workers and gained better employment, which, in turn, gave these people real disposable income, which many of them had not previously had.¹⁰⁰ Perhaps the most noticeable effect, however, was the increased confidence that Fard's teachings gave the Muslims; these down-trodden individuals began, possibly for the first time in their lives, displaying

Edward Ali, was a former member of the MSTA, UNIA, and PMEW; see Larry 14X, “Fast-stepping Muslim Marched with Garvey,” *Muhammad Speaks*, August 2, 1975, 1, 7, 16. An ex-Ahmadi was known to have joined in the early 1940s; see Elijah Muhammad FBI file, Report, 6/13/1942, Chicago file 100-6989, 12.

97 Dillon, “Islam Cult,” 11-14, 35.

98 Ibid., 13-14.

99 Ibid.

100 Beynon, “Voodoo Cult,” 905-06.

great pride and even a sense of superiority,¹⁰¹ perhaps seeing themselves as the ‘poor in spirit’ who, as Jesus promised, had finally received the ‘kingdom of Heaven.’¹⁰²

The early Muslims’ own accounts from both during and after this early period reveal, in addition, a deep sense that feelings of love and serenity pervaded the community.¹⁰³ Fard, for example, is generally depicted as a caring, divinely-inspired father figure who was, notably, usually referred to as ‘Master’ Fard—the term ‘master’ in black folk religion being typically reserved for Jesus and God Himself. And like Jesus, Fard was seen as a wise, loving, and patient teacher, who, interestingly, called African Americans his ‘uncle’—the old slave term of respect that was believed to have been used back in Africa—while explaining to them his doctrines and how to perform the jobs they were assigned in the movement.¹⁰⁴ Among the rank-and-file, self-sacrifice was widespread, with members eagerly sharing their food and assisting with any task that other Muslims were performing; and it seems that largely through this generous service to other African Americans most of the Muslims gained a profound sense of joy and peace in their lives.¹⁰⁵ The feeling of internal peace (a feeling common to slave Christian converts as well) was further strengthened through devoting a significant portion of the Muslims’ free time to religious learning. At the group’s meetings, both Fard and Muhammad would, like the old slave exhorters, lecture for several hours at a time, sometimes starting in the afternoon and not finishing until the early morning. Frequently adults would attend University of Islam classes with the children, and even the men’s

101 Dillon, “Islam Cult,” 14.

102 Matthew 5:3.

103 The best source for Muslims’ views from the early 1930s is the newspaper *Final Call to Islam*. Several early Muslims from Detroit were interviewed for Muhammad et al., *Step in the Right*, and early Muslims from Chicago were discussed in multiple articles in *Muhammad Speaks* in the 1970s.

104 Nathaniel 10X, “Muslim Pioneers Remember the Early Years of Islam,” *Muhammad Speaks*, March 16, 1973, 4; Mohammed, *Pathway of Islam*, 23; Mohammed, *I Am Burnsteen Sharrieff Mohammed*, [1]–[4]; Mohammed, *As the Light Shineth*, 18–19.

105 John Mohammed, “A Happy Moslem,” *Final Call to Islam* 1, no. 3, August 25, 1934, 4; John Mohammed, “To the Young Asiatics of North America,” *Final Call to Islam* 1, no. 4, September 1, 1934, 2; John Ali, “Editorial [IV],” *Final Call to Islam* 1, no. 4, September 1, 1934, 3; Nathaniel 10X, “Muslim Pioneers Remember the Early Years of Islam,” *Muhammad Speaks*, March 16, 1973, 4; *idem.*; “Muslim Pioneers Remember Islam’s Early Years,” *Muhammad Speaks*, March 23, 1973, 11; Karriem Allah, “The Early Days of the Messenger’s Mission: ‘The Glorious Past,’” *Muhammad Speaks*, July 20, 1973, 15; Mohammed, *Pathway of Islam*, 23; Mohammed, *I Am Burnsteen Sharrieff Mohammed*, [1]–[4].

Fruit of Islam sessions were primarily for learning NOI teachings.¹⁰⁶ Women, meanwhile, instructed NOI girls in homemaking skills and behavioral habits in an auxiliary called the Muslim Girls' Training-General Civilization Class (MGT-GCC).

The positive feelings shared throughout the NOI seem to have also come from a sense of improved physical wellbeing and safety. A number of members appreciated the many health benefits that came from following Fard's unique diet regimen, which stressed regular fasting, eating one meal per day (which Barton said Ford did), and avoiding less than healthy temptations, such as white bread and overeating.¹⁰⁷ A number of converts from Chicago also attested to the NOI having helped them overcome addictions to alcohol, gambling, and minor crimes, apparently by convincing the Muslims that those behaviors were not natural to African Americans, but had been taught to them by whites.¹⁰⁸ In addition, the very frequent references to white violence in early 1930s NOI writings as well as members' discussions of the protection African Americans would receive by being in the NOI—from both the FOI and Muslims currently living in other parts of the world—suggest that the feeling of physical safety through the hope of protection from racist violence was also widespread in the group.¹⁰⁹ According to some Muslims, in fact, upon joining the Nation a person lost both “all fear of his enemy” and the accompanying “inferiority complex”—

106 Karriem Allah, “The Early Days of the Messenger's Mission: ‘The Glorious Past,’” *Muhammad Speaks*, July 20, 1973, 15; Fatimah Abdul-Tawwab, “‘Doing for Self!': The Nation of Islam's Temple #11 and Its Impact on Social and Economic Development of Boston's African American Community, 1948–1968” (MA thesis, Tufts University, 2001), 76–80, 84.

107 Burnsteen Sharrieff, “The Dangerousness of Overweight,” *Final Call to Islam* 1, no. 4, September 1, 1934, 3; Wali Mohammed, “Health through Proper Living,” *Final Call to Islam* 1, no. 4, September 1, 1934, 6.

108 Theodore 4X, “Islam Taught Me My Wrongdoings Not Really Mine; Those of Whites,” *Muhammad Speaks*, October 24, 1969, 13; Larry 14X, “Faststepping,” 16.

109 See Elijah Karriem [Muhammad], “Moslems Are Misrepresented by Caucasians,” *Afro-American*, May 6, 1933, 6; J.B. Morris, “Islam as the Black Man's Religion,” *Tribune Independent* (Detroit), July 7, 1934, 6; Elijah Muhammad, “A Warning to the Black Man of America [chapter 1],” *Final Call to Islam* 1, no. 1, August 11, 1934, 1; [John Ali], “Editorial [1],” *Final Call to Islam* 1, no. 1, August 11, 1934, 3; A Reader, “A New View with New Eyes,” *Final Call to Islam* 1, no. 2, August 18, 1934, 3; John Ali, “Editorial [111],” *Final Call to Islam* 1, no. 3, August 25, 1934, 4; J.B. Morris, “Islam,” *Tribune Independent* (Detroit), July 7, 21, and 28, 1934; John Ali, “Editorial [IV],” *Final Call to Islam* 1, no. 4, September 1, 1934, 3; Lonnie Pasha, “Black Man Father of All Humanity,” *Final Call to Islam* 1, no. 4, September 1, 1934,

feelings that, again, were similar to those of slave Christian converts.¹¹⁰ Muhammad even composed a “Muslim Fighting Song” that was passionately sung by the emboldened early converts.¹¹¹

Confidence in one’s safety as a Muslim was augmented by a number of additional oral teachings about magical protection. One was the claim that whites were unable to harm Muslims either because whites were scared of them or because Allah would protect the Muslims—the latter notion being similar to beliefs that were present in hoodoo and some American slave revolts.¹¹² According to one early Muslim, there was at least once incident in which several whites shot at the Muslims with machine guns and other firearms, sometimes at point-blank range, yet the Muslims remained unharmed.¹¹³ The profound sense of protection was further increased when Fard began teaching that Japan would in 1934 attack the US with a Mother Plane and “the Armageddon war [would] take place to determine whether the Asiatics or the Caucasians will have to get off this planet.”¹¹⁴

With its programs, its folk-related doctrines, its isolationist and millennialist teachings, its MSTAs, and its passionate, dedicated members, the Allah Temple of Islam—now also alternatively called the Order of Islam, the American Moslem Brotherhood, and the Nation of Islam—was growing rapidly. By the end of the 1930s, the NOI had probably 4,000–8,000 registered members,¹¹⁵ and

110 Kallatt Mohammed, “The Psychological Values of Islam,” *Final Call to Islam* 1, no. 3, August 25, 1934, 3; Ali, “Editorial [1],” 4; Morris, “Islam,” July 7, 1934.

111 Mannan, *A History*, 44.

112 Najiy, *Nation of Islam’s*, 70, 96; Bashir, *Top of the Clock*, 23; Pauline Williams FBI file, Report, 7/17/1958, Cincinnati file 100–10668, 7. The theme of protection is extremely common in hoodoo; see Hyatt, *Hoodoo, passim* and Chireau, *Black Magic*, 59–90. It may be worth noting that the belief that a god or magical talisman will protect a certain non-white religious population when it battles white oppressors was also very common among millennialist protest sects in colonial regions throughout the world in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; see, e.g., Michael Adas, *Prophets of Rebellion: Millenarian Protest Movements against the European Colonial Order* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979), 151–52; Wilson, *Magic and the Millennium*, 204, 242, 458.

113 Ar-Rahman, “Nation of Islam.”

114 Wallace D. Fard FBI file, Report, Washington, DC file 14–12, 6/19/1942, 9; “Voodoo Killer Tries”; “Member Lists Are Checked by Police,” *Detroit Evening Times*, November 24, 1932, 2.

115 “Suburbs also in Voodoo Net,” *Detroit Free Press*, November 29, 1932, 9. In this article, eight thousand is said to be the number of people listed in the group’s membership register found by police, and the number was 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

the group was so well organized that, as an early study of the Nation explains, Fard was able to “gradually s[i]nk into the background,” taking on the role of a mere administrator. “He did not come to the temple any more but he practiced his plan by contacting his minister [Muhammad] whenever he had an order, decision, or instruction.”¹¹⁶

Conflicts, Schisms, and Decline

Things seem to have been progressing fairly smoothly for the NOI during its first few years, even despite the occasional close call. In November 1931, for instance, the group was able to evade police investigation after an unstable member who was reported to have been “armed and talking wildly” appeared unannounced at the home of Detroit’s mayor. This individual neither made threats nor discussed the NOI in detail, so after his being arrested without incident, the Nation was not looked into.¹¹⁷ But the group’s relative peace was to come to an end one year later, as Fard and the NOI experienced their first major confrontation with the government. On November 20, Robert Harris, who despite his claim of being a “king of Islam,” was probably just an ordinary member of the Hastings Street temple,¹¹⁸ and possibly one of the people who had participated in an eviction riot the year before,¹¹⁹ killed his African American roomer, John J. Smith, apparently as part of a human sacrifice ordered by the “Gods of Islam”

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, “Voodoo Cult,” 897n10), and one FBI memorandum states that the NOI only had 700 members at the time; Fard FBI file, Memorandum, [redacted] to SAC, Detroit, 12/11/1957, 3.

116 Sahib, “Nation of Islam,” 70. Also see Beynon, “Voodoo Cult,” 902.

117 “Tries to See Mayor; Held,” *Detroit Free Press*, November 19, 1931, 1.

118 See “Voodoo Killer Tries.” Beynon (“Voodoo Cult,” 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.

119 See “15 Are Arrested in Eviction Riot.”

to make Harris “the Saviour of the world.”¹²⁰ Harris did not attempt to decapitate Smith, as might be expected, but instead drove a knife into Smith’s heart. Harris, it seems, was mentally unstable and was inspired to perform this ritual after reading in a “cheap magazine [...] a story of mysticism of the desert [...] [which claimed that] ‘the believer must be stabbed through the heart.’”¹²¹ Despite the Detroit police knowing about Smith’s mental state and the fact that his murder had largely been influenced by a non-NOI text, when they realized that Harris was in the same organization as the “plainly psychopathic” man who confronted the mayor a year before, they decided to look deeper into the group, which was now being called by the press a “voodoo cult.”¹²²

Subsequently, then, police traveled to the Hastings Street temple where they learned about the doctrines instructing followers to ‘kill devils’ and, because the leader at the meeting they walked in on affirmed that he considered himself a god (following the NOI understanding of black divinity), the police apparently assumed this was evidence that he was one of the ‘Gods of Islam’ who told Harris to kill, so they arrested him.¹²³ Fard himself was arrested soon after as well (photographs from the arrest reveal that Fard was, as Hazel Barton described Ford, wearing his hair long in the back) and after interviewing Fard and discovering in his hotel room hundreds of letters written to the leader, police scrutiny of the group intensified. Authorities soon learned that Harris had previously assaulted a number of individuals and planned to attack others, and that other members of the NOI had threatened welfare agents to persuade them to continue to give Muslims government assistance; they therefore decided that something had to be done about the movement.¹²⁴

Before the police could make a major move, however, the NOI achieved something that would forever shape the group’s identity. Until this moment, the Nation had served as a crucible; Fard and Muhammad had mixed together African Americans’ awareness of their long victimhood to white violence in America and mixed it with black Detroiters’ recent history of self-defense and rioting, the example of Garvey’s African Legions, the ‘badman’ and other folk traditions and stories, belief in magical and Islamic protection, the African American tradition of unwavering loyalty to beloved religious leaders, the concept of an imminent apocalypse, black veteran leadership, and the MSTA prac-

120 Beynon, “Voodoo Cult,” 903.

121 “Leader of Cult,” 2.

122 See the headlines of the articles covering the event in Detroit’s newspapers at the time.

123 “Raided Temple Bares Grip of Voodoo in City,” *Detroit Free Press*, November 23, 1932, 1, 3.

124 “Intended Voodoo Victims’ Number Still Mounting,” *Detroit Free Press*, November 27, 1932, 1, 4; “‘Asiatic’ Trend.”

tice of showing collective action when Muslims were taken to courts. The product of this concoction was a deep devotion to group unity, order, and militancy that was unparalleled in the AAIR. On November 24, five hundred Muslims marched to the local police station and courthouse in support of Fard and the other members who had been arrested.¹²⁵ It was an impressive display of black collective action that would go down in NOI history as a key event in the movement's development and, as we will see, would serve as a model for what became an important trait of the Nation. However, unsurprisingly, such a display of black militancy significantly increased the concerns of local authorities about the possible threat the group posed. On December 6, Fard was, according to news reports, "persuaded" by police to disband the NOI and leave the city; he agreed to leave and promised authorities that he would not return.¹²⁶

But Fard, after a brief stay in Chicago—from where he sent a letter to the editor of a popular black newspaper, the *Afro-American*, criticizing the characterization of his group as a 'voodoo cult'—was back in Detroit by January.¹²⁷ Now he was using the name Wallace Fard Muhammad, perhaps emphasizing his divinity, and stressing to his followers that an Armageddon was to take place in 1934.¹²⁸ 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, Muhammad was acting as the main leader of the NOI. Over the next few months, he wrote several letters to the *Afro-American* editor himself; these ignored the Harris case and instead promoted NOI doctrines and criticized black Christian ministers as exploiters of the masses.¹²⁹ This effort may have helped the group replace some of the members they had apparently lost since November, but more difficulties came in May when Fard was picked up again by the police and was told once more to leave the city.¹³⁰

125 "500 Join March to Ask Voodoo Kings' Freedom," *Detroit Free Press*, November 25, 1934, 1, 2; "Voodoo Slayer Doffs."

126 "Voodoo's Reign Here is Broken," *Detroit Free Press*, December 7, 1932, 7; "Voodoo Ranks Disbanding," *Detroit Evening Times*, December 7, 1932, 2.

127 Farad, "No Connection"; Evanzz, *Messenger*, 94.

128 Evanzz, *Messenger*, 94–95; Clegg, *Original Man*, 33; Joint Legislative Committee, *Activities of*, 97.

129 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 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.

130 "Banished Leader."

Fard's presence was largely what had held the group together. Without him leading the NOI, the same thing that had happened in Chicago after Drew Ali passed 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.¹³¹ A major source of contention during this period was the degree to which MSTA doctrines would be incorporated into the movement. From the beginning, Fard had been irritated with his original ministers, Abdul Mohammed and Othman Ali, because their message was primarily an MSTA one.¹³² 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.¹³³ Soon, Abdul reportedly began openly preaching MSTA doctrines and pro-US ideas,¹³⁴ and it seems that in 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 African American uplift group called the Development of Our Own (DOO).¹³⁵ As will be discussed in Chapter 8, in the spring or early summer of 1933, a Japanese nationalist named Satokata 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. 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.¹³⁶ 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

131 Clegg, *Original Man*, 35; Beynon, "Voodoo Cult," 904; Sahib, "Nation of Islam," 77. We do not know the names or specific details about 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.

132 Sahib, "Nation of Islam," 96.

133 Sahib, "Nation of Islam," 74.

134 Clegg, *Original Man*, 35.

135 See the discussion and notes concerning Abdul Mohammed in chapter 5.

136 Fard FBI file, Report, 6/19/1942, Washington, DC file 14-12, 10; Fard FBI file, Memorandum, [name withheld] to SAC, Detroit, 12/11/1957, 2. 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. However, this information may possibly be in the versions of the relevant FBI files housed at the National Archives, which I failed to obtain while researching this book. Evanzz has informed me that he is confident this data is contained in the files he acquired; an attempt should therefore be made to look through either the original files or Evanzz's papers, which are currently in the possession of the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center.

of a book Fard had claimed to have written—perhaps in an attempt to insist that Fard had stolen ideas from *him*.¹³⁷ Takahashi's DOO was so successful that after his arrest in December 1933 and then deportation the following April, the 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.

Meanwhile, the people loyal to Elijah Muhammad, who were being called the 'Temple People,' became dedicated exclusively to Fard's teachings.¹³⁸ Fard's divinity status, a topic on which Fard himself had been somewhat ambiguous,¹³⁹ was emphasized more—he was therefore now often called 'Allah'; at the same time, Muhammad's rank was raised to 'messenger' or 'apostle,' and he sometimes began referring to himself 'prophet,' a title that he had previously reserved for Fard.¹⁴⁰ As a prophet, Muhammad could address the fact that no Armageddon had arrived that year as Fard had predicted it would; his solution for this ideological conflict was to simply begin giving new, but extremely vague predictions for the end of times, asserting that Armageddon was to take place in "one [...] year," at which time whites and Christians would be wiped off the face of the Earth.¹⁴¹ Also Muhammad, like some versions of the little man, started wearing white robes,¹⁴² apparently a practice Fard had done (which may explain the white sheets Hazel Barton observed in Ford's car). Those who desired to remain exclusively loyal to both Fard's doctrines and Muhammad's leadership were few, and the NOI membership numbers began

137 See the citations from 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 MSTA had 'five principles' (love, truth, peace, freedom, and justice) and b) Elijah sometimes 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.

138 Sahib, "Nation of Islam," 76-77.

139 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, "Voodoo Cult," 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, "Voodoo Cult," 897).

140 See Sahib, "Nation of Islam," 76-77 and Muhammad's signatures in Muhammad, *Ministry Class*.

141 This is contained in the short quotation of Revelation 18:8 at the beginning of every issue of *Final Call of Islam*, the Temple People's newspaper from the summer of 1934.

142 "Tells Court His Allegiance Pledged to 'Islam'; not us," *Chicago Defender* (Ntl. ed.), August 8, 1942, 12.

rapidly declining. So many people had left the movement out of loss of interest, fear of government persecution, and frustration with infighting that by late 1934 the Detroit faction following Muhammad had been reduced to only 180.¹⁴³

Fard was not yet completely out of the picture, but it was becoming clear that his time directly leading the Nation was soon to be over. After spending the summer of 1933 traveling across the US,¹⁴⁴ in September he appeared in Chicago and was quickly arrested.¹⁴⁵ 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 newly-established University of Islam, and telling leaders to change the signs on the University to make it appear as if it had been replaced in order to avoid police scrutiny.¹⁴⁶ Many accepted these instructions as they had become convinced that public schools were centers of tricknolleggy indoctrination, similar to the slavemasters' churches of the pre-Emancipation days. Fard's return, then, 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, Muhammad was feeling a great deal of pressure. He would later claim that he had started receiving death threats from competing NOI faction leaders,¹⁴⁷ and, due to the Muslim youth not attending the city's schools, in January 1934 the police began looking for the missing children in Detroit's black neighborhood; by March, the investigation—and the fact that the NOI still existed in the city—had become widespread public knowledge.¹⁴⁸ One month later the University of Islam on Hastings Street was raided and fourteen of its instructors were arrested for contributing to the delinquency of the children.¹⁴⁹

143 Sahib, "Nation of Islam," 76–77.

144 Sahib, "Nation of Islam," 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 1, 3; Fard FBI file, Report, 10/18/1943, Chicago file 100–12899, 6.

145 Evanzz, *Messenger*, 95.

146 Evanzz, *Messenger*, 95–96. Some of the Muslim children attended public school part time; see Muhammad et al., *Step in the Right*, 19.

147 Clegg, *Original Man*, 35. The veracity of this claim has recently been contested by Arian.

148 "'Islam' Faces Double Probe," *Detroit Free Press*, March 28, 1934, A07.

149 "'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.

Fed up with the police persecution, nearly fifty NOI members marched to the police station where they rioted, injuring several policemen.¹⁵⁰ Most of the rioters' charges were dropped, however, and the court simply required that Muhammad send the children back to public school.¹⁵¹ Still, although the NOI's second display of militancy was now inspiring some sympathizers—including a local black attorney who would soon write for the *Tribune-Independent* a three-part piece promoting Islam¹⁵²—it was not enough to keep the movement strong.

At some point before the fall of 1934, Fard departed from both Detroit and the larger NOI community for the last time, leaving the unstable group again without its main leader.¹⁵³ Muhammad was now more than ever stressing Fard's divinity and his own prophethood, but Osman Sharrieff, the minister of Chicago's temple who had been personally trained by Fard, rejected Muhammad's assertions, saying Fard never said that he was Allah and that he had never heard Fard say Muhammad was a prophet.¹⁵⁴ Osman broke with the Temple People, taking several hundred of Muhammad's Chicago followers with him to form what he called the Moslem Brotherhood. Chicago, however, was still a less hostile location for Muhammad than Detroit, where he continued to receive death threats, and in the fall Muhammad left for the Windy City, although he would be unable to fully revive his faction there as well.¹⁵⁵

The NOI continued to decline numerically, organizationally, and in morale. In March and April 1935, Muhammad's Muslims rioted twice in Chicago courts, resulting in dozens injured and, indirectly, one death.¹⁵⁶ By December 1935,

150 "13 Policemen Hurt Battling Voodoo Band," *Detroit Free Press*, April 19, 1934, 1, 3.

151 "Girl Recounts Lore of Islam," *Detroit Free Press*, April 26, 1934, 1, 2.

152 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.

153 Sahib, "Nation of Islam," 71; Beynon, "Voodoo Cult," 896.

154 Evanzz, *Messenger*, 104.

155 Clegg, *Original Man*, 37–38; Les Brownlee, "Cult Head Vows Negro World Rule," *Chicago's American*, February 22, 1960, 1, 4.

156 Clegg, *Original Man*, 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.

the number of Chicago Temple People had dropped to just thirteen,¹⁵⁷ and the total number of Temple People in the US was probably no more than 250. Now reportedly receiving death threats in Chicago,¹⁵⁸ 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, DC, which he established as his home base for the next few years.¹⁵⁹ During this period, schisms continued, morale worsened, and white society was seen with increasing disgust and suspicion—government efforts to register people for social welfare programs like the WPA and social security, for example, were regarded as devilish tricks to place on African Americans numbers that represented the Mark of the Beast.¹⁶⁰ The Temple People were also being constantly told by their leaders that the world was about to end through an imminent ‘Holy War’; and in 1936, the end was said to be so close that they were instructed to sell off everything they owned.¹⁶¹ However, after 1937 came and went without whites being killed off, in 1938 Detroit’s Temple People minister, Theodore Rozier, created his own break-off faction, and other new groups, such as the OMA and DOAM (see Chapter 8) were drawing more and more NOI believers away from the Temple People.¹⁶² Meanwhile, outside movements, such as those of the communists and a pro-Ethiopian group, attempted to exploit the factionalism by trying to take control of the movement, though these efforts failed as frequently as the NOI factions’ own attempts to regain control.¹⁶³ In 1937, the Nation also received a new wave of bad press and police scrutiny when a follower of one faction (according to one account, it was that of Abdul Mohammed) attempted to ritualistically boil and eat his wife and daughter in order to atone for his sins.¹⁶⁴

157 Clegg, *Original Man*, 40.

158 A.K. Arian has convincingly argued that at this time Muhammad’s brother Kallat was not, as had been previously suggested by Muhammad himself and subsequent researchers, one of those attempting to kill Muhammad; he in fact appears to have been a loyal follower; see Arian, *Chameleon*, 257–73.

159 Sahib, “Nation of Islam,” 80; Clegg, *Original Man*, 79–81.

160 Dolinar, *Negro in Illinois*, 207.

161 Mohammed, *As the Light Shinneth*, 24; Dolinar, *Negro in Illinois*, 207.

162 Sahib, “Nation of Islam,” 74. Another break-off was made by Azzim Shah in 1936; see Sahib, “Nation of Islam,” 74. Clegg (p. 82) mentions other factions.

163 Sahib, “Nation of Islam,” 78; Beynon, “Voodoo Cult,” 904–05; Clegg, *Original Man*, 37. One of the figures, Beynon tells us, was Prince Wyzzezwxixard 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.

164 “Police Study Story of Cult,” *Detroit News*, January 19, 1937, 15; “Death Rituals Revived in

With these schisms and controversies piling up, by 1938, Elijah's Temple People had probably dropped off to fewer than 200 members—which would be the group's nadir.

Despite these difficulties, after settling in Washington, DC, hundreds of miles from the turmoil in the Midwest, Elijah had set to work rebuilding his following. He converted the family from whom he rented his room, the Mitchells, and by 1937 had established in the city the fourth NOI temple.¹⁶⁵ Being supported by his followers back in the Midwest, Elijah spent a great deal of his time studying, frequently reading about religion, black history, and Freemasonry at the Library of Congress, and he also traveled to meet Moorish Americans in various eastern cities, even meeting and speaking with Turner-El's MDMNA in Hartford.¹⁶⁶ Within a few years, although the Detroit and Milwaukee temples had plateaued—Milwaukee had only two dozen members¹⁶⁷—a few small new pro-Elijah communities that were not yet official temples had sprung up in New York, Newark, Virginia, Philadelphia, and possibly Cleveland,¹⁶⁸ and the temple

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.

165 Clegg, *Original Man*, 79–80; Amir N. Muhammad, *The History of Masjid Muhammad and the Early Muslims in the Washington, DC Area* (Washington: FreeMan Publications, 2009), 17.

166 Muhammad, *Secrets of Freemasonry*, 24; Clegg, *Original Man*, 80; Marsh, "World Community," 92–93; Fard FBI file, Report, 9/30/1942, Chicago file 100–9129, 12. It is unclear exactly how the Washington NOI first grew beyond the Mitchells' family, but a clue is suggested by the fact that in a photograph of early temple member Charles X, he is depicted wearing an MSTA-like plain red fez—not the NOI fez—and we know that Isaac Cooke-Bey had indeed established a Moorish group in Washington by 1930; see Muhammad, *History of Masjid Muhammad*, 18, 26, 31. B.J. Jack, "The Moorish American Science Temple," 2/14/40, 5–6, Federal Writers Project Records, 1935–1944, Box 188, Folder Moorish Science Temple, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library.

167 Wallace D. Fard FBI file, Report, Milwaukee 14–4, 6/1/1942, 4.

168 We unfortunately do not have a large amount of information on these groups. The early New York community was reportedly started by Muslims from Washington and we know that at least one early Newark Muslim had converted in Chicago in 1933, so it is likely that the Newark group's head, Willie Sharrieff, was also from Chicago. The Philadelphia community was started by an ex-con—who met Muslims in a Virginia prison—named Charles Simms around 1942 or 1943; see Mannan, *A History*, 27 ff.; "Temple of Islam Heads Jailed in Draft Charges," *New Jersey Herald News*, February 27, 1943, 1, 2; Fard FBI file, Report, 10/18/1943, Chicago file 100–12899, 6; Bashir, *Top of the Clock*, 11–12; Hauser, *Muhammad Ali*, 91. One news report indicated that the NOI also had temples in "parts of Maryland"; see "Islam Hearing Delayed."

in Chicago finally began to be replenished.¹⁶⁹ By early 1942, the Temple People, one of the few NOI factions still in existence, had somewhere between 350 and 500 members.¹⁷⁰

Part of the Chicago NOI's renewed ability to grow in the early 1940s may have been due to an attempt to appeal specifically to Moorish Americans. Moors appear to have made up a substantial core of the local temple since the early 1930s; newspaper reports about the group in 1935 frequently noted that members identified as Moors, even when they did not use the Bey or El surname suffix, and some reporters explicitly connected the movement to that of Noble Drew Ali.¹⁷¹ However, a 1942 investigation by a Chicago newspaper revealed that this was more than a simple case of former MSTA members joining the NOI and retaining their Moorish identity—the Moorish links were actively being cultivated by the local NOI. In early June that year, the *Chicago Herald-American*, a newspaper that took great pride in exposing anti-American movements, stumbled onto the Allah Temple of Islam while conducting its regular sweep for local 'subversive' activities.¹⁷² Utilizing undercover reporters and working with the Chicago police and the FBI—both of which had their own undercover agents—over the next four months the newspaper recorded numerous details about the Muslims, which were used in the mass arrest of a large proportion of the male temple members on September 20.¹⁷³ During its investigation, the *Herald-American* discovered not only that many Chicago NOI members identified as Moors and referred to their crescent-and-star flag as the 'Moorish flag,' the paper learned that Elijah Muhammad himself, who had moved to Chicago in July after being arrested in Washington earlier that year, explicitly instructed members to tell the government officials that they were

169 Sahib, "Nation of Islam," 81.

170 The Chicago group had 150–300 members (Clegg, *Original Man*, 81); Detroit probably had around fifty (FBI file on Elijah Muhammad, Report, 8/6/1942, file 100–5549, [31?]); Washington had around one hundred ("Moslem, Tried as Draft Evader, Says Allah Didn't Declare War," *Washington Post*, November 25, 1942, 22; "'Moslem' Sect's Membership Declining Under Prosecution," undated [November 26, 1942] newspaper clipping, in Elijah Muhammad FBI file Subsection A); Milwaukee still had around twenty-two; and Newark and New York probably had fewer than a dozen.

171 See, e.g., "Cult Members Run Amuck during Court Trial," *Atlanta Daily World*, March 7, 1935, 1, 2; "Cultists Riot in Court; One Death, 41 Hurt," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 6, 1935, 1, 10; "Cult Riots in Court," *New Journal and Guide*, March 9, 1935, 1, 10; "Moors Battle in Court; 40 Hurt," *Chicago Defender* (Ntl. ed.), March 9, 1935, 1, 2.

172 Robey Parks, "Blanket US in Spy Hunt," *Chicago Herald-American*, September 23, 1942, 1, 5.

173 The newspaper revealed its findings in a series of articles that ran from September 22 to 24.

“of the Moorish religion.”¹⁷⁴ Even the dress of members was more like that of the MSTA than that of the later NOI, with male members still sporting the red fez with the crescent and star and female members wearing red, green, and purple robes.¹⁷⁵ According to one report, in the Chicago temple the number seven was given great emphasis as well, as the group’s supposed initiation ceremony required neophytes to place their fingers in a way that symbolized the number—such a hand signal had been used by the MSTA in the 1920s as the group’s ‘mystic sign,’ apparently being raised during the group’s first prayer at temple meetings.¹⁷⁶ The paper’s most surprising revelation, though, was that the Allah Temple had its Muslims read the *Holy Koran of the Moorish Science Temple of America*, which NOI members referred to, simply, as the “Koran,” as well as Drew Ali’s MSTA catechism—in both cases, explicit references to Drew Ali and the MSTA seem to have been removed from the texts.¹⁷⁷ Fascinatingly, reporters apparently never even heard any reference to the Tribe of Shabazz or Fard. Although those familiar with the history of the research on the NOI might point out that the WPA’s main official reports about the Nation, which were made by African Americans between 1938 and 1941 and were used as

174 “US Seizes 84 Here in Big Jap Plot,” *Chicago Herald-American*, September 22, 1942, 1, 2; “How the American Traced Jap Plotters,” *Chicago Herald-American*, September 23, 1942, 5.

175 “Prison for 32 in Jap Plot,” *Chicago Herald-American*, October 6, 1942, 1.

176 Robey Parks, “Bare Human Sacrifices of Jap-Directed Spy Ring,” *Chicago Herald-American*, September 24, 1942, 4; “Mystic Cult Sign Given,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, September 28, 1929, 20; Herbert H. Nelson, “The Moorish American Science Temple,” 1/31/40, 3, Federal Writers Project Records, 1935–1944, Box 188, Folder Moorish Science Temple, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. The NOI initiation ritual also reportedly involved the cutting of wrists to share blood, a practice that was not only mentioned in 1935 reports about the Chicago NOI, but was also reminiscent of the finger-pricking blood ceremony used by the black communist group—which had a strong branch in Chicago in the early 1920s—called the African Blood Brotherhood. Fascinatingly, the *Herald-American* reports also indicated that the Chicago NOI flag was red and yellow, not red and white as it would be later, and it thus would have looked, with its crescent and star, very similar to the international flag of communists: that of the Soviet Union, which contained a red background with a yellow star and crescent-like sickle. The possible influence from the communists is therefore worth investigating. On the ABB and their blood rite, see Robert A. Hill, “Racial and Radical: Cyril V. Briggs, *The Crusader Magazine*, and the African Blood Brotherhood, 1918–1922,” introduction to *The Crusader: September 1918–August 1919*, vol. 1, ed. Robert A. Hill (New York: Garland, 1987), xxix; Harry Haywood, *Black Bolshevik: Autobiography of an Afro-American Communist* (Chicago: Liberator Press, 1978), 122; Minkah Makalani, *In the Cause of Freedom: Radical Black Internationalism from Harlem to London, 1917–1939* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

177 “US Seizes 84”; “How the American Traced”; Parks, “Blanket Us”; Parks, “Bare Human.”

the bases of the NOI descriptions in influential books by Arna Bontemps and Jack Conroy, did not note this emphasis on Moorish teachings, three issues should be kept in mind. First is that the WPA reports do not include all of the WPA's findings on both the NOI and MSTA due to a significant amount of its research on these groups having been lost, stolen, or simply excluded from the reports.¹⁷⁸ Second, some of the *Herald-American's* rarer claims, namely the description of the initiation ceremony, the emphasis on Moorish identity, and Elijah Muhammad's Chicago practice of referring to himself as 'w.f.'—Fard's initials—have striking parallels in the 1935 news reports about the NOI and in the FBI reports from the 1940s.¹⁷⁹ Finally, the repeated and detailed claims of the *Herald-American* reporters in themselves lend their stories a great deal of credibility.

It is hard to say what are exactly the historical implications of this discovery of MSTA connections in the 1940s. We do not know, first of all, if this stress on Moorish identity had been universal in the Allah Temple—temporally or geographically—or if it was restricted to Chicago in the 1940s. It would make sense that the greatest emphasis on the Moorish identity would be in Chicago, as the city was still the central location of the Moorish movement, but when C. Eric Lincoln studied the NOI in the late 1950s he learned that many of its Muslims—so, presumably Muslim throughout the country, as he attempted to gather information from several temples—were indeed former Moors.¹⁸⁰ Given the existence of rumors that the original Detroit NOI was itself a successionist branch of the MSTA, it is possible that the Chicago group was simply repeating practices NOI Muslims had first used for recruiting/forming a schism

178 This should be clear to anyone who has examined the Federal Writers Project Records, 1935–1944, Box 188, at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, which contains several reports that were not used by Bontemps and Conroy, and some of which even mention other reports that are missing from the collection. Also see Joyce Aschenbrenner, *Katherine Dunham: Dancing a Life* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 112; Jack Conroy, "Memories of Arna Bontemps Friend and Collaborator," *American Libraries* 5, no. 11 (1974): 603. According to the famed African American scholar St. Clair Drake, in the late 1930s one of the WPA writers, Katherine Dunham, with the help of "a Japanese graduate student"—whose name, evidence suggests, was Mary Fujii (Fugi)—published an article on the MSTA "in one of the academic journals"; so far this purported article has not been identified; see St. Clair Drake, "Honoring Katherine Dunham, 26 May 1976," in *Kaiso!: Writings by and about Katherine Dunham*, eds. Vève A. Clark and Sarah East Johnson (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005), 575.

179 See, e.g., "Riot Discloses"; "Cultists Riot in Court."

180 Lincoln, *Black Muslims*, 23. I have personally been told that Moors made up a relatively large portion of the NOI's followings in Philadelphia and Newark.

among Detroit's Moors. It also seems possible, in any case, that the MSTA links were being cultivated in the early 1940s in particular as a result of the Temple People either merging with or trying to bring in other Moorish-focused NOI factions, such as that of Abdul Mohammed or perhaps even a pure Moorish group. But whatever the motivations were at the time, it appears that this strong connection with the MSTA was not to last. By the end of the 1940s, Muhammad had decided to greatly distinguish his movement from Drew Ali's. There is no evidence the NOI continued to use the Moorish *Holy Koran* and Muhammad all but ended the practice of men wearing fezzes (except for himself) and women wearing red or green robes—they would now mostly use all-white robes that were highly reminiscent of the robes worn by the UNIA's Black Star Nurses auxiliary.¹⁸¹

Indeed, it seems that what these MSTA links ultimately point to is that during the late 1930s and early 1940s the NOI underwent a metamorphosis. Faced with significant internal struggles for power, Fard's disappearance, Muhammad's exile, membership loss, and government persecution, the Temple People sought to redefine themselves, and emphasized their MSTA roots in the process. Their transformation, however, would not be complete until the mass arrests of NOI members in 1942. Following the US'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.¹⁸² Between 1942 and 1943, dozens of male Temple People members, including Muhammad and most of the other leaders in the

181 Clegg, *Original Man*, 81.

182 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 Us," *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 US," *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*

organization, were sent to prison for evading the Selective Service, resulting in the near collapse of the movement.¹⁸³ Clara Muhammad, Elijah's wife, had to take charge of the on-the-ground activities, instituting her husband's orders as he sent them from prison.¹⁸⁴ To survive, the remaining male members collected and sold junk off the street, pooling their resources to help any Muslim in need.

Muhammad, however, was not about to accept defeat. Fard had been the man responsible for initially reviving the 'underground' nation of the 'dead,' but now a much more experienced and well-studied Muhammad was at the helm. No longer would his group primarily identify with the Moors or even with Fard's leadership. What was born in America's prisons in the 1940s would be unquestionably Muhammad's group; as a sign, his movement would soon be known primarily as the Nation of Islam and its temples would be called 'Muhammad's Temples'—the old titles Allah Temple of Islam and Temple People would fall into disuse. The movement's rebirth, however, would not become widely known until the mid-1950s, and in the meantime, the AAIR continued to expand and change.

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. In addition, because so many Muslims were arrested and tried in Chicago and Washington, DC courts, a large number of new briefs ran in those cities' local newspapers during 1942 and early 1943.

183 Sahib, "Nation of Islam," 81. Some reports place the number in the thirties, some say fifty-four, one April 1943 report claims sixty-eight, and one government report indicates that eighty-three NOI Muslims were arrested in 1942; but according to one count, by October 1943, 150 Muslims were in prison for draft evasion, and of these presumably most were NOI members, as non-NOI Muslims who were arrested for the charge were relatively few. See "Negroes Represent Less"; "Last of Islam Cult Tried; Get 3 Years," *Chicago Bee*, April 11, 1943, 1; Joint Legislative Committee, *Activities of*, 36; "150 Objectors in Federal Prisons." Decline in temple numbers at this time are also noted in Clegg, *Original Man*, 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.

184 For more on Clara Muhammad, see Rosetta E. Ross, *Witnessing and Testifying: Black Women, Religion, and Civil Rights* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 141-62.

Smaller Sects and Independent Mystics

Although the Nation of Islam is the most well-known product of the Great Schism, it certainly was not the only Islamic current to emerge in the 1930s. The present chapter examines some of the less well-known examples of the deterritorialization of Islam in the first era of the AAIR: the smaller sects and independent mystics. Several of these were influenced by the MSTA and the NOI, and sometimes they were able to thrive precisely because of the MSTA's disunity and the NOI's near-collapse in the mid-1930s, but these sects and figures had additional sources of influence and differed enough from those groups that they should be considered separately. An examination of these organizations and individuals is important not only because they reveal further the legacy of Garvey and the black folk tradition, but also because their diversity serves as a reminder that no single Islamic organization truly dominated African American Islam in the first era of the AAIR.

The US Ahmadis after 1925

After Muhammad Sadiq left the US in 1923, the US Ahmadi movement's growth began slowing significantly. Under Sadiq's successor, Muhammad Din, the movement's American 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, and by 1926 Muhammad Yusuf Khan, an Indian immigrant who had been left in charge of the US organization, still had no idea when or if the magazine would be revived.¹ Though a combined 1,400 people were said to have converted under Sadiq and Din, by 1927 there were at the very most 400 active members throughout the country.² At that time, the group's largest membership was, surprisingly, not in Chicago, where the movement was headquartered, but in New York, which had 120 to 125 active Ahmadis.³ Probably due to the MSTA siphoning off most of the African Amer-

1 Holmes, "Islam in America," 264–65.

2 Hoffert, "Moslem Propaganda," 141.

3 Hoffert, "Moslem Propaganda," 141; Wallace Thurman, *Negro Life in New York's Harlem: A Lively*

ican interest in Islam in the former city, the Chicago mosque had dwindled to maybe sixty or seventy members total,⁴ whereas the New York mosque may have thrived precisely because the city had no official MSTA presence. There were, in addition, smaller groups in Indianapolis, Detroit, and Cincinnati and in St. Louis, Paul Nathaniel Johnson, the most prominent African American Ahmadi leader, had retained around seventy-five followers.⁵

In this depleted state, even the August 1928 arrival of Sufi M.B. Bengalee, the group's new official missionary, could not produce an immediate revival. To some extent, though, the failure to grow was Bengalee's own fault, as he desired to direct much of his attention towards white Americans, an effort that came at the cost of losing more black members. In late 1929, Bengalee admitted that there were now only twelve Ahmadis in Chicago, 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 black.⁶ 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 US, they would have to put more effort into their work with African Americans.

From a proselytizer's standpoint, the timing of this realization 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 back into the Ahmadi fold. Fortunately for Bengalee, he did not have to completely sacrifice the attention he wanted to give to whites in order to do this, as he already had a proselytizer in the US who possessed experience in working with African Americans: Muhammad Yusuf Khan.

Within a few months of first coming to the US as a student from Jhelum, India (in what is today Pakistan) in January 1921,⁷ Khan had joined up with Sadiq, helping him write and mail letters to various US groups to promote Islam and the Ahmadi movement.⁸ With this experience behind him, when Din arrived

Picture of a Popular and Interesting Section (Girard, KS: Haldeman-Julius Publications, 1927), 57.

4 Hoffert, "Moslem Propaganda," 141; John Van Ess, "A Moslem Mosque in Chicago," *Neglected Arabia* 141 (1927): 13–15.

5 Hoffert, "Moslem Propaganda," 141; Holmes, "Islam in America," 266.

6 Andrew T. Hoffert, "The Moslem Movement in America," *Moslem World* 20 (1930): 309. On white Ahmadis under Bengalee, see Bowen, *HCTIUS*, 1:229–30.

7 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*.

8 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.

in 1923, Khan became an important and respected figure in the movement and he began giving lectures on Islam.⁹ After Din left, Khan became the de facto head of the US mission,¹⁰ and by 1926 he had settled in Cincinnati, Ohio where he began making converts.¹¹ A few years later, probably in 1929, Bengalee apparently made Khan a full-time missionary. This seems to have been a wise move from a proselytizer's perspective, as by 1930 the *Moslem Sunrise* was being printed again, signaling the revival of the US Ahmadi movement.¹²

After building up the African American Ahmadi community in Cincinnati and leaving a black convert in charge, in March 1930 Khan moved to Pittsburgh where he soon set up a mosque.¹³ From this new mosque base—which was known in the early 1930s as the 'Mother Mosque'—Khan led the establishment of numerous additional mosques in the region. By 1932, he had under his leadership mosques in Cincinnati, Youngstown, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, and Washington, Pennsylvania.¹⁴ In 1933, these mosques, which were each being led by the African American 'sheiks' (religious leaders) whom Khan had appointed, were responsible for starting additional mosques in at least four more cities: Columbus, Akron, Dayton, and Braddock.¹⁵ By 1934, when the Ahmadiis were boasting that they had 3,000 American converts,¹⁶ there were also communities in Buf-

9 *Moslem Sunrise*, 2, no. 2 & 3 (1923): 190, 193.

10 Holmes, "Islam in America," 264–65; 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 US mission from 1925 to 1927, but left to India in the latter year, and then returned to the US 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.

11 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; Muhammad Yusuf Khan FBI file, Report, 2/15/1944, Cincinnati file 14–69, 4. Cincinnati had likely already had a small number of people who had converted under Sadiq.

12 The magazine started back up with volume 3, number 3, in July 1930.

13 Khan, "Some of our Missionaries," 15. Khan may have been visiting Pittsburgh as early as 1928; see Kaikobad, "Colored Muslims," 19; Muhammad Yusuf Khan FBI file, Report, 2/15/1944, Cincinnati file 14–69, 4. A different 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.

14 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.

15 Khan, "My Message."

16 "Press Notices," *Moslem Sunrise* 7, no. 1 & 2 (1934): 30. I suspect this number was exagger-

falo, New York; Homestead, Pennsylvania; Mansfield, Ohio; and Steubenville, Ohio.¹⁷ With these thirteen communities, the Ohio River Valley region had become, in four years, the US region with one of the fastest-growing, and perhaps most densely-concentrated African American Islamic organizations.

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 US blacks for ten years—longer, perhaps, than almost any other Islamic missionary in the US at the time—he was comfortable with them, and had even taken an African American wife.¹⁸ When Khan found his audiences, furthermore, he made sure his message highlighted the themes and symbols that would resonate with them. Under Khan, African Americans were taught elements of mystical Islam (Sufism), they were sold fezzes,¹⁹ they were encouraged to 'know thyself,' they 'got back their language' through his Arabic lessons, 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."²⁰ 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 MSTA and an African American Sunni community (see Chapter 9). While it does not appear that Khan made contact with the Sunnis, he did find Moorish Americans who were interested in his message.

ated 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.

17 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 9. 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, *Black Pilgrimage*, 285n1. 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 US by 1933.

18 Muhammad Yusuf Khan FBI file, Report, 2/15/1944, Cincinnati file 14-69, 4.

19 Dannin, *Black Pilgrimage*, 39.

20 "Mohammedan Activities," *Missionary Review of the World* 55 (1932): 246; "Islam in Pittsburgh," *Moslem World* 23, no. 1 (1933): 90; John H. Breiel, "Bustle of Cincinnati Fails to Disturb Devotions of Followers of Mohammed," *Cincinnati Post*, February 9, 1933, 2A.

Pittsburgh's Temple No. 5 had probably been established around late 1927.²¹ 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 MSTA temple.²² 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 by one W. Smith Bey.²³ 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.²⁴ 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."²⁵ Not thirty days later, one of Crumby's relatives—probably his son—was arrested for shooting at two individuals with the intent to kill.²⁶ 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.²⁷ Just as had happened when Fard arrived in Detroit, when Khan came to Pittsburgh he found an African American Muslim population in distress, needing a new approach to their problems and a new leader.

21 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) MSTA historians date the temple's founding to November 15, 1927; see Way-El, *Noble*, 95.

22 "Report of Temples," *Moorish Guide*, October 26, 1928, 4.

23 "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.'"

24 "Pittsburgh," *New York Evening Post*, Apr 17, 1928, 28.

25 "T. Crumby Bey Freed of Charges," *Moorish Guide*, September 14, 1928, 3.

26 *The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania v. Carson Crumby Bey*, November 9, 1928.

27 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.

It seems that Walter Smith Bey—probably the same person as the W. Smith Bey who had run the MSTA grocery store—had become the leader of one post-Drew Ali MSTA faction in Pittsburgh, and it was he who would serve as the Moorish liaison to Khan.²⁸ It is unknown when it happened exactly, but at some point between 1930 and 1932,²⁹ Smith Bey had met Khan, joined the Ahmadis,

28 Jameela A. Hakim, *History of the First Muslim Mosque of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania* (Cedar Rapids: Igram Press, 1979), 2.

29 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 Avenue 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, *Black Pilgrimage*, 97), which suggests that the Cleveland mosque could have been Sunni-led in 1930. (c) 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 Avenue 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, *Black Pilgrimage*, 98). In my opinion, this story is probably incorrect. It seems to be a case of

and was given the Arabic name Nasir Ahmad.³⁰ Khan believed that 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.³¹ These former MSTA members were the people directly responsible for establishing the

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] Avenue s.e. (see "Mohammedan to Speak," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, January 30, 1933, 5). The mosque itself was not explicitly identified as an 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 Avenue 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, "A Brief Summary," 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 Khan to teach his own followers (former MSTA 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. (l) In 1943, Akram told the FBI that there was no Muslim activity in Cleveland until 1932 when Khan had Ahmad start a group, which soon grew to 400 to 500 members. See Muhammad Yusuf Khan FBI file, Report, 9/12/1943, Cleveland file 100–11202.

Clearly this evidence does not give us any obvious and reliable outline and timeline of the events.

30 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.

31 Hakim, *History*, 6; M[uhammad] Yusuf Khan, "Cleveland Mosque, My Message," *Cleveland Call and Post*, April 7, 1934, [2?].

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.³² By that time, Ahmad, now the most prominent African American Muslim in the region, was attracting hundreds to the Cleveland mosque alone, and was thus poised to become a significant shaper of the region’s African American Muslim community.³³

In March 1934, Khan announced that he would be making the Cleveland mosque his new headquarters, ostensibly because of its strategic position near the major cities of Detroit and Chicago.³⁴ However, soon after this, probably due to his having been recently arrested for being in the possession of a stolen car, Khan told his followers that he was returning to India for a few months.³⁵ But instead of leaving Ahmad in charge, an Indian, ‘Prof.’ Mohammud Ashraf, was installed as the head. Ahmad, surprisingly, was not to return to Pittsburgh either—that temple’s sheik position had been granted to Abdullah Farook. Ahmad, it turned out, 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. However, in April, as Ahmad was preparing to leave for eastern Pennsylvania and Khan for India, the latter began publicly criticizing the MSTA and denouncing Ahmad for supposedly maintaining ties with his former group.³⁶ The true reason for Ahmad’s transfer, it appears, was that Khan was afraid of losing control of his community to the popular Ahmad while he went to India. Exiling Ahmad, however, would prove a fateful decision for Khan. Despite his followers’ frequent public expressions of respect and admiration for their leader,³⁷ there was growing resentment towards the man, as many believed that he was racist and had been exploiting them for personal profit.³⁸

32 Ahsan Elihee, “The Cleveland Mosque,” *Cleveland Call and Post*, January 13, 1934, 4; Muhammad Yusuf Khan FBI file, Report, 9/12/1943, Cleveland file 100–11202, 4. Also, see three footnotes above for a discussion of the difficulties of dating the events in Cleveland in the early 1930s.

33 Ahmad later claimed that at its peak under his leadership, the Cleveland mosque had 500–600 members; see AAUAA FBI file, Report, 10/9/43, Philadelphia file 100–19940, 8.

34 “Dr. Khan to Make His Headquarters Here,” *Cleveland Call and Post*, March 3, 1934, 2.

35 Muhammad Yusuf Khan FBI file, Report, 9/12/1943, Cleveland file 100–11202, 6; Report, 2/15/1944, Cincinnati file 14–69, 4–5.

36 “Bismilla,” *Cleveland Call and Post*, April 21, 1934, 2; Dannin, *Black Pilgrimage*, 38.

37 As seen weekly in the *Cleveland Call and Post* religion section.

38 Dannin, *Black Pilgrimage*, 38–40, 98–103; Muhammad Yusuf Khan FBI file, Report, 9/12/1943, Cleveland file 100–11202.

The removal of Ahmad from the Ohio River Valley region and his subsequent condemnation was, it seems, the last straw—and Khan’s absence would make it easy to initiate changes.

Just six weeks after his departure, the Ohio River Valley Muslims received word of Ahmad’s success in Philadelphia where he was teaching the local African Americans—echoing the words of Muhammad Din in the 1920s—their “own language and religion.”³⁹ 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, 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.⁴⁰

The Vearianue,⁴¹ 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 additional representatives from the Pittsburgh, Braddock, Youngstown, and Columbus Ahmadi mosques.⁴²

It was said that Abdul Mohammed Iben Akbar, a purported Egyptian who claimed to be the ‘Imam Ul Shareef of America,’ was the person who connected

39 Abdul Mohammad, “Philadelphia Mission,” *Cleveland Call and Post*, June 2, 1934, 2.

40 “Pittsburgh Mosque,” *Cleveland Call and Post*, July 14, 1934, 2.

41 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.

42 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.

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 Pakistan, worked for the creation of a separate Muslim country in South Asia.⁴³ Unfortunately, next to nothing is known about this Abdul Mohammed Iben Akbar or his Moslem League connections. Although there are reports of various ‘Moslem Leagues’ in the US during the AAIR—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—there is no publicly-available information concerning the activities of a US branch of the Moslem League in the 1930s.⁴⁴ In any case, the black Ahmadis had perhaps learned that Sunnis did not accept the Ahmadi movement as true Islam, so they concluded that connecting with the League was “most necessary” if the African American Muslims of Ohio and Pennsylvania were to be “recognized as Moslems.”⁴⁵ 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.⁴⁶

In histories of the schism in Pittsburgh, there has been some confusion over the Islamic sectarian beliefs that were introduced to the community. Robert Dannin, relying on private 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

43 Mliak, “Proceedings”; Eesa, “Bis-mil-lah.”

44 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 USA*; see “Moslems in the USA.,” *Moslem World & the USA* 1, no. 1 (1955): 24–25.

45 Mliak, “Proceedings”; Eesa, “Bis-mil-lah.”

46 “Moslem Activities in Braddock,” *Cleveland Call and Post*, August 4, 1934, 2.

joined up with the 'Lahoris.'⁴⁷ The former believe that Ghulam Ahmad, the Ahmadi founder, was a messiah and a prophet, whereas the latter see him as merely a messiah, and thus are more in line with Sunni Islam. However, Jameela A. Hakim, who, as a member of the Pittsburgh mosque in the 1970s, wrote about the local group's history, makes no mention of the Lahori split, and only discusses an Ahmadi-Sunni split. 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, even if 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 doing so in the Pittsburgh area.⁴⁸ Saeed Ahmad registered his group, apparently with the state, 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 Qadiani community, we do know that by late 1937/early 1938 Nasir Ahmad and other Pennsylvania leaders were adamant that they were Lahori and that their leader was American-born.⁴⁹

Another important element of this story is the fact that some of the African American Muslims in the region had formally organized as the 'Moslems of America' (MOA), a term that had sometimes been used when Khan was in charge. Although in 1938 the group's acting head claimed that he had been authorized to lead the organization by Yahya Ibn Abdullah, the King of Yemen, it is still not known exactly how and why the MOA was founded and it is possible that it was originally as a Lahori group.⁵⁰ What seems to be clear, however, is that at first the MOA head was an immigrant named Professor

47 Dannin, *Black Pilgrimage*, 103.

48 See *Young Islam*, 1935–36.

49 See Dannin, *Black Pilgrimage*, 103 and accompanying notes.

50 "Moslem Mixup Brings Koran into Court Use," *Buffalo Courier-Express*, September 21, 1938, 1. The latter claim is suggested by the fact that Ahmad and one Saeed Akmal were definitely Lahoris at one point, and were also affiliated with the MOA. It is also possible that there is some association between the MOA and the community surrounding Satti Majid, as one of Majid's prominent followers, Ishmael Moore, is in some reports listed as being from Yemen and claimed that, prior to his immigration, he had prepared to come to the US to spread Islam. See Chapter 9 for more on Majid's group.

Ala E. Mohammed, who had originally incorporated the group in Washington, DC in September 1935,⁵¹ and Pittsburgh's local leader that year was a man named Omar El-Farook.⁵² In 1937, when the Pittsburgh Muslim community had reportedly reached what would be its peak size in the AAIR, 1,800 people,⁵³ Mohammed was deported, leaving El-Farook as national MOA president.⁵⁴ As had 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.⁵⁵ While not much is known about the Moslems of America's activities over the next few years, the group does appear to have been affiliated with a UNIA chapter,⁵⁶ and it continued to actively promote its religion, establishing more branches in West Virginia, western Pennsylvania, and, at some point prior to 1936, in Buffalo, New York.⁵⁷ More about the MOA will be discussed in Chapter 9.

Meanwhile, Sufi Bengalee, who had spent most of the last few years promoting Islam to whites in cities outside of the Ohio River Valley region, starting in August 1934 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.⁵⁸ The mosques that had already separated themselves from Khan's group, however, were unwilling to do this, and Bengalee was left to try to organize new mosques in the cities that had experienced schisms—he appears to have only been successful in Pittsburgh—and convince those mosques that had not already broken off to stay. In 1935, Bengalee,

51 AAUAA FBI file, Report, 10/20/1943, Buffalo file 100-6320.

52 Moslems of America (MOA) FBI file, Report, 9/5/1944, Pittsburgh file 100-6685, 2.

53 Laurence A. Glasco, ed., *The WPA History of the Negro in Pittsburgh* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2004), 350.

54 AAUAA FBI file, Report, 10/20/1943, Buffalo file 100-6320.

55 MOA FBI File, Report, 9/5/1944, Pittsburgh file 100-6685, 2; MOA FBI File, Report, 3/7/1944, Pittsburgh file 100-6685, 3.

56 "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.

57 AAUAA FBI file, Buffalo, No. 100-6320; Hakim, *History*, 7; Dannin, *Black Pilgrimage*, 103; AAUAA FBI file, Cleveland, No. 100-10446.

58 "Moslem Activities in Braddock," *Cleveland Call and Post*, August 4, 1934, 2.

leaving African American sheiks in charge, returned to India, possibly to consult with the Ahmadi leadership on what he should do with the Americans.⁵⁹ Whatever the motives for his trip, after his return in December 1936, he does not seem to have been able to revive the US mission to its early-1930s level.

Judging by newspaper accounts, Dannin's evidence, Qadiani histories of their US activities, FBI files, and US 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, including apparently the loss of white members.⁶⁰ 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 one Wali Akram eventually left the Ahmadiyya movement completely (see Chapter 9). Though there are no known precise numbers, if the movement had, as it claimed, 3,000 US members in early 1934,⁶¹ then the various schisms and the subsequent lack of substantial growth brought the entire US Qadiani community down to less than 1,000, and, evidence suggests, to maybe even less than 500, by the mid-to-late 1940s.⁶² No Islamic movement, it seems, had as many ups and downs in the first era of the AAIR as the Ahmadis'

59 "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.

60 In a 1948, a US Qadiani official said that the group only had sixteen US 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. By 1949, the Chicago mosque, which had been entirely white twenty years earlier, was now apparently entirely black; see Helen Fleming, "Reporter Visits Moslem Service," *Chicago Daily News*, September 6, 1949, 10.

61 "Press Notices," *Moslem Sunrise* 7, no. 1 & 2 (1934): 30. However, I suspect this number was an exaggeration.

62 Turner claims that by 1940 the US mission had "somewhere between 5,000 and 10,000 members" (*Islam in the*, 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 US at the time, only had fifty members, and the vast majority did not even attend regularly (see Sahib, "Nation of Islam," 54). The following year, FBI agents learned that the Boston Ahmadi group, which was composed largely of musicians, had only fifteen members (see Report, 10/15/51, Boston file 25-13999, 4-5, Elijah Muhammad

yet in a way it was representative of the AAIR as a whole during this period, as the latter was characterized by its constant deterritorializing volatility. This, however, would dramatically change for both the Ahmadis and the larger AAIR in the years to come.

Fahamme and the Ethiopian Temples of Islam

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 of the early 1920s. Johnson's story is important not only because it shows a new way in which Islam began to take hold in African American culture, it also exemplifies the deterritorialization of religious currents in the first era of the AAIR despite folk-tinged black nationalism remaining as a core element.

Johnson's first appearance in the US Ahmadi magazine the *Moslem Sunrise* was in the July 1922 issue. Here, he and his wife are listed among the 116 individuals who had become Ahmadis since the previous April.⁶³ Interestingly, although he had only just been made an Ahmadi, his "new convert" listing identifies him as a "sheik"—and this was the only instance of a 'new convert' being identified as a sheik in the magazine during the AAIR. While at first glance this seems to suggest that Johnson (known as Ahmad Din) had been a Muslim prior to Muhammad Sadiq's arrival, that conclusion is probably not accurate. The early issues of the *Moslem Sunrise* distinguish 'new converts' from both non-Ahmadi Muslim immigrants who had aligned themselves with the Ahmadi movement as well as from individuals who had converted to Islam prior to joining the Ahmadis.⁶⁴ 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

FBI file). Taken together, this evidence suggests that that there were probably only around 200–300 Qadiani Ahmadis by the beginning of the 1950s.

63 "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.

64 The latter example can be seen in the case of Ella May Garber (Siddica tun-Nisa Rahatulla); see *Moslem Sunrise* 1, no. 1 (1921): 13.

Arab-Spanish mixture.”⁶⁵ 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 language of African Americans’ ‘forefathers,’ and his claim of having an “Arab-Spanish” background had possibly been influenced by the interest in Moors promoted by the UNIA and then the MSTA. Without more evidence, however, we are 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 intellectual skills, respectability, and perhaps even a pre-existing following, all of which were features that Sadiq would have 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.⁶⁶ In addition, he was clearly an able writer, as can be seen in the six pieces he published in St. Louis newspapers and the *Moslem Sunrise* between 1923 and 1924.⁶⁷ Johnson had probably also been involved with esoteric studies in St. Louis, possibly having connections with the city’s white esoteric community and St. Louis’s resident black eclectic mystic-Ahmadi William Manuel Patton⁶⁸—in fact, Johnson would later claim to have

65 “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.

66 Johnson served in seventh company, sixth regiment, 164th depot brigade at Camp Funston in Kansas; cf. his Official Military Personnel File from the National Personnel Records Center. Johnson’s World War I draft registration card from 1917 and his National Cemetery Internment (burial) forms can both be found on *Ancestry.com*. In his 1927 letters to the *Chicago Defender* and the *Messenger*, Johnson claims to have a bachelor’s degree, and the later Fahamme community says he had attended Philander Smith College in Little Rock, Arkansas.

67 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, “An Ode to the Prophet of the Day,” *Moslem Sunrise* 3, no. 1 (1924): 11; a portion of his “Expose” tract: “False Alarmists,” *Moslem Sunrise* 3, no. 1 (1924): 12; and two original articles for the *Moslem Sunrise*: “Living Flora—and Dead,” *Moslem Sunrise* 3, no. 1 (1924): 14–15 and “Did Jesus Indorse Polygamy?” *Moslem Sunrise* 3, no. 2 (1924): 76–77.

68 On Patton, see Chapter 2. The possible connection with whites 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).

first started a religious community back in 1919.⁶⁹ But whatever the reasons, by 1924, he was not only the most prominent black Ahmadi in the country, he was also the only US American of any race listed as an official Ahmadi missionary.⁷⁰ In 1923, Johnson—who, like other Ahmadis at the time, was adding UNIA themes to his Islamic message⁷¹—quickly gained around one hundred St. Louis converts,⁷² retaining seventy-five by as late as 1927.⁷³ As we will see, Johnson was so influential for the early US Ahmadi community that his saying “Get back your language 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.⁷⁴

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,⁷⁵ and he may have been, as a result, 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, African American-focused organization.

In the early 1960s a doctoral student researched Johnson’s post-Ahmadi group and learned that, despite maintaining that the community had originally organized in 1919, the current group actually dated from around 1930 when Johnson began proclaiming himself to be the prophet of the religious culture of ‘Fahamme’ and the leader of the Ethiopian Temples of Islam.⁷⁶ Now frequently

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*, accessed July 12, 2012, <http://www.fahamme.org/fahamme.html>.

69 The earliest record I have found of the 1919 claim is “Ethiopian Temples of Islam,” *St. Louis Argus*, June 3, 1932, 10.

70 “Ahmadia Movement in Islam,” *Moslem Sunrise* 3, no. 2 (1924): inside cover.

71 Such as promoting the idea that African Americans should move to Africa; see “Colored People of St. Louis.”

72 “Colored People of St. Louis.”

73 Hoffert, “Moslem Propaganda.”

74 Dannin, *Black Pilgrimage*, 37; Kaikobad, “Colored Moslems,” 30.

75 Holmes, “Islam in America,” 266.

76 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

going as Paul J. Achamad, the ‘noble prophet’ claimed to have learned about this religion through a combination of study and divine dreams in which he communicated with various major religious figures.⁷⁷ He asserted that African people, their culture, and their religion all originally came from Ethiopia, where their true religious culture was Islamic and their original language was Arabic. The suffering of African Americans, he insisted, was the product of their lack of self-respect, which itself was due to the fact that African Americans, in the words of one Fahamme follower, 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”—an assertion strikingly similar to that of 1920s Garveyites and Noble Drew Ali.⁷⁸ Johnson asserted, furthermore, that the solution to African Americans’ condition was to “know thyself” through the study of the “science of Islam.”⁷⁹ Obviously retaining some Ahmadi teachings and practices, early on Johnson’s organization gave members Islamic (‘honorable Ethiopian’) names, held regular classes for the study of Arabic and the Qur’an, and sometimes observed Ramadan and other Islamic holidays.⁸⁰ That self-knowledge was the key to black uplift was reflected in the word ‘Fahamme’ itself, which, Johnson taught, is Arabic for ‘understanding.’

Despite these Ahmadi-Islamic retentions, however, the ‘science of Islam’ also involved a number of concepts and practices not typically associated with Islam. Johnson showed, for instance, a growing interest in using occult powers and astrology—undoubtedly a reflection of both the popularity of hoodoo and

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.

- 77 Ibid.; “Americana,” *American Mercury* 29, no. 115 (1933): 293–294. The term “noble prophet” first appeared in the *St. Louis Argus* on August 25, 1933 and was used several times after this. Prior to this, in 1932, Johnson was sometimes referred to as the “honorable prophet.”
- 78 “Americana,” *American Mercury*; A[liah] B[aalkis] Walay, “Prophet Will Pay for Self-Respect,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, May 5, 1934, 5.
- 79 For “know thyself,” see the *St. Louis Argus* for October 8, 1932; November 10, 1933; and July 10, 1936. For “science of Islam,” see May 18, 1934.
- 80 The following dates refer to the *St. Louis Argus* newspaper; the Fahamme information can be found in each issue’s “Churches” section, which usually appeared on page 10. For names, see December 1, 1933. For an explicit reference to Qur’an classes, see April 1, 1932; however, the Qur’an was presumably also taught at the group’s Sunday school, which was being mentioned from the beginning of the Fahamme appearance in the *Argus*. Arabic was taught in the group’s language program/school, which was discussed in issues appearing between December 2, 1932 and February 17, 1933. Celebrations of Muslim holidays were noted on May 13, 1932 and December 7, 1934.

Patton's influence on St. Louis Muslims.⁸¹ In addition, in a flyer for the group posted in St. Louis in 1933, Johnson explained that the Ethiopian Temple members practiced ancestor worship and taught the notion that African Americans are descendants of nineteen African dynasties that ruled the world 50,000 years ago, all before Adam's creation.⁸² These ancestors, as Johnson would more fully describe over the years, were gods in human flesh as were the leaders of the twelve ancient black 'nations';⁸³ Johnson argued that the spirits of these divine ancestors were still present in this world, and if they were worshipped properly, they would give the worshipper their powers. Since 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, historical study of black history is vitally important. 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 figures⁸⁴—which means that Fahamme is at the same time both a religion and not a religion. Although the specific teachings about the nineteen dynasties was unique, overall the fundamental concept here was very close to what was taught by Drew Ali and other innovative black nationalism-inspired religious leaders of that era.

Like a number of black nationalists before him, Johnson also emphasized ancient Egyptian civilization and mythology, which he understood as being primarily based around the importance of the Sun. Johnson's fascination with the Sun and mythology appears to have pre-dated his Ahmadi conversion, as he was writing about both as early as 1923.⁸⁵ He seems to be combining

81 See the discussions of the group in the *Argus's* "Churches" section on the following dates: occult powers generally—July 26, 1935; healing power—January 15 and 22, 1932; vibrations of the brain—June 23, 1933; astrology—January 20 and April 21, 1933; reincarnation—February 10, 1933.

82 "Americana," *American Mercury*.

83 The following is derived largely from Paul Johnson, *Holy Fahamme Gospel or Divine Understanding* ([St. Louis]: Fahamme Temples of Islam and Culture, 1943), *passim* and Onwuachi, *Fahamme, passim*. On the twelve black nations and the twelve gods of Ethiopia, see the *St. Louis Argus* for March 12, 1933 and August 30, 1935.

84 The MSTA's reverence for Jesus, Buddha, and Confucius was a similar concept.

85 The 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 his "Living Flora—And Dead," 14.

multiple sources here. Certain eighteenth- and nineteenth-century religious theories that were popular among white esotericists identified the Sun as the central element to most mythologies and religions, but particularly those of the Egyptians.⁸⁶ Johnson's additional emphasis on Ethiopia, however, suggests that he was probably also influenced by George Wells Parker's 1918 black nationalist book *The Children of the Sun*. Parker, the founder of the Hamitic League of the World, explained that Africans, whom he claimed have a special relationship with the Sun, originated in Ethiopia, and from there spread out and established the great Egyptian and Islamic civilizations.⁸⁷ These claims were very much reflected in the Fahamme teachings; and Johnson's connection with Parker's book seems to be confirmed by his own appropriation of the term 'Children of the Sun.'⁸⁸

Perhaps in aligning his teachings with Parker's, Johnson was hoping to win the interest of black nationalist-leaning people with predilections for Ethiopism or Hamitic theories, both of which were gaining popularity in St. Louis in the 1930s. Advertisements for Parker's book had appeared in the St. Louis's black newspaper *The Argus* in the mid-1920s, and in 1933 one A.J. McCrary was leading in the city an organization called the American Hamitic Union.⁸⁹ Ethiopism was even more popular. In the 1930s there was a widespread interest in Ethiopia among African Americans generally due to the country being the last independent African nation as well as the fact that several Ethiopian nationals were doing propaganda work in the US.⁹⁰ As a result, a number of pro-Ethiopian organizations were started in larger northern cities and were often attracting black nationalists, including some Muslims.⁹¹ St.

86 See Jocelyn Godwin, *The Theosophical Enlightenment* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 27–48.

87 George Wells Parker, *The Children of the Sun* (n.p.: Black Classic Press, 1981). Stephen Howe has proposed that it is likely that the later popular idea that Africans and African Americans are 'Sun People' may be largely due to the influence of Parker and the ethnologist W.J. Perry; see his *Afrocentrism: Mythical Pasts and Imagined Homes* (New York: Verso, 1998), 57n17.

88 *St. Louis Argus*, September 13, 1935.

89 "American Hamitic Union," *St. Louis Argus*, December 15, 1933, 2.

90 See Fikru Negash Gebrekidan, *Bond without Blood: A History of Ethiopian and New World Black Relations, 1896–1991* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2005); Joseph E. Harris, *African American Reactions to War in Ethiopia 1936–1941* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1994).

91 At least one Moor and one NOI member are known to have joined the Ethiopian World Federation. For the Moor, see Harris, *African American*, 135. The NOI member is mentioned in Chapter 10.

Louis was the home of at least two Ethiopian-focused groups: J.E. Blaychettai, who wrote two pro-Ethiopian works in the 1920s,⁹² had moved to St. Louis where in 1936 he established his Masonry-based Brotherhood of the Land of Ethiopia, and in 1938 Father J.E.B. Johnson, a Jamaican, created in the city the United Universal Ethiopian Redemption Movement.⁹³ The Fahamme movement appears to have been riding this popular current, even attempting to cultivate modern Ethiopian ties when, in 1934, the group hosted a lecture by a traveling Ethiopian physician named Dr. Glasson who embraced the Fahamme teachings and joined the Temple.⁹⁴

By skillfully weaving together many of the Ahmadi teachings, his Garveyite black nationalist leanings, occultism, hoodoo, traditional African religious ideas about ancestors, and Ethiopianism, Johnson was apparently able to retain several of his St. Louis followers and start to grow his movement. By late 1931, news briefs describing the activities of the Fahamme Temples in St. Louis and nearby Richmond Heights began appearing in the “Churches” section of the *Argus*. The movement seems to have expanded through at least 1934, judging by the occasional references to new converts and the Temples’ attempt to spread their teachings to Chicago and Indiana that year.⁹⁵ However, beginning in 1936, the appearances of these news briefs became much more erratic, and the group seems to have started undergoing an identity change. That summer, it was sometimes listed as ‘Ethiopian Temples of Divine Culture’—leaving out the reference to Islam. Although over the next few months the group sometimes listed itself as either ‘Ethiopian Temples of Islam’ or ‘Ethiopian Temples of Islam and Divine Culture,’ by mid-April 1937 the term ‘Islam’ was apparently permanently removed from its title. It is notable, too, that it was around this time that the group began incorporating astronomical celebrations. The first public announcement for such an event was for the summer solstice in June 1936, and by March 1938 the Fahammes had also begun celebrating the equinoxes.⁹⁶

92 See Chapter 2.

93 Blaychettai’s books were noted in Chapter 2. For his Brotherhood and the Coptic Church he started along with it, see *St. Louis Argus* October 9, 1936 as well as the listings for “The Coptic” in the *Argus*’s “Churches” section in the spring of 1938. The United Universal Ethiopian Redemption Movement was listed in the “Churches” section on February 4 and April 1, 1938 and was the subject of a front page *Argus* story on March 1, 1940.

94 *St. Louis Argus*, October 26, 1934, 8.

95 On the latter point, see the *Argus* for September 2, 1934.

96 For the former, see the *Argus* for June 26, 1936 and for the latter, see Juanita Mitchell, “Fine Folks in St. Louis,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, February 17, 1938, 16.

That the Fahamme group was moving further and further away from its Islamic roots was made clear in 1938 when it was announced that Johnson—who now called himself the ‘Culture Prophet’—maintained that “Negro culture need not be Jewish nor Mohammedan, but a creed and a system unto itself.”⁹⁷ By the 1940s, Johnson had developed a full articulation of his new teachings. At its core was Fahamme, “the out-pouring of the great Solar Intelligence behind which is the Spirit of God.”⁹⁸ The Sun, furthermore, “is the Father of all life, energy, and all light”; but behind the Sun is the greater omnipresent and eternal God, and all people are His children—which thus makes them gods and goddesses themselves.⁹⁹ Islam is the original religion of humankind; it is the doctrine of Isis, El, and Amun, the High God. The word ‘Islam’ is in fact derived from the names of these three gods, as are the words ‘Israel’ (which incorporates the god Ra in its name) and ‘Christ’ (‘Ka-ra-is’). Moses, Jesus, the Prophet Muhammad, and even the Shriners and Noble Drew Ali are said to have taught this same ancient Sun-based religion.¹⁰⁰ Orthodox Islamic rituals had thus been abandoned by the group as had the formal study of the Qur’an and Arabic; what remained was the group’s Sunday meetings and four astronomical celebrations.¹⁰¹ Accompanying this doctrinal transformation was a new propaganda effort through which the Temple promoted itself in the popular black newspapers the *Pittsburgh Courier* and the *New York Age*.

In spite of these changes, however, the Ethiopian Temple—as it was now called—does not appear to have gained a large following outside of St. Louis. By the late 1940s, interest had significantly died down, and by 1954, the year of Johnson’s death, the legacy of his important work in propagating Islam to African Americans had largely been forgotten.

The Takahashi- and Manansala-Influenced Groups

As was mentioned in Chapters 5 and 7, in the 1930s and 1940s, the MSTA and NOI came under the influence of pro-Japanese black nationalist thought, which was largely spread by a Japanese national by the name of Nakane Naka, more commonly known as Satokata Takahashi, and a Filipino named Policar-

97 Juanita Mitchell, “Fine Folks in St. Louis,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, March 10 and March 17, 1938, 16.

98 Onwuachi, *Fahamme*, 13–14. See also Johnson, *Holy Fahamme Gospel*, *passim*.

99 *Ibid.*

100 On Drew Ali and the Shriners, see Johnson, *Holy Fahamme Gospel*, 26 and 30.

101 Onwuachi, *Fahamme*, 34–36.

pio Manansala, also known as Ashima Takis and Mimo De Guzman.¹⁰² On a few occasions, the organizations started by these two men were able to draw in African Americans who had already converted to the MSTA and the NOI by appealing to those two groups' stress on the Asiatic origins of African Americans and their feelings of antipathy towards US society. It appears, in fact, that the most successful merger of Takahashi and Manansala's efforts with African American Muslims was in the NOI's home state of Michigan during the mid-1930s, where a number of NOI and MSTA members joined up with Takahashi 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.

Good information on Takahashi is limited, but he appears to have 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 the MSTA's stress on African Americans having businesses and other institutions of 'our own,' had most likely come from the 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.¹⁰³ Takahashi's main

102 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.

103 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

entrée into the Muslim community was apparently his marrying a local Moor, Pearl Sherrod, who vouched for him and helped mold his propaganda to better combine the views he wanted to promote with the ideas of the Muslims.¹⁰⁴ Although under Mohammed the DOO was primarily concerned with

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 Samuel Grimes, the 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; 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 this is refuted by the several DOO members who explained to the FBI that they were told (and one claimed to have been told this 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 h) historians of the NOI have shown that around 1932/1933 Abdul was already trying to form a break-off faction 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, “Nation of Islam,” 74; Clegg, *Original Man*, 35; MSTA FBI file, Memorandum, United States Naval Intelligence Service Ninth Naval District B-7-0, “Topical Study Memorandum on Moorish Science Temple of America,” 5/28/1943.

104 “How Japan’s Net Spread over US,” *Chicago Herald-American*, September 22, 1942, 1, 2. For

black uplift, when Takahashi took charge, the group started promoting an anti-American millennial message in which blacks and the Japanese would be allies when the Japanese invaded the US, killing all its white citizens.¹⁰⁵ Although he was also possibly able to recruit some prominent local UNIA members, such as John Charles Zampty, Takahashi's ability to develop his group 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, the Nation of Islam was beginning to lose members and experience its own internal rifts.¹⁰⁶ In addition, several South Asian Muslims found their way into the group—with one, Mohamed A. Khan, even being made a first lieutenant in the organization—a fact that may have increased the legitimacy of the group among African American Muslims.¹⁰⁷ Ultimately, Takahashi was so successful that local black community leaders, who found his anti-American message troubling, informed the police about his efforts, which led to an investigation for seditious activities and his arrest in December 1933. In April 1934, Takahashi was deported for the first time.

Like when Muhammad Yusuf Khan left the country and when Drew Ali died, with its leader gone the DOO soon underwent several schisms.¹⁰⁸ Manansala, Takahashi's associate, traveled to Pittsburgh where he began running a DOO that may have had African American Lahori/Sunni members.¹⁰⁹ 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 America (OMA).¹¹⁰ This group was the product of Takahashi separating from Pearl

more on Sherrod, see Keisha N. Blain, “[F]or the Rights of Dark People in Every Part of the World’: Pearl Sherrod, Black Internationalist Feminism, and Afro-Asian Politics during the 1930s,” *Souls* 17, nos. 1–2 (2015): 90–112.

105 See the MSTA FBI file, MID [9?]04.4, 4/2/1943, interviews in Flint.

106 On the membership of a “Charles Zampty,” see DOO FBI file, Report, 3/20/1940, Detroit file 62–709, 47.

107 DOO FBI file, Report, 12/19/1933, Detroit file 62–709. Arian (in *Chameleon*, 285–88) has proposed that this Khan was a Fard alias.

108 See Allen, “When Japan,” 35.

109 See *Correspondence of the Military Intelligence Division*, Report, 4/17/1934, Immigration Office, 4–5. 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, *History*, 7.

110 On the OMA, see Allen, “When Japan,” 35–37 and United States Naval Intelligence Service Ninth Naval District B-7-O, “Topical Study Memorandum.”

Sherrod, who was leading her own DOO faction, in September 1938.¹¹¹ One Cash C. Bates, an early member of the DOO, aligned with Takahashi and incorporated the OMA during the next year, apparently with at least one Sunni Muslim who had probably converted under the Sudanese missionary Satti Majid, Ali Abdullah (Bartie Alsobrooks).¹¹² However, when Takahashi—who had returned to Detroit to deal with his wife and the schisms—was arrested and sent to prison later that year, interest in the group began to wane significantly.¹¹³ By 1942, the OMA was near death.¹¹⁴ Bates, then, decided to join up with Kirkman Bey's MSTA, Inc., quickly gaining an important role as the primary person responsible for printing the MSTA's *Holy Koran* and catechism; and through this influential position he maintained regular communication with MSTA leaders throughout the country and was able to continue to attempt to spread the DOO/OMA message.¹¹⁵ Ali Abdullah, meanwhile, would eventually join up with a new African American-majority Sunni mosque, Masjid al-Mu'mineen.¹¹⁶

In 1941, while the OMA was disintegrating, one Emanuel Pharr revived the DOO in Gary and Detroit.¹¹⁷ His group at first retained a strong pro-Japanese stance, but in 1944 the FBI learned that Pharr's DOO, which at the time had around 170 total members in its five branches,¹¹⁸ had departed from the original DOO teachings and had become primarily an Islamic organization.¹¹⁹ Interestingly, although the group's form of Islam was mostly NOI-influenced—it had several former NOI and MSTA members, but the 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

111 See, again, Blain, “[F]or the Rights.”

112 Allen, “When Japan,” 45n106; “Detroit, Michigan: Services for Member of al-Mumineen Mosque,” *Muslim Star* 17, no. 126 (1977): 11, IMJC Papers, Box 8, BHL. For more on Alsobrooks and Majid, see Chapter 9.

113 For his arrest, see “Cult Claims Thousands of Race Members,” *Michigan Chronicle*, July 1, 1939, 5; “Cult Head Held Under \$2,500 Bond,” *Michigan Chronicle*, July 8, 1939, 1.

114 DOO FBI file, Report, 12/7/1942, Detroit file 100-5209; Allen, “When Japan,” 45n106.

115 United States Naval Intelligence Service Ninth Naval District B-7-O, “Topical Study Memorandum,” 3, 7.

116 “Detroit, Michigan: Services.” See Chapter 11 for more on this mosque.

117 DOO FBI file, Report, 3/11/1943, Indianapolis file 100-4087.

118 Hill, *RACON*, 517.

119 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.

Lomax Bey) who was heading in Detroit an organization called the Uniting Islamic Society of America (see Chapter 9).¹²⁰

Another group that the DOO schism produced possibly rivaled the Fahamme Temple for being the most doctrinally eclectic of the AAIR organizations: the Moorish Science Temple of I AM (MSTIAM).¹²¹ 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 the teachings of the I AM sect. 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 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 Thought-oriented materials, and by the mid-1930s I AM circles were being set up throughout the country,¹²² and at least one African American group had been established in Chicago sometime before 1940.¹²³ As was noted above, Drew Ali's *Holy Koran* had borrowed from similar New Thought-connected literature with Dowling's extremely popular *Aquarian Gospel*, which Kirkman Bey had plagiarized for his own book, *Mysteries of the Silent Brotherhood of the East*; therefore Moors could certainly find commonalities in their and Ballard's writings.¹²⁴ While we cannot say with certainty that there was a direct influence of Ballard, it is at least probable that the MSTIAM was using the 'I AM' phrase to represent the divinity within people, and that the group was strongly New Thought-oriented.

120 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.

121 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.

122 J. Gordon Melton, Jerome Clark and Aidan A. Kelly, eds., *New Age Encyclopedia* (Detroit: Gale Research, 1990), 55-56.

123 Works Progress Administration, *Early Studies*, 23, 82.

124 Charles Kirkman Bey, *The Mysteries of the Silent Brotherhood of the East* (Chicago: Magribine Press, 2006).

In its investigation into the MSTA, the FBI discovered that the MSTIAM had been established in Detroit in early 1938 at 9316 Oakland Avenue.¹²⁵ At that time, 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.¹²⁶ However, by the late summer of 1938, the DOAM had aligned with Kirkman Bey's MSTA, Inc. faction; thereafter it was sometimes referred to as MSTA Temple No. 25; its head, Sheik 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 an MSTA conference.¹²⁷ But its having an MSTA influence did not mean that the group had shed its old doctrines. The FBI also learned that the MSTIAM retained many NOI, anti-American, and anti-white teachings, and it even, like the NOI, kept guards, called 'Muftis,' at the temple door who were apparently very willing to strike with a sword anyone who tried to enter the building without giving the correct password.¹²⁸ Indeed it appears that the MSTIAM was probably the most radicalized of the MSTA temples in the upper Midwest, and was 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, according

125 MSTA 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.

126 Ibid.

127 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; "Cult Officer Held in Cutting Despite Plea of Self Defense," *Detroit Free Press*, August 27, 1938, 2. Due to factionalism, there were two Temple No. 25s in Michigan, though I do not know if this is the same MSTA-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 MSTA only in the late 1930s, 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.

128 "Lacks Lodge's Password; Skull Cracked with Sword," *Detroit Free Press*, August 25, 1938, 1; "Cult Officer Held." An attorney for a Mufti charged with assault in 1938 explained to the press that he had performed that job "for several years," suggesting that this was a pre-MSTA-influenced aspect of the group, and thus that the entire MSTA auxiliary of 'Muftis'—which continued to be present in the small factions of the movement ever since—was originally derived from the NOI's FOI, which had in turn modeled itself on the UNIA's African Legions.

to one report, was at least partially attributable to the fact that this particular temple was located in a neighborhood that was almost entirely composed of African American Muslims,¹²⁹ but its numbers dropped off significantly by the next year when there were only an estimated seventy-five members.¹³⁰

Another Takahashi/Manansala organization that the US 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 ideologically very close to Takahashi's DOO, but was more directly modeled on the UNIA.¹³¹ 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 did not have a strong 'Asiatic' Muslim presence.¹³² Still, because he kept in touch with Takahashi, Manansala presumably knew the value of allying with the Muslims, and when the opportunity presented itself, he probably attempted to do so.¹³³

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.¹³⁴ In December that year, she and twelve other African Americans established in

129 MSTA FBI file, Report, 11/12/1942, Detroit file 100-6603, 10, 13.

130 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.

131 For general information on the PMEW, see Allen's "When Japan" and "Waiting for Tojo."

132 The only information I have been able to locate about an Asiatic Muslim group in St. Louis in the early 1930s is the 1933 incorporation form, on file with the state of Missouri, for the Ancient Moorish School and Temple of Religious Science, led by C. Brown, Bruck Ricks, and Sulliman Hopkins, which does not appear to have been a large organization.

133 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 MSTA group held its meetings; see *Correspondence of the Military Intelligence Division*, Letter, 9/16/1935, Assistant Chief of Staff, G-2, 79th Division to Paul Murray, Lt. Col., Infantry.

134 Hill, *RACON*, 523-24. For an overview of Gordon's movement, see Keisha N. Blain, "'Confraternity Among All Dark Races': Mittie Maude Lena Gordon and the Practice of Black (Inter)nationalism in Chicago, 1932-1942," *Palimpsest* 5, no. 2 (2016): 151-81.

Chicago the Peace Movement of Ethiopia (PME).¹³⁵ As mentioned in Chapter 4, the Moor George Johnson Bey claimed (while testifying at Gordon's 1942 sedition trial) that Gordon was a former wife of Givens-El as well as kin to himself and his father Ira.¹³⁶ George further explained that in 1933 or 1934, Gordon—who believed that George should walk in the footsteps of his father—sent George to St. Louis to organize there an MSTA with a PME leaning.¹³⁷ George was hesitant at first, so Gordon took him to see either Manansala or Takahashi, who offered George start-up money for the group. But 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 MSTA in West Virginia. George claimed that he feared being assaulted again, and intentionally violated his probation so he could go to prison where he would be safe.¹³⁸ 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.¹³⁹

In addition, in the group's *Constitution*, which contains on its front page a crescent and star and makes reference to Allah, it is explained that the year

135 Ethel Wolfskill Hedlin, "Earnest Cox and Colonization: A White Racist's Response to Black Repatriation, 1923–1966" (PhD diss., Duke University, 1974), 112; Peace Movement of Ethiopia, *Constitution of the Peace Movement of Ethiopia* (n.p.: n.p., [1941?]), 11, 14.

136 Hedlin, "Earnest Cox," 154.

137 "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.

138 "Jap Payoffs to Cult Bared at Trial"; MSTA FBI file, Report, 9/21/1943, Chicago file 14–39, 25–26.

139 Hill, *RACON*, 525. Also see the PME FBI file, esp. Report, 6/19/1942; Report, 9/30/1942, Chicago file 100–8932, 6.

1914 marks the beginning of the fall of white supremacy—a teaching that was popular in the NOI.¹⁴⁰ Like many of the ‘Asiatic’ groups from the period, then, the PME’s version of Islam appears to have come from multiple sources.

Government investigations in 1940s Detroit revealed yet another organization with a close, but slightly different name from the P_{MEW}: the Eastern Pacific Movement (E_{PM}). Because there were break-off groups from the P_{MEW} that used names that were similar to the P_{MEW}’s (such as the P_{ME}, which also sometimes went as Ethiopian Peace Movement) and because Manansala’s P_{MEW} sometimes referred to itself as, simply, the Pacific Movement or the Pacific Movement, Inc., we cannot be sure whether the E_{PM} was a distinct organization or just another name for the P_{MEW} or the P_{ME}. Whatever its exact relationship with the those and other Takahashi/Manansala groups, however, it still almost definitely was related in some way to them, and, like the D_{OO}s, O_{MA}, M_{STIAM}, and P_{ME}, it may have had a significant Muslim presence. The first known mention of the E_{PM} is from 1942, when government agents discovered the group in Chicago and Detroit.¹⁴¹ At the time, the agents 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 D_{OO} in that city. Six years later, an FBI memorandum that was apparently concerned with the E_{PM} reported that in Detroit there was a growing belief that Arabs would soon defeat Jews and communists “for the purpose of eventual domination of the world by the Asiatic peoples,” and “in two or three years” Islam would be preached in America and that this would be accompanied by a “Holy War and after that the whites would no longer dominate the world”—again, claims similar to what was taught in the NOI.¹⁴² The final piece of evidence concerning the E_{PM} comes from a US Army intelligence report from 1950 that indicated that during that year the group was being led at 1474 Frederick Street by two individuals who had the M_{STA} and NOI surnames of Bey—Jackson Bey and Wilfred Bey—and that they had transformed the E_{PM} into an organization called the Moslem Holy Temple of Islam; in other words, the Nation of Islam.¹⁴³ On the walls of the group’s meeting room were posters

140 Peace Movement of Ethiopia, *Constitution*, 12.

141 D_{OO} FBI file, MID 201, Development of Our Own, 12/5/1942, 3–4; M_{STA} FBI file, Memorandum, SAC, Detroit to Director, FBI, 12/8/1942.

142 M_{STA} FBI file, Memorandum, SAC, Detroit to Director, FBI, 8/10/1948. As we will later see, even into the late 1950s some NOI members did believe a holy war with Muslims fighting was on the horizon.

143 Letter, 9/22/1950, [redacted] to Assistant Chief of Staff, G-2, Intelligence, AMP. The Detroit NOI used the 1474 Frederick Street address through late 1954, and it was the temple that

containing phrases like “The End of the White Man’s Rule” and “World Leadership for the Blacks.” Next to these, a drawing showed a faceless dummy hanging from a tree with a sign on it that read “Christianity”—a piece of art known to have been used in the NOI. Again, the available evidence does not tell us the exact relationship between the EPM, the MSTA, and the NOI, but it seems that the EPM had either merged with or had been overtaken by the NOI—perhaps in a similar way to what had occurred when the Chicago NOI blended MSTA teachings. In an interesting connection, the only Wilfred known to have been a member of the Detroit NOI during this period was Wilfred Little, Malcolm X’s older brother who, in 1947, became the first of the Little siblings to join the NOI, and whose conversion was very influential in convincing Malcolm to embrace Islam.¹⁴⁴

Despite their claims of having a combined total of tens of thousands of members, the various Takahashi/Manansala groups had, at their peak, at most only a few thousand, and probably only a few hundred were remaining in 1944. In fact, the groups would not last, as pro-Japanese sentiment was not at all widely popular among African Americans in the 1940s.¹⁴⁵ Nonetheless, the impact of Takahashi and Manansala’s organizations, 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.

Independent Muslim Mystics and ‘Sufis’

After the UNIA made Islam prominent in the early 1920s, the religion had become popular enough in the black community that, in addition to the numerous organized Islamic groups that began to spring up, dozens of African

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; Wilfred Little FBI file, Report, 10/27/1955, Detroit file 100–22472, 7.

144 William Strickland, *Malcolm X: Make It Plain*, ed. Cheryll Y. Greene (New York: Viking, 1994), 60; Moon, *Untold Tales*, 274–75; James K. Anderson, “Muslim Cites Goal, Explains Belief,” *Detroit News*, May 11, 1960, 9C. Unfortunately, Wilfred Little’s published discussions of his Islamic activities in the 1940s offer few details about either the EPM or the NOI during this period. His FBI file, furthermore, neither discusses his involvement with the NOI in the late 1940s nor does it mention his possible involvement with the EPM. A Freedom of Information Act request for EPM records, unfortunately, produced no results.

145 “Poll Proves Sympathy for Japanese is False,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, November 7, 1942, 4.

Americans from a wide variety of backgrounds and drawing from very different sources began either identifying as Muslims or adapting Islam-like elements in their identities despite not being attached to any specific Muslim organization. In one interesting case from 1926, in the Muslim organization-lacking Bluefield, West Virginia, a self-proclaimed “colored Mohammedan” was the proprietor of the Mohammedan Jewelry Repairing Co., and for several weeks he ran a classified advertisement in the local newspaper seeking a “girl or woman with good habits.”¹⁴⁶ Two years later, 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.¹⁴⁷ Although not particularly common, such idiosyncratic Islamic identities reflected the deterritorializing atmosphere of the first era of the AAIR.

Several of the independent Muslims from the AAIR’s earliest years were discussed in Chapter 3: the Muslim mystics in New York. After 1925, probably largely due to the popularity of Drew Ali’s MSTA and the UNIA’s Islamophilia, there was a small surge in numbers of these Muslim mystics. Nineteen twenty-seven, however, seems to be the peak year, after which mystics in the black community for the most part returned to promoting a vaguer ‘oriental’ image. But because Islam was increasingly held as a legitimate identity for African Americans, the distinctly-Muslim mystics did not completely disappear, and they capitalized on the fact that Islam in African American culture was still far from being fully reterritorialized. The Islamic themes that they promoted, then, just like the Islam in African American Islamic organizations, were drawn from various deterritorialized sources of religion, such as literature, hoodoo, and Muslim immigrants.

One example of these eclectic Muslim mystics was Hazrat Ismet Ali, a West Indian who posed as a beard-wearing, long-haired East Indian Hindu ‘Sufi Mystic,’ apparently borrowing several elements of his identity from the Sufi Inayat Khan.¹⁴⁸ Ali seems to have first established himself in Chicago around 1924,

146 “Wanted—Colored Mohammedan” (advertisement), *Bluefield Daily Telegraph*, October 20–22, 1926, 10. I cannot be certain that this was a convert, however, as I have been informed that there was a relatively substantial, but so far unstudied, early immigrant Muslim population in West Virginia.

147 “Turkish Coffee Vender Turns out as American,” *Chicago Defender* (City ed.), June 30, 1928, sect. I, 1.

148 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. For more on this figure, see Bowen, *HCTIUS*, 1:210–11 and Kurt Leland, “Cajzoran Ali and Francois Brousse: A Documentary Chronology,” unpublished essay, Microsoft Word file, 2017.

where he was trained by one Premel el Adaros, an individual who was probably African American and similarly mixed various ‘oriental’—including Islamic—and occult teachings and themes.¹⁴⁹ Soon, Ali set out on his own, traveling between Milwaukee and Hartford from 1926 to 1929, and setting up his main headquarters in New York City.¹⁵⁰ Like the other New York City mystics, he sold spiritual services, though like Abdul Hamid Suleiman and Drew Ali he also started two small religious organizations, the Kabaa Alif and the Wali Phil-E-ah-Suf, before being arrested for fraud in 1929, for which he was sentenced to serve one to five years in prison.¹⁵¹ Another black ‘sufi’ from this period was the Puerto Rico-born A. Gilmo Rodez, popularly known to Cleveland’s black and immigrant Muslim residents as Sufi Rajaba.¹⁵² Rodez, who made a living by selling both Masonic regalia and ‘spiritual advice,’ took on the identity of a Muslim mystic after, according to his obituary, he realized his physical features were similar to an “East Indian seer.”¹⁵³ Meanwhile, out in Norfolk and Philadelphia, small-time local conjurers—Dr. Alayoon Buzzard and Alayogi, respectively—were incorporating the world ‘Allah’ into their hoodoo names apparently for the simple reason that it gave their reputations an extra ‘oriental’ feel.¹⁵⁴ Despite the fact that these individuals and most of the other Islam-themed black mystics made little impact on the larger African American Islamic community during the AAIR, a few had a somewhat notable influence, and this section provides brief profiles of them.

149 Bowen, *HCTIUS*, 1:209–10; Leland, “Cajzoran,” 41–43n68.

150 See, besides Leland, “Cajzoran,” “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 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.

151 Leland, “Cajzoran”; “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.

152 See Patrick D. Bowen, “U.S. Latina/o Muslims since 1920: From ‘Moors’ to ‘Latino Muslims,’” *Journal of ReligiousHistory* 37, no. 2 (2013): 173–74.

153 “Hold Final Rites for ‘Dr.’ Rodez Spiritual Advisor,” *Cleveland Call and Post*, December 11, 1948, 11B.

154 Hyatt, *Hoodoo*, 4166, 4170–71.

'Sufi' Muhammad Yusuf Khan

Although we have already looked at Khan's early 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 and independent Qadiani leader, it is important to include him in this section. Khan, it should be first understood, was probably not a complete charlatan, as one might suspect after learning about the displeasure of the Ohio-Pennsylvania community and Sufi Bengalee's denouncement. Khan's writings suggest that he had some real intellectual training, which supports his claim that he received an Islamic education in the Punjab; and his being from India makes it likely that he had some exposure to Sufism as a child.¹⁵⁵ This background would have allowed him to fit in with the Ahmadi group in the US, where, as has been mentioned, Sadiq promoted the association of the Ahmadiyya movement with mystical themes and in a few issues during 1921–1922 the *Moslem Sunrise* even ran advertisements for an Occult Circle that was probably led by Ahmadi converts in Tampa, Florida.¹⁵⁶

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 principal means for doing so. By 1927 he was promoting himself and the Ahmadiyya movement in occult periodicals and was soon traveling to black communities throughout the country as 'Prof. Khan,' lecturing on the topics that suggest a strong association with the New Thought current; a description given in a 1928 advertisement for his lectures in St. Louis exemplifies this connection: "Know thyself, How to understand God, Everlasting Happiness, Paradise on earth, [and] How to be successful in this life."¹⁵⁷ Adopting the titles of 'Doctor' and 'Sufi,' by 1929 he had begun advertising himself as an overtly Sufi lecturer who promised to teach people, through a ten-part, twenty-five-dollar course

the practice of the Sufi technique, which will remove defects in voice and produce sound health. It will teach one how to influence and control people in personal relations and will uncover hidden ability.¹⁵⁸

155 Muhammad Yusuf Khan FBI file, Report, 2/15/1944, Cincinnati file 14–69, 4.

156 *Moslem Sunrise* 1 (October 1921): 47; *Moslem Sunrise* 1 (January 1922): 74; *Moslem Sunrise* 1 (April 1922): 82.

157 Muhammad Yusuf Khan, "Muhammad in America," *Occult Digest* (August 1927): 9, 26, 29; "Coming! Hear Him," *St. Louis Argus*, October 5, 1928, 3.

158 Muhammad Yusuf Khan FBI file, Report, 9/12/1943, Cleveland file 100–11202, 5. See also his advertisements in the *Washington Post* on January 22 and 23, 1929.

From a business perspective, emphasizing Sufism was a smart decision, as Inayat Khan and Gurdjieff had popularized Sufism as a legitimate practice for Americans. However, Khan's efforts to make money apparently knew no bounds. At his own Ahmadi mosques, he charged members for Muslim identification cards, literature, herbs and medicines, classes on Arabic, and even short prayers and metaphysical sayings;¹⁵⁹ and it was this greed that had contributed to him being kicked out of the community in 1934.

When Khan first returned to the States in 1937, he attempted to regain his leadership role in various mosques.¹⁶⁰ By 1938, however, after most of the mosques had rejected him, Khan resumed his for-profit mystical lecturing in the black community—only now, probably in an attempt to evade angry former followers, he adopted the identity of 'Sheik Abdul,' an astrologer and 'divine medium' from Cairo who had studied at Oxford University.¹⁶¹ By the end of the year, he had affiliated himself with William Patton's Lamasary Temple, where he was claiming to be "associated with Sufi M.Y. Khan"—and then, suddenly, in January, Sheik Abdul disappeared and 'Sufi Yusuf Khan' returned, now lecturing at Masonic halls.¹⁶²

Khan would continue to promote himself as mystic, traveling as far as Atlanta by 1941, but he had also established a new homebase in Cincinnati, where the group he first founded remained loyal to him into the 1940s.¹⁶³ Using the name Universal Muslim League—a curious title, since it was the influence of a Muslim League that had led to Khan's initial ouster from the Ohio-Pennsylvania region—the small group regarded Khan as a prophet, possibly due to him having changed his image.¹⁶⁴ In his previous phase as an Ahmadi leader, Khan had avoided bringing up race and anti-American views, allowing his followers to broach the controversial subjects without sharing his own

159 Muhammad Yusuf Khan FBI file, Report, 9/12/1943, Cleveland file 100-11202, 5.

160 Muhammad Yusuf Khan FBI file, Report, 9/12/1943, Cleveland file 100-11202, 9.

161 His advertisements in the *St. Louis Argus* (which ran from late October through November) used the same photograph that he had used in that paper back in 1928.

162 "Sheik Abdul Giving Free Lectures," *St. Louis Argus*, November 25, 1938, 2; "Oriental Astrology," *St. Louis Argus*, January 6, 1939, 5.

163 "Astrologist and Metaphysician at Radcliffe Church," *Atlanta Daily World*, October 28, 1941, 2; Muhammad Yusuf Khan FBI file; MOA FBI file, Report, 1/15/1944, Pittsburgh file 100-6685, 2; Dannin, *Black Pilgrimage*, 99 and notes; 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.

164 Muhammad Yusuf Khan FBI file, Report, 7/13/1943, Cincinnati file 14-69, 5; Report, 2/15/1944, Cincinnati file 14-69, 4-5.

opinion, but now it seems that he was more willing to go there himself, possibly due to having been influenced by other organizations. He, for example, was sometimes overtly critical of whites and the US government, insisting that African Americans had been deceived by the 'white man' who gave them new names and called them 'negroes.'¹⁶⁵ Khan even spoke at UNIA meetings and was rumored to have had a connection with Manansala; it may have been the latter who influenced Khan to say that in World War II Japan would bomb churches but not mosques.¹⁶⁶ Apparently, all of this helped Khan grow his following; in 1943 he was able to start a new mosque in Braddock, Pennsylvania with forty people.¹⁶⁷

Still, despite his rising prominence as a Muslim organization leader, Khan appears to have increasingly focused his energy into lecturing and selling spiritualistic services. In doing this, he frequently shed his overtly Islamic identity and promoted himself as a vague oriental astrologer and, as he put it, 'metaphysician.' For the next fifteen years, 'Dr. Yusuf Khan' gave speeches at various churches and sold his services all around the South, the Eastern Seaboard, and, surprisingly, throughout the Ohio River Valley region.¹⁶⁸ It is unclear, however, as to what became of Khan after the 1950s.

Father Hurley, Elias Mohammed Abraham, and 'Arabian Science'

The ease with which an AAIR-era African American might begin to take on in his or her identity elements of Islam can be seen in the case of Father George W. Hurley. Hurley, a spiritual preacher whose message was very much based on a Garvey-influenced Christian discourse, established in 1923 the Universal Hagar Spiritual Church in Detroit.¹⁶⁹ Although it is likely that the figure of Hagar was chosen for his church's name not because of her connection to Ishmael and thus Muslims (as Islamic tradition holds that the Prophet Muhammad is a descendant of Ishmael), but rather because she was a well-known

165 Muhammad Yusuf Khan FBI file, Report, 7/13/1943, Cincinnati file 14-69, 2, 3.

166 Muhammad Yusuf Khan FBI file, Report, 7/13/1943, Cincinnati file 14-69, 7, 9; Report, 4/1/1943, Cincinnati file 14-69, 2; Report, 5/15/1943, Cincinnati file 14-69, 6.

167 Muhammad Yusuf Khan FBI file, Report, 2/15/1944, Cincinnati file 14-69, 5.

168 Muhammad Yusuf Khan FBI file, *passim.*; "US Most Religious Moslem Missionary Thinks," *Cincinnati Times-Star*, February 20, 1947, 19; "Don't Tip Hat 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.

169 On Hurley, see Baer, *Black Spiritual*, 86-94.

biblical slave, it reflects how close an African American could get to taking on an 'Islamic' identity using existing knowledge. Hurley's church, moreover, shared much with the mystic-leaning Islamic movements of the AAIR. This 'prophet,' like Paul Nathaniel Johnson, stressed identification with Ethiopia and Egypt and, similar to Fard, 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 Seeing Eye. In addition, Hurley emphasized mystical and oriental knowledge, and his movement frequently used Levi Dowling's *Aquarian Gospel*.

Hurley developed some of his more Islam-leaning ideas in 1930 under the direct influence of a self-proclaimed Muslim spiritualist, one Elias Mohammed Abraham.¹⁷⁰ That year, 'Reverend' Abraham was the Church's 'Professor of the Arabic School.'¹⁷¹ Hurley at that time had taken up the notions that Arabic was "the language [...] spoken by the prophets, from Adam to Prophet Jesus, then to Mohammed," and that it was important to study the language "in case we need our Arabian brethren's help."¹⁷² He also felt that Islam was "a Spiritual doctrine and the same doctrine that we are preaching," and, therefore, that Muslims could legitimately believe that he—Hurley—was a legitimate prophet.¹⁷³ This last assertion may have been an attempt to bring African American Muslims into his community. Within months, Hurley, under the name Aboonah Adam, with Abraham as a co-author, produced the booklet *Arabian Science*, which contains introductory lessons in Arabic, a brief biography of the Prophet Muhammad (emphasizing his spiritualist qualities), some sayings attributed to Muhammad, common Islamic expressions, and his assertion that "a true Moslem is a true Spiritualist."¹⁷⁴

Who Elias Mohammed Abraham was is somewhat of a mystery. Like Abdul Hamid Suleiman, Fard, and even Lucius Lehman, he claimed to be an Arabian

170 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.

171 Adam and Abraham, *Arabian Science*, 4.

172 *Ibid.*, 3, 2.

173 *Ibid.*

174 *Ibid.*, 4.

who could speak over a dozen languages—but this is virtually all we know about the man. While scholar Jacob Dorman has proposed that Abraham was possibly a person known alternatively as Elijah Martin, Elias Martin, and Elijah Mohammed—an African American Sunni convert under Satti Majid—there is no direct evidence to support this.¹⁷⁵ Given the fact that Detroit was home to the largest Muslim community in the US, Abraham was probably a Muslim immigrant living in Detroit. However, his affiliation with someone who saw Islam as a ‘spiritualist’ religion suggests that 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.¹⁷⁶

In other words, the Prophet Muhammad is “the master spiritualist”—an idea that was popular in Western mystical Islam tradition¹⁷⁷—and readers of the Qur’an might have access to this spiritualism. However, although this idea corresponds with Hurley’s view of Muhammad, it is not known if Elias Mohammed Abraham actually agreed with Hurley’s interpretations. It appears, in any case, that Abraham did not stay with the group long, and Hurley’s emphasis on Arabic and Islam seems to have soon died off.

Sufi Abdul Hamid

Perhaps the most well-known independent Muslim mystic in the AAIR was Sufi Abdul Hamid. Throughout his career, Sufi told varying stories about his supposed Sudanese-Egyptian background and international travels, but when

¹⁷⁵ Dorman, “A True Moslem,” 118.

¹⁷⁶ Din, “Living Flora—And Dead,” 15.

¹⁷⁷ 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 and was even used by the famous white convert Alexander Russell Webb; see Bowen, “Scientific Religion,” 315–16 and *idem.*, *HCTIUS*, 1:57–59, 165. 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 Ahmadi’s; see “Swedenborgian Church,” *Moslem Sunrise* 3, no. 1 (1924): 36–37.

faced with serious legal issues he stated that he was born in Philadelphia¹⁷⁸ 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.¹⁷⁹ There was a rumor that later, in the late 1920s or early 1930s, while still in Chicago, he had transformed his persona into an oriental mystic named Bishop Conshankin¹⁸⁰ and led a movement trying to obtain jobs for African Americans,¹⁸¹ but 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.¹⁸²

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.¹⁸³ After gaining this attention, Sufi took on the role of an activist leader and in June he was arrested heading, probably with several UNIA followers, a picket of a Woolworth's store for not hiring African Americans.¹⁸⁴ 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.¹⁸⁵ Preaching from Harlem street corners a pro-Garvey message about the need for blacks to organize to ensure that they would have jobs, Sufi had

178 However, another account holds that he was born in Lowell, Massachusetts.

179 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.

180 Unfortunately, I know of no direct evidence of this. Sufi was affiliated with the *Chicago Whip* newspaper at the time; however, I have not been able to locate copies of the paper's issues from the late 1920s and early 1930s.

181 McKay, *Harlem*, 185–186. One report indicates that Hamid was nicknamed 'Philadelphia Slim'; Ebenezer Ray, "‘Race-Uplift’ Groups Stage Early Morning Battle at 133rd Street and Lenox Ave.," *New York Age*, September 10, 1932, 1.

182 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.

183 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.

184 "13 Jailed for Picketing N.Y. Woolworth Store," *Chicago Defender* (Ntl. ed.), June 25, 1932, 4.
185 "‘Race-Uplift’ Groups," 1.

gained enough of a following that he decided to run for an assemblyman position in Manhattan.¹⁸⁶ After failing to be elected, however, in September Sufi led his Oriental and Occidental Society in a raid of the New York UNIA's Tiger Division (which itself had some Islamic influences),¹⁸⁷ with whom Sufi was frustrated because the group had resisted aligning with his efforts to boycott businesses that refused to hire blacks.¹⁸⁸ 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."¹⁸⁹ 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 his Islamic identity resonated with those who had been exposed to the UNIA's Islamophilia.

Still, it seems that with the raid on the Tiger Division, Sufi had significantly overstepped Harlem's cultural boundaries,¹⁹⁰ and he appears to have soon left New York. But in the summer of 1934, Sufi reappeared in the press when he became a major figure in a new picketing campaign, calling once again for jobs for African Americans.¹⁹¹ Due to his making anti-semitic remarks, this time it was the Jewish community that came out to oppose Sufi, and in the fall he was unsuccessfully sued. Then, in January 1935, Sufi made more headlines when he was arrested for giving a public speech without a permit and for selling a book without a license.¹⁹² Although in one newspaper report it was said that Sufi had been charged for preaching atheism,¹⁹³ the booklet, entitled *The Black*

186 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.

187 On the Tiger division, see Hill, *Garvey Papers*, 7:308n2. 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.

188 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.

189 "Two Injured."

190 See, for example, The Man at the Window, "Looking at Life," *New York Age*, October 1, 1932, 5.

191 See Muraskin, "Harlem Boycott."

192 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.

193 Layne, "Sufi Abdul Hamid, In Stormy," 1.

Challenge to White Supremacy,¹⁹⁴ used mystical religious and Islamic themes and symbols. The writer Claude McKay described the booklet as follows:

The frontispiece contained a photograph of the turbaned Sufi and under it this verse from Omar Khayyam:¹⁹⁵

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.”¹⁹⁶

Even if, as Sufi’s lawyer claimed, *The Black Challenge to White Supremacy* contained “absolutely nothing relevant to Sufi’s actual avowed doctrines,”¹⁹⁷ 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 sometimes had Muslim immigrants in his organizations, such as a purported Egyptian sheikh named Hafiz Mandalay 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 1938.¹⁹⁸

194 “Jail ‘Hitler’ of Harlem,” *St. Louis Argus*, January 25, 1935, 12.

195 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; see John D. Yohannan, *Persian Poetry in England and America: A 200-Year History* (Delmar, NY: Caravan Books, 1977), 161–214.

196 McKay, *Harlem*, 205.

197 “Sufi Abdul Hamid Sentenced to 10 Days in Workhouse; Magistrate Brands Him Professional Faker,” *New York Age*, January 26, 1935, 1.

198 Nadim al-Maqdissi, “The Muslims of America,” *The Islamic Review* 43, no. 6 (June 1955): 30; Mayes, “Muslims of African Descent,” 29–30; “Old Hymns Stir Sufi Mourners,” *Afro-*

After his 1935 arrest, while he continued both organizing labor activities and facing legal prosecution, Sufi began working on additional projects. In 1935, he traveled through North Carolina to gain support and financing for an African American pilot, Ace Hawkins, to serve in Ethiopia's military.¹⁹⁹ 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 the Harlem 'numbers' (lotto) racket that she dominated.²⁰⁰ 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.²⁰¹ Soon after, Sufi married Madame Fu Futtam, another fortune teller and author of multiple dream books.²⁰² 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-inspired²⁰³—its 'temple priest' used an Islamic name, Yusef Mohamid, and Hafiz Mandalay and Sufi Akbar may have also been members.²⁰⁴ Only a few months later, however, on July 31, Sufi's life was cut short when he died in a plane crash in Long Island. His new wife, who claimed to be able to communicate with Sufi's spirit and believed

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*.

- 199 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, DC: Middle Atlantic Regional Press, 1993), 28–29; and the following reports from Samuel Daniels's FBI file: Report, 8/13/1935, New York file 62–5541, 4; Report, 11/20/1935, Charlotte, NC file 62–576, 1–2; Report, 12/27/1935, New York file 62–5541, 1, 6; Report, 1/20/1936, Charlotte, NC file 62–576, 1–4; Report, 3/20/1936, New York file 62–5541, 3–4.
- 200 The St. Clair-'Bumpy' Johnson-Schultz drama was the subject of the 1997 film *Hoodlum*. Sufi, however, does not appear in this movie.
- 201 Cooke, "Mme. Sufi Up," 1.
- 202 "Negro Cultist Dies in Plane," *New York Sun*, August 1, 1938, 6. Her dream books included *The 5 & 7 Race Magical, Spiritual Dream Book, Fu Futtam's New Startling Facts*, and probably several others.
- 203 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.
- 204 "Widow Smiles at 'Black Hitler's' Rites," *Chicago Defender* (Ntl. ed.), August 13, 1938, 3.

that he would soon resurrect, continued to run the Temple for a few months; but there are no reports of it existing after 1938.²⁰⁵

The Relative Prominence of Sectarian Groups in the First Era

The existence of several smaller sects and independent mystics in the 1920s through the 1940s 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 highly novel ways and were fairly popular; in almost any Northern city, one could find multiple forms of Islam in the local black community. Although most forms had a Garvey/black nationalist tinge and a folk element, esoteric-New Thought themes remained strong components, and more and more African Americans were going beyond the Islam they were first exposed to, exploring and eventually incorporating ideas of various black and immigrant Muslim groups as well as notions not traditionally identified as Islamic. In short, the AAIR's diversity was growing.

In the second era of the AAIR, there would continue to be several sectarian Islamic organizations in the US's black community, but they would never have the relative prominence and influence that they did in the first era. Sectarian groups like the Ahmadis and the Fahamme Temples were dominant African American Islamic organizations in certain areas at certain times during this period. The Takahashi/Manansala factions 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 contrast, 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 NOI was the dominant African American Muslim group in almost every major city and region in the US. It was only in the first era of the AAIR, then, that deterritorialized sectarianism was a pervasive, defining feature of African American Islam.

205 "Widow Smiles"; "Sufi's Widow Tells of Contact with Dead Mate," *Chicago Defender* (Ntl. ed.), October 22, 1938, 3.

Early Sunnis

Despite the fact that during the first era of the AAIR black nationalism and folk religion were the fundamental shapers of African American Islam and Islamic sectarianism was extremely common, there was still a strong current of more orthodox forms of Islam—that is, what is often called ‘Sunni.’ This development was significantly influenced by two additional and competing factors: the deterritorialization of Islamic currents, primarily through Muslim immigration, and the reterritorializing desire for Islamic strength and unity to counter the growing sectarianism and schisms plaguing the African American Muslim community. Although deterritorialization would eventually win out, with even the Sunni community dividing into numerous groups, the efforts to form a national black Sunni organization in the first half of the AAIR show that African American approaches to Islam were gaining an increasing ability to respond to the challenges that building an African American Islamic community posed.

The main currents of first-era AAIR Sunni Islam developed over the course of three distinct phases. The first phase lasted from the 1920s to the early 1930s. Duseé Mohamed Ali and the UNIA’s Islamophilia seem to have contributed to this somewhat in Detroit, and there were apparently a few South Asian-led conversions in both California and New York. 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 several to Islam before his departure from America in 1929.

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 early 1930s and lasted until around 1942: Muhammad Ezaldeen, the former James Lomax Bey. In this second phase, Ezaldeen spent the majority of his time building up Sunni Islam in the Ohio-Pennsylvania region, where he was greatly assisted by former Moorish-Ahmadis like Nasir Ahmad. New York, however, had a relatively strong Sunni community as well, and the several organizations there reveal the diversity in Islamic currents that were influencing African American Sunni Islam over the course of this early period.

In phase three, which took place during the early-to-mid 1940s, the ties between New York City and the Ohio-Pennsylvania regions were formalized with the creation of a national African American Sunni organization, the Unit-

ing Islamic Society of America. Also during this phase, a number of influential immigrant Muslims, through teaching and publishing books, began to significantly increase religious knowledge in the black Sunni community. With this new information, African American Sunnis were now less dependent on their early leaders and more willing to explore Islam for themselves.

Phase I: 1919–1931

As we saw in Chapter 2, at the beginning of the AAIR a number of immigrant Sunni Muslims were interacting with African Americans. In most cases, though, either their impact was minimal or they simply made African Americans aware of Islam without actually converting anyone.¹ There were, however, a few exceptions to the pattern, as immigrant organizations and missionaries occasionally brought in black converts in the 1920s and early 1930s.

The former Garveyite Dusé Mohamed Ali is notable in this regard. In the fall of 1922, around the time he withdrew from the UNIA, Dusé was invited to Detroit by several Indian Muslims, some of whom possibly knew of him through his work with the Muslim community in London in the 1910s.² Dusé would not take up residence in Detroit at this time, however; in fact, he spent much of the next three years in Chicago, St. Louis, and New York promoting his African American Oriental Trading Company.³ Nevertheless, it was in Detroit where Dusé seems to have first planted solid organizational roots for Islam-based activities. In late 1925 he formed a group with both immigrants and non-Muslim whites called the American-Asiatic Association (also known as the America-Asia Society), which, as Dusé put it, aimed to “call into being more amicable relations and a better understanding between America and the Orient in general than had previously obtained.”⁴

1 For more on the 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), 120–24; Atif Amin Wasfi, “Dearborn Arab-Moslem Community: A Study of Acculturation” (PhD diss., Michigan State University, 1964), 176–77; 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.

2 Duffield, “Dusé Mohamed Ali,” 690; Khan, *Chains to Lose*, 422–24.

3 Duffield, “Dusé Mohamed Ali,” 678–87. Numerous mentions of Dusé’s activities during this period can be seen in the *Chicago Defender* and the *St. Louis Argus*. In addition, I have found brief references to him in various New York newspapers.

4 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.

The following year, Dusé went even further in his Islam-based organizing activities by becoming the president of the Universal Islamic Society (UIS), a newly-formed multi-racial organization located in Detroit's black section at 1941 Hastings Street.⁵ In addition to its Arab and Indian immigrant members, photographs of the Society suggest that some African Muslims had joined the group and one reporter explicitly noted that the Society had African American converts.⁶ Interestingly, according to this reporter, these Muslims prayed "to Allah for the blessings of democracy which they had not been able to obtain under the Cross, but which [Dusé] assured them they would and under the Crescent."⁷ It is likely that the meaning of this statement was that through conversion to Islam African Americans might gain either God's favor or, perhaps, improved self-discipline and self-respect and better treatment from white society, and thus be able to obtain "the blessings of democracy." However, it is possible too that this statement's intent was similar to Fard's claim that converts would become citizens of Mecca—that Dusé was suggesting converts move to Muslim countries.

Unfortunately, we know virtually nothing about these converts or about the lasting impact of Dusé's Islamic activities in the city. He left Detroit in 1927 and we have no clear additional information regarding possible later activities of the UIS or any other interactions Dusé may have had with African Americans there. There is, however, one clue that suggests memory of Dusé lingered among at least a certain group of Detroit Muslims. In 1939, when Detroit resident John Mosby, also known as John Mosby Bey or Abdul Hock, murdered his friend and then took his own life, police discovered that he was a one-time member of not only the 'Moorish Holy Temple of Science and the Moorish Divine Order of North America'—a Moorish faction that apparently issued fezzes that had a six-pointed blue star as well as a blue and red flag—but also the 'Arab Religious Society Universal Islamic' and the 'Native African Union of America.'⁸ Given that the last of these organizations was a Pan-African

5 See Duffield, "Dusé Mohamed Ali," 688–93; Sally Howell, *Old Islam in Detroit: Rediscovering the Muslim American Past* (New York: Oxford University Press, [2014]), 71–80; Sally F. Howell, "Inventing the American Mosque: Early Muslims and Their Institutions in Detroit, 1910–1980" (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2009), 92–101.

6 Cf. the sources in the previous note. See also Philip A. Adler, "Oriental Influence in Riot Background," *Detroit News*, June 25, 1943, 15.

7 Adler, "Oriental Influence."

8 "Cult Murderer Kills Self," *Michigan Chronicle*, September 9, 1939, 1, 2. The subheading for this article states that Mosby was a "cult member in 1926–28," but the article does not clarify whether this was with Moorish Science.

group in which Dusé was a prominent member and through which he was possibly influencing others to embrace Islam,⁹ it seems very possible that the 'Arab Religious Society Universal Islamic' was in fact the UIS, and that Mosby, and perhaps other Moors, had been influenced by Dusé at some point.

South Asian Sunnis, meanwhile, were apparently responsible for some conversions on both American coasts. In New York City, where a number of Indian immigrants were marrying African Americans,¹⁰ South Asian Sunni-led proselytization was primarily being conducted by the members of a group known as the Moslem Brotherhood of the United States of America (MBUSA). Organized on August 25, 1929 by an ethnically mixed group of Muslims, including the prominent white convert Louis Selim Glick,¹¹ by the early 1930s the organization had moved to Harlem and was being led by Indians who, although they do not appear to have been extremely effective, were enthusiastic about converting black Caribbean immigrants.¹²

9 Duffield, "Dusé Mohamed Ali," 709–20. Duffield speculates that Dusé may have influenced the conversion of one of the group's leaders, Winfried Tete-Ansa; see Duffield, "Dusé Mohamed Ali," 697–98.

10 Vivek Bald, "Hands across the Water: Indian Sailors, Peddlers, and Radicals in the US 1890–1965" (PhD diss., New York University, 2009).

11 "Islam in New York City," *Genuine Islam* 1, no. 3 (March 1936): [16?]. (I would like to thank Fathie Ali Abdat for finding this article for me.) The founders are listed as Abdoul Raschid—president; Hasbey Abdullah—treasurer; Sheik Ahmad—secretary; and L. Lincoln Glick (i.e., Louis Glick)—honorary member. Although this article appeared in 1936 and does not specify the year of the MBUSA's founding, the information contained in it, when compared with what we know about Islamic activities in New York at that time, suggests that it was indeed referring to events from years earlier. For a discussion of Muslims in New York in the late 1920s and early 1930s, see Bowen, *HCTIUS*, 1: 240–51.

12 "Islam in America," *Muslim Revival* 2, no. 2 (1933): 170; v.v., "Le associazioni islamiche degli Stati Uniti d'America," *Oriente Moderne* 12, no. 11 (1932): 524; "What Is Going on this Week," *New York Times*, April 19, 1931, 52; "Moslems Hold Annual Rally," *Brooklyn Standard Union*, May 9, 1930, 18; Dunlap, "City's Moslems." It is worth mentioning here that this group was not connected to the famous Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood led by Hassan al-Banna. The similarity in names is due to the term 'brotherhood' having special significance in Islam because the Qur'an and numerous traditions of the Prophet Muhammad repeatedly stress the brotherhood of all Muslims (see, for example, Qur'an 49:10). Over the centuries, a number of Islamic groups have used that term to define their organizations, just as al-Banna would when he created the famous Egyptian group in 1928. Because it took a few years for al-Banna's Muslim Brotherhood to organize its propaganda activities, it would not be until the late 1930s that it would start to spread outside of Egypt, and it only did this on a significant scale after World War II. There should be little doubt, then, that the 1930s New York City 'Moslem Brotherhood' organization, which a) had several

As for the western US's South Asian-African American ties, these 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. Because almost no women had traveled with them, if those who remained in the country wanted to start a family, they had to find American wives.¹³ Due to racism and anti-miscegenation practices at the time, these South Asians were frequently prohibited from marrying people of too different of skin tone, a prohibition that resulted in many Indians marrying Mexican American and, to a far lesser extent, African American women.¹⁴ Ultimately, however, African American spouses accounted for only fifteen marriages out of the 378 known South Asian-immigrant marriages in California between 1913 and 1949, with only seven of these verifiably to a Muslim husband; and there is no confirmation that these women converted to Islam, even if their mixed children were sometimes raised as Muslims.¹⁵

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, where most of the immigrants lived.¹⁶ City life offered greater freedom and opportunities for making new social ties, which increased the possibilities for both Indian-black interactions as well as for 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 in fact led to the forming of a small Mus-

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; see Richard P. Mitchell, *The Society of Muslim Brothers* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), 13; Brigitte Maréchal, *Muslim Brothers in Europe: Roots And Discourse* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2008), 22–26; “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.

13 The authoritative study on this topic is Karen Isaksen Leonard, *Making Ethnic Choices: California's Punjabi-Mexican Americans* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992).

14 For a discussion of this phenomenon in other parts of the country, but particularly in New York and Louisiana, see Bald, “Hands across the Water.”

15 Leonard, *Making Ethnic*, 67, 69; Lurey Khan, “An American Pursues Her Pakistani Past,” *Asia* 2, no. 6 (1980): 34–39; Lurey Khan, “A Boston Moslem Goes back to the Homeland,” *Boston Globe*, October 5, 1979, 36.

16 Leonard, *Making Ethnic*, 69.

lim community in Sacramento, which in 1920 became home to the first South Asian-majority mosque in California, the Muslim Association of America.¹⁷ 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, even using the black newspaper *California Eagle* to emphasize the claim that Islam was free of racism.¹⁸ The results of these efforts, unfortunately, are not known.

The Missionary Work of Satti Majid

The most notable example of an immigrant converting African Americans in the early years of the AAIR was Satti Majid, the Sudanese Muslim missionary who worked with immigrant and African American Muslims in several cities during the 1910s and 1920s.¹⁹ Through Majid's efforts, 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 era's second phase of Sunni Islam, the story of his efforts sheds light on both the diversity of Islam in the first era of the AAIR and on the religious backgrounds of two key figures who would later play leading roles in later phases of the era.

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 city of el-Ghaddar in Old Dongola. In the late 1890s or early 1900s, he left the Sudan for Egypt, attempting to attend al-Azhar.²⁰ Sometime before 1904, however,

17 Leonard, *Making Ethnic*, 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.

18 Rahmat Ali Khan, "Letter from Rahmat Ali Khan to His Disciple, Aldabaran P. Byer," *California Eagle*, December 9, 1922, 2. 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.

19 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; Rogaiia Musafa Abusharaf, *Wanderings: Sudanese Migrants and Exiles in North America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), 17–32; and GhaneaBassiri, *A History*, 172–78.

20 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 US, he claimed that he had in fact graduated from there with honors. See Abu Shouk et al., "Sudanese Mission-

Majid's plans changed and he had 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 US where, some sources claim, he believed anti-Islamic propaganda was being spread, particularly in New York.²¹ In the 1920s, however, he asserted that he had traveled to the US with "the avowed purpose of aiding his fellow countrymen and of founding a nation-wide association for their political, industrial and social betterment."²² Both of these aims suggest that prior to leaving for the US, Majid had already become a committed Muslim missionary and, perhaps, also a proponent of Pan-Islam.²³

The evidence concerning Majid's earliest years in the US is conflicting, so we can say with certainty only that he arrived in the country sometime between 1904 and 1915, and almost certainly before 1912.²⁴ His first home in the US was in New York City; there he connected with Shaykh Mehmed Ali, the imam for the Ottoman Embassy who led religious worship in an Ottoman-funded apartment mosque at 17 Rector Street in lower Manhattan.²⁵ 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 when the mosque first opened 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 Ottoman government had named head "of the spiritual affairs of the Mohammedans in this part of the world,"²⁶ also regularly traveled to and was the religious leader for Muslims in various New England cities (including the Massachusetts cities of Lowell, Boston, and Worcester,²⁷ as well as Providence, Rhode Island). News

ary," 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.

21 Abu Shouk et al., "Sudanese Missionary," 140–42; Abusharaf, *Wanderings*, 20.

22 "Descendant."

23 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).

24 Bowen, "Satti Majid," 195–96.

25 Bowen, "Satti Majid," 196; "Oriental 'Mystics' Are Gathering in Force for Invasion of America," *New-York Tribune*, August 11, 1912, 6. "Mohammedans Now Have a Place of Worship Here," *The Sun* (New York), February 25, 1912, 15. The latter article gives extensive biographical details for Mehmed Ali.

26 "Mohammedans Now Have."

27 For those interested in the history of Islam in the US, it is interesting to note that in

of Mehmed's religious work had made its way back to Muslim-majority lands where it attracted several Syrian sheikhs to come to the US, and may have been part of what drew Majid to New York.²⁸ 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 Balkans²⁹—were the same activities that Mehmed was participating in at the time.³⁰ It is likely, then, given Mehmed's own passion for Islam, that he was also the unnamed Ottoman attaché who, Majid claimed, had enthusiastically supported Majid's later efforts to spread and defend Islam in the US.³¹

It is not clear how long Mehmed and the Rector Street mosque stayed active, but it almost certainly remained open at least through the mid-1910s, and possibly was reopened in the 1920s.³² This might 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. There, over the next ten years, Majid worked with several local immigrant Muslims to purchase 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.³³ Majid,

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").

28 Abu Shouk et al., "Sudanese Missionary," 141–42.

29 GhaneaBassiri, *A History*, 174, 175. The Red Crescent Society is a Muslim humanitarian organization modeled after the Red Cross.

30 "Mohammedans Now Have."

31 Abusharaf, *Wanderings*, 21.

32 In April 1917, the Ottoman Empire broke diplomatic relations with the US, and the attachés were officially required to leave the country. Whether this caused Mehmed Ali to leave the US and the Rector Street mosque to close is unknown. In 1923 a writer observed that New York did have, at least in 1922, a Turkish imam "dispatched [...] from Constantinople" who had "charge of Moslems in New York," although it is possible that this was Sheikh Salih Ahmad Al-Kateeb, who was verifiably working as a religious leader in Manhattan in by the mid-1920s. See Clair Price, "The New Era in Islam," *The Forum* (February 1923): 1208; Bowen, *HCTIUS*, 1:242–44.

33 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., "Sudanese Missionary," 154; GhaneaBassiri, *A History*, 175. As GhaneaBassiri points out, however, there is no independent record of Majid attempting to build a mosque in Detroit.

who considered himself to be a leader of the local Muslims,³⁴ also established in Detroit at least one local Islamic benevolence society and perhaps a national organization,³⁵ and, in addition to his organizing work, attempted to publicly defend Islam in the local press.³⁶

34 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.

35 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 I suggested in a previous study, 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 *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.

36 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

Majid may have also been starting to convert small numbers of African Americans in the late 1910s and early 1920s. As we saw in Chapter 8, Ali Abdullah (Bartie Alsobrooks) reportedly embraced Islam in Detroit in 1919—making it very likely that Majid was the person who brought him to the religion.³⁷ Majid may have also converted Ahmadis to Sunni Islam a few years later, when, in 1922, Detroit's immigrant Muslims discovered that Muhammad Sadiq was not an orthodox Muslim and was allowing his UNIA-influenced converts to continue some of their folk practices.³⁸ Majid almost certainly had a say in the controversy. As a committed Sunni Muslim, he was not accepting of the Ahmadis' beliefs, and a few years later he even attempted to obtain a religious ruling (*fatwa*) against the US Ahmadi missionaries.³⁹ However, as a missionary himself, Majid would have been happy to try to instruct the Ahmadi converts on Sunni religious beliefs and practices; and there is in fact strong evidence that he converted at least one prominent white Ahmadi in the city.⁴⁰ Majid would in fact later claim to have converted 1,000 people to Islam by 1924;⁴¹ although this number was undoubtedly a significant exaggeration, it suggests that he had actually converted at least some people in Detroit by the early 1920s.

Tracing Majid's activities during his stay in the US is a somewhat difficult task because it appears that he traveled frequently and maintained several residences. New York City, for instance, seems to have been one of his regular destinations. By 1921, Majid had set up an office near the old Rector Street mosque in Manhattan at 22 West Street, from which he would stay connected to New York City Muslims until his departure from the country in early 1929.⁴²

identified the title of the editorial as "As Islam Looks at It"; see "Descendant." Majid, later in life, conveyed that during his time in the US, 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., "Sudanese Missionary," 141, 142.

37 Allen, "When Japan," 45n106; "Detroit, Michigan: Services for Member of al-Mumineen Mosque," *Muslim Star* 17, no. 126 (1977): 11, IMJC Papers, Box 8, BHL. For more on Alsobrooks and Majid, see Chapter 9.

38 GhaneaBassiri, 188; "Actress Returns as Moslem Wife," *New York Amsterdam News*, March 19, 1930, 9.

39 See Abu Shouk et al., "Sudanese Missionary," 154.

40 This was Ella May Garber, also known as Siddica-tun-Nisa Rahatulla; see Bowen, "Satti Majid," 198 and Bowen, *HCTIUS*, 1: 184, 221–22, 226, 319.

41 "Mohammedans to Build Real Mosque Here," *Buffalo Morning Express*, September 11, 1924, 5. On other occasions, Majid made the even more ridiculous claim of having converted 45,000 (see Abusharaf, *Wanderings*, 30; Abu Shouk et al., "Sudanese Missionary," 189).

42 Abu Shouk et al., "Sudanese Missionary," 143; "Descendant."

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 immigrant Muslim ship workers who were living in the city.⁴³ Majid, who had most likely been a maritime worker himself as a young man,⁴⁴ wrote letters to the British consulate-general and John D. Rockefeller asking for this assistance, explaining that these sailors—who were probably Sudanese, Yemeni, and South Asian—had lived in British territory and had worked on British ships, so therefore, in Majid's opinion, they deserved the British government's aid.⁴⁵ 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 was promoting Islam to local African Americans, and there is evidence that Majid made a number of African American converts in the city.⁴⁶ However, the most important black American who seems to have joined with Majid and proselytized in his name was possibly not himself a convert: Sheikh Daoud Ahmed Faisal.⁴⁷ 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 128th and Lenox Avenue in Harlem, where he, like Majid, reached out to Muslim maritime workers and African American converts.⁴⁸ While very little is known about the details of 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.

From at least 1924 to 1927, Majid was also residing part-time, possibly with his family, in Buffalo in an apartment above the coffee shop that served as the center of the city's Muslim community.⁴⁹ The available evidence suggests that

43 Abu Shouk et al., "Sudanese Missionary," 144.

44 Abu Shouk et al., "Sudanese Missionary," 140.

45 Abu Shouk et al., "Sudanese Missionary," 140; Bald, "Hands."

46 Abusharaf, *Wanderings*, 22–23, 30–32.

47 Rumors disagree as to whether Sheikh Daoud really did promote Islam in the 1920s; he frequently said he did, and some others have attested to this as well, but there are several Muslims who are adamant that he did not. In the present book, I will assume that he did since I have not yet seen persuasive evidence otherwise.

48 See the section on Sheikh Daoud below for citations.

49 Dannin, *Black Pilgrimage*, 285n1; Bald, "Hands across the Water," 211, 230, 233; "Descendant"; Abu Shouk et al., "Sudanese Missionary," 154n41. Buffalo, in fact, was the very city

here, too, Majid was regarded as an important community and religious leader. In June 1924, he and five other Muslims incorporated the Buffalo Moslem Welfare Society,⁵⁰ a group that was an immediate success under Majid's leadership. By early September 1924, it was reported in the local newspaper that "seven 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."⁵¹ 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 concerned with assisting immigrant Muslims in the process of becoming Americans. He appeared in courts as an interpreter and religious expert when needed,⁵² and helped the immigrants learn English and US customs. On at least one occasion, he also held a meeting for Buffalo Muslims, many of whom were unemployed, at which he discussed 'industrial problems' and ways to inform local employers about the employees' culture.⁵³ In his role 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 [US]."⁵⁴ At the same time, he stressed that Islam should be "kept bright by the faithful even

in which Majid was said to be residing (at 24 Seneca Street) on his undated certificate of emigration form (see Abu Shouk et al., "Sudanese Missionary," 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. 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.

50 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.

51 "Descendant." It is unclear as to how long Satti Majid had already been in Buffalo.

52 "Descendant"; "Real Mohammedan Sheik, Federal Court Witness," *Buffalo Morning Express*, June 20, 1925, 5.

53 "Mohammedans to Build."

54 "Descendant."

under the new conditions of life in America,⁵⁵ and to encourage this maintenance of faith, Majid attempted to both obtain Islamic reading materials and build a local mosque.⁵⁶ It was in Buffalo, too, that Majid attempted to strengthen a national organization called the United Moslem Society (UMS), which he had initially set up in Detroit to connect and coordinate his various local benevolence societies.⁵⁷ However, although Majid boasted that this group was supported by “at least 100,000” Muslims,⁵⁸ the UMS most likely only had affiliated with it the people, numbering no more than a few thousand, who were involved in his local benevolence societies.⁵⁹ In any case, because there is no

55 “Descendant.”

56 On acquiring literature for US Muslims both while he was in the US 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).

57 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 US.

58 “Descendant”; “Mohammedans to Build.” This is, of course, another example of Majid’s tendency to exaggerate his influence.

59 It seems that part of the difficulty of assessing Satti Majid’s work in the US 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.’ 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 indicates that this group had sent \$2,000 to Turkish soldiers (“Suburban Settings,” *Detroit Free Press*, October 10, 1915, 6). 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.

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 US, Majid referred to having hoped to form a *single* national organization that dealt with US 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 US. See Abu Shouk et al., “Sudanese Missionary,” 143.

It is not known whether the UMS was the parent organization of a number of other

known mention of the UMS after 1924, it is likely that the project was abandoned soon after that year.

Still, although the UMS may have failed as an umbrella organization, Majid did succeed in creating an informally-connected 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).⁶⁰ Originally organized in 1927, 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.”⁶¹ The AMWSA incorporation records show that the group also possessed the same goals as the Buffalo organization, such as educating members about “Americanism” and providing them financial assistance. Though its name suggests that the majority of its members were recent African immigrants like Majid, the group’s FBI file reveals that the congregation was primarily composed of Arab immigrants—some of whom were probably ‘black’ by American racial standards—and African American converts, both US-born and Caribbean-born. The members, like Majid, wore fezzes and long robes, and speakers at its meetings read from the Qur’an.⁶² Not a significant amount of information is known about the converts’ lives, though at least one, Mohammed Amen (born Frank Montgomery May) was a former promoter for the UNIA and Murad Jemel (born Moree James) had witnessed his father being lynched—as we have seen, both of these types of traits were associated with other Muslim converts from that period.⁶³

The AMWSA’s records indicate that by 1928 ‘branches’ of the group had already been established in Detroit, New York City, and Cleveland,⁶⁴ the last two of which are confirmed by preserved letters sent by AMWSA members.⁶⁵

groups with similar names created throughout the US 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.

60 See Bowen, “Satti Majid,” 201 and notes.

61 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.

62 See Nyang, “Growing of Islam” and Hill, *RACON*.

63 AMWSA FBI file, Report, 6/15/1943, Pittsburgh file 100–5292, 2; Murad Jemel FBI file, Report, 5/31/1943, Pittsburgh file 100–5679, 4.

64 Hill, *RACON*, 545.

65 Abu Shouk et al., “Sudanese Missionary,” 184–85.

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, 1917,⁶⁶ 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. A mere 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, 1918.⁶⁷ What happened to the local Muslim community after that is uncertain. 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 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.⁶⁸ The FBI files, meanwhile, also connect the AMWSA to Muslim communities in Chicago, Cincinnati, and Washington, DC.⁶⁹ Next to nothing is known about these particular groups, other than it being possible that Majid had been personally responsible for starting them and that, later, in the early 1940s, the Pittsburgh heads were unhappy with those groups for their not following the rules of the AMWSA and for working with foreign governments—a clue that suggests some ties with the Philadelphia-based Moslem League, which, as we saw in Chapter 8, explicitly encouraged groups working with governments of Muslim-majority countries.⁷⁰

Majid departed from the US on January 13, 1929 with the intent of obtaining *fatwas* from al-Azhar and Sudanese clerics against Noble Drew Ali.⁷¹ Though a proponent of Pan-Islam, he, as exemplified by his response to the Ahmadis,

66 Previous authors have incorrectly claimed that 1918 was the first date.

67 The group appears to have either continued to exist or was re-established. Dannin notes them as existing in the late 1920s; see Dannin, *Black Pilgrimage*, 97.

68 “Descendant.”

69 Nyang, “Growing of Islam.”

70 One newspaper article from 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, DC. Also see AMWSA FBI file, Report, 11/9/1943, Pittsburgh file 100–5292, 3–4.

71 GhaneaBassiri, *A History*, 177; Abu Shouk et al., “Sudanese Missionary,” 155.

had no tolerance for Islamic movements that ignored some of the core widely-held beliefs of Sunni Muslims; in the case of the MSTAs, the group's use of its own "Koran" and its belief in the prophethood of Drew Ali were seen as highly heretical. When MSTAs 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 the Moorish prophet.⁷² Majid had never met Drew Ali personally, but he reportedly sent him missives urging him to cease spreading his doctrines. When this failed, he 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 US and become an official missionary recognized by al-Azhar.⁷³ 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;⁷⁴ the founding of an Arabic-language Islamic magazine; and the establishment of a society known as the Islamic Unity Association, based at al-Azhar but with branches in other locations.⁷⁵ His success in accomplishing these projects was in many ways the result of the skills, experiences, and knowledge he had acquired in the US. Majid had left Africa a young man with moderate religious training and life experience; he had returned as a seasoned missionary, apologist, community organizer, and religious leader.

His Egyptian activities, furthermore, reflected the key ideology that he had refined over the years in the US: Pan-Islam. And, because of his experiences in the multicultural US, 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 work and the populations of immigrants and converts he encountered, and possibly even gave the converts' names to religious officials in Cairo.⁷⁶ Majid was thus serving as an important conduit for the knowledge of the existence and practices of Muslims in the US to reach Egypt.

72 Abu Shouk et al., "Sudanese Missionary," 147.

73 Abu Shouk et al., "Sudanese Missionary," 150–51, 188–89.

74 Abu Shouk et al., "Sudanese Missionary," 184, 185, 187.

75 Abu Shouk et al., "Sudanese Missionary," 184, 188. Majid writes that the group was also known as "Islam Men."

76 Abu Shouk et al., "Sudanese Missionary," 188. This was perhaps the first example of African Americans belonging to an international Sunni movement.

This conduit in fact transported knowledge and practices in the other direction as well. The US converts continued to correspond with Majid during the 1930s, learning of his activities abroad and reading his Pan-Islamic, Arabic-language magazine.⁷⁷ 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-African identity.⁷⁸ It is likely, too, that some of the African Americans whom Majid had converted were among the group of black Muslims who emigrated to Egypt in the 1930s.⁷⁹ However, without its leader, the AMWSA as a government-recognized organization became unstable, and in 1930 the organization let its incorporation lapse. Despite these issues, the community, which at the time was being led by one Elijah Martin,⁸⁰ remained mostly intact for the first half-dozen years after Majid's departure. However, in 1937 or 1938, Murad Jemel led a faction of five individuals who had chosen not to be associated with Martin to reactivate the original group's charter, thus creating a split in the organization. Though a number of the AMWSA converts in both factions identified with the UNIA and even built connections with Garvey's organization,⁸¹ it appears that Jemel's faction was much more politically active.⁸² In 1942, in fact, several members of the AMWSA—primarily from Jemel's faction—became influenced by pro-Japanese beliefs. It was for this reason that the FBI briefly investigated the AMWSA. Soon after this investigation, however, both AMWSA factions appear to have petered out.⁸³

77 See Abu Shouk et al., "Sudanese Missionary," 183–88.

78 Abu Shouk et al., "Sudanese Missionary," 184–87. It is not known how much Majid contributed to their Pan-African interest, which was almost certainly heightened by their Garvey leanings.

79 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.

80 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. Martin has a small FBI file containing only one relatively short report.

81 Sulayman Nyang, "Growing of Islam in America," *Saudi Gazette*, October 19, 1983, 6; Abu Shouk et al., "Sudanese Missionary," 184–85; UNIA FBI file, Report, 10/12/1945, Pittsburgh file 100–3472.

82 Hill, *RACON*, 545–46; AMWSA FBI file.

83 Nyang, "Growing of Islam."

Phase II: 1931–1943

*Muhammad Ezaldeen and the Addeynu Allahe-Universal Arabic Association*⁸⁴

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.⁸⁵ 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."⁸⁶ 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

84 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, he states that Ezaldeen left the US in 1929 and returned in the "late 1930s," but on pages 121–22—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 book. 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.

85 Abu Shouk et al., "Sudanese Missionary," 183–85. 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.

86 Abu Shouk et al., "Sudanese Missionary," 184. The only indication of a date for this convention is that it had taken place "a short while ago."

by the name Muhammad Ez Al Deen.⁸⁷ Ez Al Deen—or Ezaldeen, as it is usually spelled today—would, in a few years, return to the US 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 US during the first era of the AAIR.

Ezaldeen was born James Lomax in Abbeville, South Carolina on October 14, 1886.⁸⁸ 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 kinds of claims were common among early African American MSTA members and, furthermore, Ezaldeen sometimes falsely stated that he himself was born in Libya.⁸⁹ Whatever his parental heritage, though, throughout his childhood and young adult life Ezaldeen moved to different cities, and eventually ended up in Chicago where, in the mid-1920s, he met Drew Ali and became James Lomax Bey as well as an early head of the MSTA's Grand Temple. In late 1927 or early 1928, after the Detroit MSTA community began rapidly growing, Lomax Bey moved to the city—probably having been sent by Drew Ali—and was made the grand governor for Michigan.⁹⁰ Under Lomax Bey's leadership, the Detroit group became immensely popular and financially successful, earning revenues far exceeding those of almost all other temples, and, according to some, this created jealousy within the movement.⁹¹

87 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.

88 AAUAA FBI file, Report, 3/22/1944, Newark file 100-18924, 34. 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.

89 AAUAA FBI file, Report, 5/24/1943, Newark file 100-18924, 8.

90 "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 MSTA, later, when interviewed by the FBI, he denied being the James Lomax whose name appears on the earliest known (1926) incorporation form for the MSTA 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.

91 "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

As noted in the Chapter 5, in early 1929 Claude Greene began working with Lomax Bey to either break off from or take over Drew Ali's organization.⁹² Drew Ali responded in February or early March, when he told Lomax Bey to step down as head of the Detroit group. Lomax Bey, however, refused and instead formed his own organization (purportedly called the Mohammedan or Moorish Church Temple), reportedly taking with him MSTA followers and funds.⁹³ A local Drew Ali partisan then complained to police that Lomax Bey had embezzled from the MSTA, and on Monday, March 11 he was arrested for this.⁹⁴ Lomax Bey may have been bailed out, because in the following evening he was reportedly speaking at an MSTA meeting that was hosting both members of his faction and Drew Ali partisans. When a shot was fired, both sides brought out weapons, resulting in a shootout that left two police and two Moors wounded, one critically.⁹⁵ Then, on Friday the fifteenth, Greene

Postmaster's Guest" and "Moorish Head Makes Plans for Conclave," *Chicago Defender* (Ntl. ed.), July 21, 1928, A4.

- 92 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," Printed for the East Coast Moorish Men's Brotherhood Summit, 2013.
- 93 "Hold Moorish Temple 'Prophet'; "Cult Leader Lured Girls to His Harem," *Chicago Defender* (City ed.), March 23, 1929, sect. 1, 1; AAUAA FBI file, Report, 4/13/1944, Chicago file 100–11280, 3.
- 94 AAUAA FBI file, Report, 3/18/1944, Buffalo file 100–6320, 11–12.
- 95 "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 MSTA 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.

was murdered in Chicago. By Sunday, Ira Johnson Bey, who was probably Greene's killer, was in Detroit ready to murder Lomax Bey as well, and word had spread that Lomax Bey was a marked man.⁹⁶ Around that time, Drew Ali also traveled to Detroit, where he personally told police that Lomax Bey had embezzled \$8,000 from the MSTA,⁹⁷ although in April a Detroit judge dismissed the embezzlement charge. After being released from jail soon after, Lomax Bey, fearing for his life, fled to Brooklyn.⁹⁸ Some MSTA members would later claim that immediately before he left Detroit, Lomax Bey stole around \$20,000 from the local temple, but Lomax Bey would later deny this and all the other charges of embezzlement.⁹⁹

For the next year, Lomax Bey stayed in New York City, where he likely developed contacts with sympathetic immigrant Muslims and Moors, some of whom he may have convinced to follow him. In fact, it is possible that Lomax Bey was responsible for organizing the group discussed below called the Moorish Science Temple Church, which had a title reminiscent of Lomax Bey's Mohammedan or Moorish Church Temple. In any case, in May 1930 Lomax Bey changed his name to Ali Mehmed Bey and, along with a few followers, left the country for Turkey, where he hoped the Muslim-populated government would grant him and his followers back in Detroit citizenship and farm land.¹⁰⁰ The Turkish government, however, was unwilling to provide what the Americans asked, and the group was forced to scrape by on whatever resources its members could acquire.¹⁰¹ Although by late 1931 it was reported that Mehmed Bey had "shown no inclination to leave Turkey for America,"¹⁰² he had apparently decided to travel to Cairo where he would stay, FBI reports indicate, "in the hospitality and good care of the General Centre [of the Young Men's Muslim Association (YMMA)] for five years."¹⁰³ During this time Mehmed Bey, he

96 "Claude Greene Shot"; "Cult Leader Lured."

97 "Detroit Followers Riot."

98 AAUAA FBI file, Report, 3/22/1944, Newark file 100-18924, 35.

99 AAUAA FBI file, Report, 4/13/1944, Chicago file 100-11280, 3.

100 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.

101 "Founders of Ill-Fated Colony Now Dig Sewers in Turkey," *Gettysburg Times*, November 18, 1931, 2.

102 "Fails to Found Negro Colony in Turkey," *New Journal and Guide*, December 12, 1931, A14.

103 Michael Nash, *Islam among Urban Blacks: Muslims in Newark, New Jersey: A Social History* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2008), 41; AAUAA FBI file, Report, 3/22/1944,

recalled in 1943, “worked in a restaurant for 50 [cents] a day to educate [himself] about Egypt”¹⁰⁴ and was prepared by the YMMA to preach Islam in the US.¹⁰⁵ He soon changed his name to Muhammad Ez Al Deen and, most likely, connected with Satti Majid and the AMWSA members in Pittsburgh.¹⁰⁶

The Egyptian organization that Ezaldeen had joined, the YMMA, had been organized in Cairo in 1927 by influential Muslim men from various professions who desired to counter Christian missionary efforts in Muslim-majority lands.¹⁰⁷ 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.¹⁰⁸ Salafi Islam at the time was different from how it is often understood today; for instance, although there was still the well-known belief that medieval and contemporary Islamic scholars are corrupted and that lay Muslims should be responsible for interpreting the Qur’an, many of these Salafis, including the Muslim Brotherhood’s Hassan al-Banna, embraced Sufism, which contemporary Salafism generally rejects. Their Salafism also had 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 issues were of high concern for Muslims of the

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.

104 AAUAA FBI file, Report, 10/9/1943, Philadelphia file 100-19940, 13.

105 Nash, *Islam among*, 41.

106 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.

107 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.

108 Al-Khatib was actually an important influence for Hasan al-Banna, who organized the Muslim Brotherhood in 1928; see Mitchell, *Society of Muslim Brothers*, 5-8, 322-25.

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.¹⁰⁹ 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. Following the YMMA's principle of allowing for the use of beneficial local ideas, he created a doctrine about African American genealogy that was reminiscent of the MSTA's. Instead of African Americans being 'Moors' and descendants of the Moabites and Canaanites, Ezaldeen emphasized the association of African-descended people with Ham, whom he said was an Arab, and claimed that African Americans were descendants of him and, later in the genealogical line, Hagar's son Ishmael, whom Muslims recognize as the Prophet Muhammad's ancestor. African Americans, according to Ezaldeen, were thus 'Hamitic' 'Ishmaelites,' also known as 'Arabs.'¹¹⁰ In addition to teaching a genealogy similar to that of the MSTA, Ezaldeen continued to allow his followers to wear, along with white turbans, red fezzes, and he emphasized the Islamic notion that Jesus did not die on the cross, which appealed to many Moors and Ahmadis.¹¹¹ Moreover, Ezaldeen also, like an old slave exhorter, combined Revelation, Exodus, and the MSTA emphasis on seven seals

109 "Islam in America," *Muslim Revival* 2, no. 2 (1933): 170; "Islam in America," *Moslem World* 24 (1934): 190; Bowen, *HCTIUS*, 1:246–48. 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.

110 AAUAA FBI file, Report, 10/9/1943, Philadelphia file 100–19940, 11, 19; "Local Moslems Arabs," *Buffalo Courier-Express*, January 1, 1939, 18; United States Congress, House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), *Subversive Influences in Riots, Looting, and Burning, Part 4 (Newark, N.J.O.)* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1968), 1927. Ham, though, was indeed included in the MSTA genealogy, see its *Holy Koran*, chapter XLVII.

111 "Negro Moslems Here Celebrate Feast of Pilgrimage to Mecca," *Buffalo Courier-Express*, January 31, 1939, 18; Jeff Diamant, "Elizabeth Loses Imam of Historic Courage," *Star-Ledger* (Newark), July 6, 2007, 17.

by saying that the Israelites, like African Americans, were ‘sealed’ from God by Pharaoh, who took their name and religion.¹¹² Moses, Ezaldeen explained, was sent by God to break the seal for the Israelites, and ‘we’—African American Muslims—must break the seal that has been put on black people by America’s ‘Pharaoh Government.’¹¹³ By combining MSTA-connected notions with Sunni Islam, Ezaldeen had found a way to give MSTA-type ideas—which already had 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.¹¹⁴

On December 4, 1936, Ezaldeen—now using the title ‘professor’—returned to the US, arriving in New York City.¹¹⁵ There, he, along with another Egyptian immigrant, began teaching both Arabic and Islamic doctrines for an MSTA break-off group called the Moorish National Islamic Center.¹¹⁶ 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 reportedly became Donald’s mentor in Islam, and, probably largely due to Ezaldeen’s influence, by 1939 Donald had publicly adopted an Islamic name (Daoud Faisal), quit his career as a musician, and opened an Islamic mosque and mission.¹¹⁷ In 1937, Ezaldeen would also serve as a teacher in a short-lived New York City

112 AAUAA FBI file, Report, 10/9/1943, Philadelphia file 100-19940, 18.

113 AAUAA FBI file, Report, 10/9/1943, Philadelphia file 100-19940, 18-19.

114 The FBI even remarked on how close Ezaldeen’s group was organizationally and ideologically to the MSTA; see Hill, *RACON*, 547.

115 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*, accessed September 22, 2011.

116 MSTA 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.

117 Hshaam Jaaber, in his *The Final Chapter ... I Buried Malcolm (Haj Malik El-Shabazz)* (Jersey City: Hshaam 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 help 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 common in the MSTA) are other pieces of circumstantial evidence that further support an early tie between Faisal and Ezaldeen.

group at 108 West 118th Street called the Islamic Unity Society, led by one Sheik H. Harfes.¹¹⁸ 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, on September 3, 1938, he incorporated it under a new name: the Addeynu Allahe-Universal Arabic Association (AAUAA).¹¹⁹ Though, as will be shown, this was not the first organization to legally incorporate with the AAUAA name, because the group's original 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.

By 1938, Ezaldeen was no longer living in New York City—he only traveled 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, who was still one of the most important African American Muslim leaders in the region. The two men, who shared an MSTA 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,¹²⁰ and in August of 1938 the pair incorporated a small AAUAA group across the Delaware River in Camden.¹²¹ A few weeks later, Nasir Ahmad appeared at a 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.¹²² The property of the Moslems was then turned over to the AAUAA, which would become a point of contention for the Moslems'

118 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.

119 AAUAA FBI file, Report, 3/22/1944, Newark file 100-18924, 36.

120 AAUAA FBI file, Report, 2/[8?]/1044, Philadelphia file 100-19940, 2.

121 Camden Addeynu Allahe-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.

122 AAUAA FBI file, Report, 2/[8?]/1044, Philadelphia file 100-19940, 2, 4-5; "Al-Sheikh Dawoud Ghani."

new leader, El-Farook, who subsequently sued the AAUAA, but lost when the judge had the congregation vote on whether the lawsuit should be considered invalid or not.¹²³

The AAUAA continued to spread through the African American Muslim network that included former MSTA members and those aligned with Nasir Ahmad, eventually establishing followings in Rochester (1939), Jacksonville (1939), Newark (1940), Philadelphia (1942), Youngstown (1942, incorporated 1944), Wilmington, Delaware (unknown),¹²⁴ Cleveland (Unknown), and Detroit (1944).¹²⁵ In addition to these groups in urban centers, the AAUAA also established self-sufficient rural communities, following the MSTA 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 US.¹²⁶

Developments in the Ohio River Valley Region

Though he was clearly popular, not everyone wanted to follow Ezaldeen, and this left room for new individuals to fill in the numerous leadership gaps that were appearing in the Ohio-Pennsylvania region. In early 1941, in fact, Mohamad S. Jalajel, a young Palestinian immigrant in Pittsburgh who was interested in propagating Sunni Islam, was able to bring together a number of the local converts, many of whom had been in the MOA, to form what would be informally known as the First Moslem (or Islam) Mosque.¹²⁷ Because many members of the Mosque had been leaders in the MOA, officially they retained that name until 1945 when the group finally became officially incorporated

123 "Moslems in Court Over Dispute on Arabic Properties," *Utica Observer Dispatch*, September 12, 1938, 8; "Moslems Decide Case," *Buffalo Courier-Express*, September 23, 1938, 6. El-Farook charged that Ahmad had won the local group over by ingenuously telling it that the MOA had folded.

124 AAUAA FBI file, Report, 10/9/1943, Philadelphia file 100-19940, 6.

125 See the following: AAUAA FBI file, Report, 3/22/1944, Newark file 100-18924; AAUAA FBI file, Report, 10/9/1943, Philadelphia file 100-19940; AAUAA FBI file, Report, 7/14/1943, Cleveland file 100-10466; Youngstown Addeynu Allahe-Universal Arabic Association incorporation form.

126 AAUAA FBI file, Newark file 100-18924; Margaret I. Fess, "Mohammedan Village Byproduct of Depression," *Buffalo Courier*, June 2, 1946; Dannin, *Black Pilgrimage*, 117-40; AAUAA FBI file, Report, 10/9/1943, Philadelphia file 100-19940, 25.

127 Kaikobad, "Colored," 22. For most of the early 1940s, this group met at 10½ Townsend Street; see Hill, *RACON*, 234 and the MOA FBI file.

as the First Moslem Mosque of Pittsburgh.¹²⁸ 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 large gatherings.¹²⁹

In Ohio, meanwhile, 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 partly stimulated in 1933 by contact with both the Lahori Ahmadis and the Qadianis' Sufi Bengalee, who arrived in Mansfield that spring.¹³⁰ Bengalee, interested in cultivating ties with immigrant Muslims who would help propagate his message, provided Nadji with numerous English-language Islamic texts to help him spread the message of Islam; but Nadji also utilized the Lahoris' *Islamic Review* magazine as another source from which he drew many of the articles he published. Having also become the head of a white convert-created group called the American Islamic Association, Nadji established (probably at his home) what he called the Islamic Center of America and frequently published both long Islamic texts in the local newspaper and books containing various Muslim-authored essays.¹³¹ It appears that in the texts he had printed, Nadji did not, for the most part, promote anything that showed distinctly Ahmadi views, such as discussions of Ghulam Ahmad; he instead

128 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.

129 See AAUAA FBI file, *passim*.

130 "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.

131 Bowen, *HCTIUS*, 1:251-53.

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 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 and also had contact with other members of the American Islamic Association.¹³²

In Cleveland, Wali Akram, an Ahmadi who had originally converted under Paul Nathaniel Johnson, began taking charge of the local community, which he would eventually lead to Sunni Islam. In 1935, Akram created what was called the Moslem Ten Year Plan, a program—probably based on the UNIA's Five Year Plan¹³³—for helping African American Muslims become both economically self-sufficient and less reliant on immigrant Muslims for knowledge of Islam.¹³⁴ For over two dozen years the community that followed Akram, which for a brief period included a branch in Youngstown, used the name of his Plan for its organizations.¹³⁵ In around 1937, Akram, believing that Sufi Bengalee had supported Muhammad Yusuf Khan's fleeing, separated his group from the other Qadiani communities, making the Ten Year Plan, which he incorporated as 'The Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam, & Moslem Ten Year Plan, Inc.,' a completely separate institution, but one that was still committed to the Lahori belief that Ghulam Ahmad was a messiah.¹³⁶

132 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; Bowen, *HCTIUS*, 1:271-78.

133 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. It should be at least noted that Akram insisted, when he was interviewed by the FBI in 1943, that he had never been "acquainted" with the UNIA—I, however, find this hard to believe considering the similarities in their 'Plans' and the fact that their groups were in the exact same building; see Muhammad Yusuf Khan FBI file, Report, 9/12/1943, Cleveland file 100-11202, 10.

134 Dannin, *Black Pilgrimage*, 108-09.

135 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.

136 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*,

Akram's community was notable during this period for producing the only Muslim to obtain conscientious objector status during World War II: Nazeer Aleem (born Holman Whitson). Aleem, who by the early 1940s was serving in several leadership positions in the mosque, had converted to Islam in Detroit in 1930, possibly through the MSTA or NOI, a fact that may explain why he was the only member of Akram's mosque to even seek to become a conscientious objector.¹³⁷ While living in the C.O. camps, Aleem was befriended by a young Marshall G.S. Hodgson, a future prominent white scholar of Islamic history.¹³⁸ Apparently fascinated by Aleem, when Hodgson learned that C.O. status was not given to other African American Muslims who refused to fight—that is, members of the NOI and one small faction of the MSTA—he attempted to try to help them attain that status by contacting Nadji, a white female convert to Islam in New York, Nadirah Osman, and probably Akram.¹³⁹

In any case, Akram began turning more towards Sunni Islam. In 1942, an immigrant Muslim from Jerusalem named Ahmad Ead Muhamed, who was presumably a Sunni, moved into Akram's home in Cleveland and established in nearby Akron an African American-majority community 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 an umbrella Sunni organization known as the Sharia Islamia—Mashru A-Al-Islami.¹⁴⁰ 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. However, this was short-lived change; by the summer of that same year the Ten Year Plan had been revived.

August 21, 1994, 10; Muhammad Yusuf Khan FBI file, Report, 9/12/1943, Cleveland file 100-11202, 9-10; and see the incorporation records on file with the state of Ohio. Dannin's assertion that Akram left Qadiani Islam in 1937 can be confirmed by information in Khan's FBI file, and we can say with near certainty that the group was still Lahori in orientation for at least a few years after 1937 due to the fact that the group did not change its official name even when it amended its incorporation records in 1942 and in the early 1940s its 'articles of faith' and 'initiation' forms which explicitly stated that the group believed Ghulam Ahmad was a messiah (for the latter forms, see the Civilian Public Service file of Nazeer Aleem [Holman Whitson] located in the Civilian Public Service Personal Papers and Collected Materials, Swarthmore College Peace Collection).

137 See the Aleem/Whitson Civilian Public Service file.

138 See Hodgson's Civilian Public Service file.

139 See Bowen, *HCTIUS*, 1:269-71.

140 AAUAA FBI file, Report, 3/7/1943, Cleveland file 100-10126, *passim*.

New York City

Although, as we have seen, a number of Muslim groups had been connecting with African Americans in New York City since the 1920s, between the early 1930s and the early 1940s, three groups stood out as being particularly influential for the city's black Sunnis: the Islamic Mission of America, the Moorish National Islamic Center, and the Academy of Islam. Like many of the other Islamic movements of this era, these three organizations reflected both the de- and reterritorializing currents that were flowing through the AAIR at the time.

One of the most important Muslims of this period was David A. Donald, an immigrant who had come to New York from the Grenada in 1913 at the age of twenty-one.¹⁴¹ Skilled as both a tailor and as a violinist, within a decade Donald had developed a relatively successful career in the music industry,¹⁴² playing the violin professionally, but also working as a music and elocution teacher, musician manager, and, for a time, a musicians' union leader.¹⁴³ At the age of thirty-two, he married Clara Forbes, a black Bermudan, who joined her husband teaching students at his Donald Concert Bureau,¹⁴⁴ and in the following year Donald became a naturalized US citizen.¹⁴⁵ Although he did not publicly portray himself as a Muslim during this period, Donald would later claim that his father was a Muslim from a prominent Moroccan family—a clue that suggests that Donald may have been a former member of the MSTA.¹⁴⁶

141 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.

142 Ibid. These facts are confirmed by him in a 1965 interview cited below.

143 "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.

144 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.

145 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*.

146 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 Grenadian; see his "The us and Islam: The Stuff that Dreams are Made of," 25.

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.¹⁴⁷ By 1928, Donald, who did not use an Islamic name at this time, was working at 128th and Lenox Avenue with local Muslim converts and the Muslim ship workers whom Majid had been helping.¹⁴⁸ During this period, he did not make Islamic work his vocation and rarely used references to Islam in his professional life; however, this habit would start slowly eroding in the 1930s when Donald 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.¹⁴⁹

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."¹⁵⁰ He and his wife dissolved their concert bureau, took Muslim names (Daoud Ahmed and Khadija Faisal), and committed themselves to their

147 As mentioned earlier, that Donald promoted Islam in the 1920s is a contested claim. In fact, I have even heard a rumor that he first came to Sunni Islam through the Academy of Islam, a group that will be discussed below.

148 Farrant, "Days of Ramadan"; 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 (Aminah Beverly McCloud, *African American Islam* [New York: Routledge, 1995], 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 Hajji Shaykh Daoud Ahmed Faisal*, ed. Muhammed al-Ahari (Chicago: Magribine Press, 2006), 7.

149 "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, DC: 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 Faisal, *Al-Islam: The True*, 7.

150 Hanscom, "Naturalized American"; Margaret Mara, "'Muslim' Prays Five Times a Day," *Brooklyn Eagle*, May 7, 1952, 19. It is unknown what led to this awareness.

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 the most popular mosques in New York City.¹⁵¹ Though influenced by Ezaldeen, the Faisals' message, which Daoud spread in the several books and pamphlets that he began to write and edit, 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.¹⁵² Also reflecting Majid's influence was the fact that the IMA's members were very diverse ethnically; the community included both white and black converts as well as immigrants from all across the Muslim world.¹⁵³ Sudanese immigrants, in particular, embraced both the IMA and Daoud, who, it was said, developed a special fondness for them due to the influence of Majid.¹⁵⁴ By the 1950s, as we will see in Chapter 11, Sheikh Daoud would add several other skills to his repertoire and would become one of the most active and influential Muslim leaders in the US.¹⁵⁵

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- 151 Hanscom, "Naturalized American"; 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; "1st 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.
- 152 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).
- 153 See, for example, "Moslems Chant." We have very little information about the early black members of this group; however, we do know of at least one individual, Hajj Hamdi Bey, who was a former Moor; see Mayes, "Muslims of African Descent," 47, 77–79.
- 154 See Abusharaf, "Structural," 243–44; 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.
- 155 See Patrick D. Bowen, "The Search for 'Islam': African American Islamic Groups in NYC,

During this period, Sheikh Daoud was not the only African American with claimed Moroccan roots interacting with immigrant Muslims. The FBI files on the MSTA indicate that several New York City MSTA temples had their own immigrant affiliations.¹⁵⁶ 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 MSTA 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 National Institute, Inc., and Mosque number 34) 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 dropped precipitously to around only a dozen total members.¹⁵⁷

The New York MSTA organization that seems to have been most impacted by international orthodox Islam during the 1930s and 1940s was MSTA Temple No. 41, located at 1 East 125th Street and led by Grand Sheik Walter Price Bey.¹⁵⁸ 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 African American community, occasionally appearing in the *New York Amsterdam News’s* society page.¹⁵⁹ 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

1904–1954,” *Muslim World* 102 (2012): 267–68; “Negroes Most Popular Topic” and “Sheikh Stops in Hayward to Lecture,” *Daily Review* (Haywood, CA), February 8, 1956, 29.

156 See Bowen, “Search for ‘Islam,’” 270–77.

157 Bowen, “Search for ‘Islam,’” 276–77.

158 Bowen, “Search for ‘Islam,’” 275–76.

159 “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.

this period, the group was being called, first, the 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, it appears that sometime during that year Walter Price Bey adopted the Arabic name of Abdul Wadood Bey,¹⁶⁰ probably under the influence of Ezaldeen.¹⁶¹ In September, 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—including many Indian Sunnis—in New York.¹⁶² Then, in November, the MNIC held an Eid al-Fitr celebration for both its members, including its Arabic-speaking imam, Si Abdesalaam Sied, and its Muslim visitors, including some from South Asia and probably Sheikh Daoud Faisal.¹⁶³ Wadood Bey also became involved with the immigrant-led New York Islamic Center, the MBUSA, and the local white convert community being led by Nadira Osman—the MNIC even co-sponsored the latter group's 1943 celebration of the famous white Muslim Alexander Russell Webb.¹⁶⁴ In addition, he joined an

160 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 MSTA); 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.

161 AAUAA FBI file, letter, E.E. Conroy, SAC, to Director, FBI, 7/30/1943.

162 "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 US to Be Naturalized," HRG-1947-SJS-0023.

163 "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."

164 Bowen, *HCTIUS*, 1:263–66.

interfaith organization known as the World Fellowship of Faiths, which over the next few years would put him in touch with other Muslims in New York.¹⁶⁵ However, because of increases in rent by 1943 year the MNIC meetings were being held in Wadood Bey's apartment, and membership had reportedly diminished to only "a very small following."¹⁶⁶ By the next year, the MNIC was closed, but, as we will see, Wadood Bey would go on to join other Sunni communities.¹⁶⁷

One final important New York Islamic group emerged in this second phase of first era-AAIR Sunni Islam. This was the Academy of Islam (International) (AOI), founded by Atiya Begum Rahamin in the fall of 1939 at 105 West 112th Street.¹⁶⁸ A female Indian Muslim reformer who had long supported both women's rights and the revival of the arts,¹⁶⁹ in 1938, Atiya organized the first AOI group in England, explaining that her purpose was to encourage "those English people who are interested in Islam to learn more about the religion."¹⁷⁰ Because of her reputation, she was able to draw a number of prominent Muslim speakers to her organization and, as a result, England's AOI seems to have been a success. Motivated to continue this type of work, in February of 1939 Atiya opened another AOI in Bombay,¹⁷¹ and in her address at the group's inaugural ceremony, she 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 harmony, and, finally, that it would open branches in Cairo in New York.¹⁷² Apparently believing that year's World's Fair in New York was a useful means to meet her American goal, from April to October Atiya and her husband, painter Dr. S. Rahamin, visited the city with the US's most diverse community of Muslims.¹⁷³

165 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.

166 Bowen, "Search for 'Islam,'" 275–76.

167 Al-Maqdissi, "The Muslims."

168 "Liner Savoia Sails, Only 224 On Board," *New York Times* October 25, 1939, 26; Nabi Bakhshu Khanu Balocu [Baloch], *World of Work: Predicament of a Scholar* (Jamshoro: Institute of Sindhology, University of Sindh, 2007), 92.

169 For more on Atiya Begum, see Bowen, "Search for 'Islam,'" 278–279.

170 "London—Day by Day," *Times of India*, May 19, 1938, 8.

171 "Academy of Islam: New Body to Promote Harmony," *Times of India*, February 18, 1939, 15.

172 "New Body to Promote."

173 "Liner Savoia."

Although it seems that most of her time during this trip was spent promoting at the World's Fair her Three Arts Circle, an organization that she had established in India during the late 1920s to cultivate intellectual and artistic activities,¹⁷⁴ a New York AOI branch that was reportedly supported by all the Muslim groups in the city was indeed opened on October 1.¹⁷⁵ 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.¹⁷⁶

Furthermore, according to a prominent member, the Academy "rallies on 2 principles: 'Quranic Teachings,' and 'Actions' for the fulfillment. It is working for that which it stands (International)."¹⁷⁷

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;¹⁷⁸ its vice president was an Indian named Mukhtar Ahmad; its assistant treasurer was a Saudi named Sheik Khalil al-Rawaf;¹⁷⁹ and several African American men and women—many of whom may have been Caribbean-born—joined and led the group's YMMA-inspired Young Women's

174 "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.

175 "Academy of Islam in New York Plan to Build Mosque," *Times of India*, February 10, 1940, 15; "Liner Savoia Sails."

176 M.A.M., "Cultural Activities," *Islamic Culture* 23, no. 1–2 (1949): 111.

177 Baloch, *World of Work*, 92.

178 AAUAA FBI file, Report, 10/9/43, Philadelphia, No. 100–19940, 15–16.

179 AAUAA FBI file, Report, 2/[8?]/44, Philadelphia, No. 100–19940, 6.

Muslim Association auxiliary.¹⁸⁰ It was largely 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

By 1943, many things were changing in African American Sunni communities. In New York City, as we have seen, the Muslim groups were becoming more ethnically diverse. Out in Cleveland, Wali Akram decided that his mosque should no longer be a member of the Sharia Islamia—Mashru A-Al-Islami; by 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, which was to be held in Philadelphia that August for, as the convention's promotional material stated, “the purpose of all uniting together as one great organization working in accord with teachings of Al Quran.”¹⁸¹ Besides Akram's group, six others participated in the Convention: the AAUAA, the Moslems of America, the Academy of Islam, the Temple of Islam,¹⁸² the Islamic Association

180 The incorporation records for the group, shows that all the directors and incorporators had non-Muslim names—such as Aida and Hansford Martin and Mary and Eustace Moore—which is strong evidence that these were converts. I have been told by Ihsan Bagby that this group was largely made up of Caribbean immigrants; phone conversation with the author, February 23, 2011.

181 AAUAA FBI file, Letter, S.K. McKee, SAC, Newark (100–18924), to Director, FBI, 7/15/1943, 2.

182 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. Abdul Wadood Bey, who was a leader in the Sunni-leaning MNIC, 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. In have, in fact, seen the MSTA referred to as the ‘Temple of Islam’ in an old MSTA document. 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 8, that the NOI-influenced DOO led by Emanuel Pharr had a relationship with an Ezaldeen-led Uniting Islamic Society 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's New York and Philadelphia branches were extremely small at the time, probably consisting of fewer than a dozen people.

of Muslims,¹⁸³ and Muhammad Yusuf Khan's Universal Muslim League of the Ahmadia Muslim Missionary.¹⁸⁴ Evidence indicates that Abdul Wadood Bey, the leader of the MNIC, was also in attendance, as was a representative from Sheikh Daoud Faisal's IMA as well as guests from various small black Muslim communities as far away as California and Florida.¹⁸⁵

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 each other and with many other Muslims of different ethnicities, the ties between the 2,000 or so Muslims that were said to be affiliated with the Convention were formalized when the attendees 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.'¹⁸⁶ In addition, plans were made to start a national Islamic journal, and the Academy of Islam distributed a pamphlet to UISA members that taught basics of the Arabic language to help better unite the large Muslim community.¹⁸⁷ As a result of these efforts, Ezaldeen established an official UISA meeting place in Detroit¹⁸⁸ and two more annual UISA conventions were held (1944

183 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 AAUA FBI file, Report, 10/9/1943, Philadelphia file 100-19940). However, it is also possible that this group has some connection to the prominent white convert Louis Glick, who was associated with multiple Islamic Associations and who even attended the 1944 UISA convention. For a discussion of Glick's connections with African Americans; see Bowen, *HCTIUS*, 1:271-78.

184 AAUA FBI file, Report, 10/9/1943, Philadelphia file 100-19940, 17.

185 AAUA FBI file, Report, 2/[8?]/44, Philadelphia file 100-19940, 7; AAUA FBI file, Report, 10/9/43, Philadelphia file 100-19940, 3, 8, 21.

186 AAUA FBI file, Report, 10/9/43, Philadelphia file 100-19940, 13-14.

187 AAUA FBI file, Report, 2/[8?]/44, Philadelphia file 100-19940, 6; AAUA FBI file, Report, 10/9/43, Philadelphia file 100-19940, 20.

188 DOO FBI file, Report, 8/1/1944, Detroit file, 100-5209, 2. This likely was the same organization that had previously identified as an AAUA.

and 1946),¹⁸⁹ during which time the ties between the various African American Sunni communities were for the most part strengthened. Over the next few years, in fact, the UISA would be attended by African American Muslims from several of the small new Sunni and Ahmadi communities throughout the country, which now included cities like St. Louis and Miami.¹⁹⁰ And, in addition, as will be shown shortly, during this period more books were published by UISA members for circulation in their national network, and cooperation between at least some of the UISA groups increased.

The UISA, however, was not to last. Although Nasir Ahmad had been responsible for the idea of the Convention and had been its chairman,¹⁹¹ Wali Akram was elected president and, apparently still leaning towards Lahori Islam, at the 1944 convention he recommended that the UISA require a pledge of loyalty known as the bayat—a feature that had been used by the Ahmadis—as well as a formal commitment to following the laws of the US.¹⁹² The bayat proposal, first of all, indicated to many that Akram was still loyal to the Ahmadis, and even though the UISA included Ahmadi participants, there was still a deep sense of suspicion surrounding the group. But beyond this, the notion of loyalty to US laws was seen by some as going against the Qur'an, and Ezaldeen, who was extremely critical of whites, strongly rejected the latter proposal.¹⁹³ After the convention, tensions lingered due to these and various other disagreements surrounding the kind of Islam that the UISA would endorse. One major issue was Ezaldeen's rejection of a proposal to allow whites to be members, a position he based on his belief that white members would learn the Muslims' language and then enslave them,¹⁹⁴ whereas Akram and the majority of the attendees supported white membership, saying that the Qur'an does not discriminate.¹⁹⁵

189 However, members of the group continued to use their UISA titles meet and met for other functions in 1945; see UISA FBI file, Report 9/7/1945, Cleveland file 100-14077; "Honoring Mohammed," *Pittsburgh Courier*, March 3, 1945, 10.

190 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.

191 Dannin, *Black Pilgrimage*, 51; AAUAA FBI file, Report, 10/9/1943, Philadelphia file 100-19940, 2.

192 Dannin, *Black Pilgrimage*, 49; UISA FBI file, Report 9/12/1944, Cleveland file 100-14077, 3; UISA FBI file, Report 9/12/1944, Cleveland file 100-14077, 8-10.

193 Dannin, *Black Pilgrimage*, 49-50; UISA FBI file, Report 9/12/1944, Cleveland file 100-14077, 2, 9.

194 A notion that suggests an Ahmadi influence.

195 UISA FBI file, Report 9/12/1944, Cleveland file 100-14077, 9. The issue was apparently most

Ezaldeen, it seems, was slowly losing support both within the UISA leadership and among Muslims in various communities, especially AAUAA members in Detroit.¹⁹⁶ With this tense atmosphere, although the UISA formed a committee to establish the group's constitution and by-laws, the community was not holding together.¹⁹⁷ The AOI stopped attending the group's meetings after 1944, and others soon followed. Meanwhile, dissension began to spread within the already-established Sunni communities—several groups, for example, either broke off from the AAUAA or created schisms at local mosques—and by 1947 the UISA itself had soon disintegrated.¹⁹⁸

Yet the spread of Sunni Islam to African Americans was not halted. Another important institution was established during this period: a group officially called the International Moslem Society (IMS)—but which would later be primarily known as '303 Mosque' or 'Mosque 303.' Writing in the 1950s, a Muslim researcher explained that the IMS was founded in Harlem in 1944 by Wadood Bey, the same former Moorish American who had once led the MNIC and had attended the 1943 UISA Convention.¹⁹⁹ 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 a group originally known as Nadil Islam. The latter had been set up by Somali immigrants at 303 West 125th Street on November 6, 1941.²⁰⁰ 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 soon established

raised due to the presence of the white convert Louis Glick; again, see Bowen, *HCTIUS*, 1:271–78.

196 UISA FBI file, Report 11/20/1944, Cleveland file 100–14077, 3; UISA FBI file, Report 2/3/1945, Cleveland file 100–14077.

197 The following is the list of people who were on the committee: Ezaldeen (Newark); Nasir Ahmad, Yusuf Hameed, and Yahya Ashraf (Philadelphia); Saeed Akmal and Muhammad Yaseen (Pittsburgh); Karma Jee Karachi (Detroit); Tahleeb Sayyed (Buffalo); Abdullah Ibn Malik (Columbus); Abdul Haqq (Rochester); Abdul Kareem (Jacksonville); H. Abdullah and Hamza Sayyed (New York); Sadyka Abdalaz and Zainab Uthman (St. Louis); Wali Akram and Ahsan M.A. Elahee (Cleveland). Source: UISA FBI file, Report 11/20/1944, Cleveland file 100–14077, 2.

198 Dannin, *Black Pilgrimage*, 54.

199 Al-Maqdissi, "The Muslims," 29.

200 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.

a relationship with the organization.²⁰¹ Still, the IMS qua IMS was probably not as much a merger between Nadil Islam and the MNIC as it was a reorganization of the former group on a more international basis. Another IMS had been founded by Somalis in Cardiff, Wales around this same time, and, like the American group would do in the late 1940s and early 1950s, it sought to promote independence for Somalia; the New York group's willingness to embrace non-Somalis was therefore probably an attempt to develop allies for the larger Somali struggle.²⁰² However, by the mid-1950s the IMS, which was under the leadership of the Somali Ibrahim Guled until at least 1957,²⁰³ seems to have become more focused on religious practice and developing 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 mixed Islamic community.²⁰⁴

One of the most important ties the American 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 access to a relatively good deal of valuable Islamic resources, such as the beginning Arabic pamphlet the group distributed at the UISA convention,²⁰⁵ as well as the author of that pamphlet, Sheikh Khalil al-Rawaf. Al-Rawaf, who was wealthy son of a governor in southern Saudi Arabia,²⁰⁶ had come to the US in 1935 purportedly at the invitation of Eleanor

201 The picture of the IMS in Jones-Quarterly shows individuals wearing the clothing of Moorish-American 'adepts' (those who had become full members of the MSTA)—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. We also know that a least one former Moor and former State Street mosque member, Hajj Hamdi Bey, joined the IMS; see Mayes, "Muslims of African Descent," 77–79.

202 "British Colored Fight Colony Return to Italy," *Atlanta Daily World*, May 25, 1948, 3; "Somalis Protest Unaction," *Philadelphia Tribune*, June 5, 1948, 15; "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; Ibrahim Guled, "Asks Aid for Somaliland," *Afro-American*, May 7, 1949, 4; "Somali League to Hold Rally," *New York Age*, May 7, 1949, 6.

203 "Three Faiths Join to Hail Jefferson," *New York Times*, April 14, 1957, 86.

204 Al-Maqdissi, "The Muslims," 77–79. Ihsan Bagby has told me that the group was primarily composed of Caribbean immigrants; phone conversation with the author, February 23, 2011.

205 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."

206 Al-Rawaf's time in the US has yet to be fully documented. The following are sources that

Roosevelt, who had an interest in his expertise in Arabian horses. During his stay in the country, which lasted roughly fifteen years, the urbane al-Rawaf traveled frequently, meeting politicians, businessmen, and many Muslims.²⁰⁷ He, in fact, served as the imam for the Cedar Rapids mosque from 1936 to 1937,²⁰⁸ and in 1943–1944, besides being the AOI's assistant treasurer, he was an Arabic teacher at both the AOI and at Sheikh Daoud Faisal's IMA.²⁰⁹ Al-Rawaf was so respected among African American and immigrant Muslims that in 1944 he was also appointed by Wali Akram to be the UISA's liaison officer to maintain relations with foreign-born Muslims.²¹⁰ In addition, in 1946 and 1947 he served as the imam of a Manhattan YMMA mosque.²¹¹

Perhaps al-Rawaf's biggest contribution to the Muslim community in the US, 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 he authored *A Brief Resumé of the Principles of Al-Islam and Pillars of Faith*, a twenty-nine page booklet—which almost certainly circulated in the UISA community and beyond—discussing Islam's five pillars, some other basic Islamic beliefs, and how to perform prayers.²¹² In 1947, he also published an edition of Ahmad Ahmad Galwas's popular *The Religion of Islam*, another introductory text, but one that, at over two hundred pages, went into much greater

I have collected on his stay: Philip Harsham, "Islam in Iowa," *Aramco World Magazine* 27, no. 6 (1976): 30–36; Yahya Aosey 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*, 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*, 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.

207 E.g., "Emir Saud to Fly."

208 See Harsham, "Islam in Iowa" and Aosey, "Fifty Years."

209 AAUAA FBI file, Report, 10/9/43, Philadelphia, No. 100–19940, 21; "Moslems Chant Prayers."

210 Dannin, *Black Pilgrimage*, 52. Dannin incorrectly identifies al-Rawaf as an "Indian immigrant who operated a trading concern in midtown Manhattan."

211 This is listed on the advertisements for his edition of the Qur'an; see below.

212 Sheikh Khalil Al Rawaf, *A Brief Resumé of the Principles of Al-Islam and Pillars of Faith* (New York: Tobia Press, 1944).

depth than *A Brief Resumé*; and it seems that the book was fairly influential for African American Sunnis at the time.²¹³ Al-Rawaf's most significant publishing contribution, however, was the 1946 publication of Yusuf Ali's English translation of the Qur'an.²¹⁴ This was the first twentieth-century US 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 approved anywhere by Muslims,"²¹⁵ 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.²¹⁶ It is interesting that the timing of the printing of these texts, 1943 to 1947, parallels almost perfectly with the life of the UISA—which suggests that al-Rawaf was motivated to publish these works largely due to the creation of the UISA, which represented the growing American interest in Sunni Islam and the increasing unification of US 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, where

213 Ahmad Ahmad Galwas, *The Religion of Islam* ([New York]: [Sheikh Khalil al-Rawaf], 1947). PhD candidate Donna Auston has informed me that during the 1950s and 1960s 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.

214 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, DC, 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, DC: Islamic Center, 1978), 25.

215 Anne Fremantle, "The Heritage of Millions who Have 'Surrendered,'" *New York Times*, October 4, 1953, BR7, 16.

216 See two letters on the subject in "Letters to the Editor," *New York Times*, November 22, 1953, BR49.

he lectured on ‘Islamic Culture and Unity.’²¹⁷ In attendance at the lecture was Mukhtar Ahmad, the AOI’s vice president who lived at one of the AOI’s mosque locations, and a few days after the lecture, Ahmad invited Subhani to stay with him at the AOI.

According to Subhani, his main reason for coming to the US was “to collect further data for the development” of a philosophy he had invented called *Rabbaniyyat*,²¹⁸ and over the next three or four months, Subhani, who reportedly had never studied English before coming to the US, wrote in English the booklet *Teachings of Islam in Light of the Philosophy of Rabbaniyyat*, published by the AOI in 1947.²¹⁹ This thirty-two page book argues that “*Rububiyat*” (translated by Subhani as “preservation”) is God’s, and thus the universe’s, “central quality”; and preserving is God’s “principal work” after creation and manifestation.²²⁰ “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.²²¹ 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).²²² The greatest achievement a human can have is becoming a “man,” which means developing the correct balance between focus on the

217 “Muslim Society to Hear Moulana Azad Subhani,” *New York Amsterdam News*, November 9, 1946, 25; Baloch, 92.

218 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.

219 Subhani Rabbani, *The Teachings of Islam in Light of the Philosophy of Rabbaniyyat, for Beginners* (New York: Academy of Islam International, Inc., 1947).

220 *Ibid.*, 11, 15.

221 *Ibid.*, 17–18. Interestingly, Subhani’s notions regarding creation, annihilation, and regeneration are similar to what would be taught by a later New York-based African American Islamic sect, the Five Percenters, which emphasized the concept of ‘build and destroy.’ I am not aware of a possible source of the Five Percent notion, so it is possible that it came from other Islamic sources that were circulating in New York.

222 *Ibid.*, 24.

material world (the “universe”) and focus on Allah.²²³ 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.”²²⁴ 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 through creating, annihilating, and regenerating economic institutions.²²⁵

Furthermore, 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, as the Ahmadis, MSTA, 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 Rabbani was therefore a relatively popular and significant figure in the New York 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 UNIA break-off group the Universal African Nationalist Movement.²²⁶

By 1949, Ahmad was noting the significant influence that Subhani Rabbani and his reformist-Sufi message had had on the AOI.²²⁷ 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. Later, in fact, one of Huysen Hilmi Isik’s

223 Ibid., 30–31.

224 Ibid., 23.

225 Syed Abu Ahmad Akif, *A Conversation Unfinished*, unpublished manuscript, Microsoft Word File, 2010.

226 “African Group Airs ‘Freedom of the Common Man,’” *New York Amsterdam News*, February 22, 1947, 4.

227 M.A.M., “Cultural Activities.”

students, Sheikh Beya-din-Gechi, served for a time as the AOI's teacher.²²⁸ Starting in this third phase, then, the Rabbani-inclined AOI, armed with the first-era 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 larger African American Sunni network.

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. Although it took Garvey's UNIA to reterritorialize the African American religious market to make it accepting of Islam, deterritorialization was still a fundamental element in the AAIR—and it was this that led to the rise of African American Sunni Islam by allowing for the contact with and embracing of wide varieties of Islamic ideas, practices, and communities. However, deterritorialized Islam came at the cost of a constant current of fragmentation and sectarianism that was hindering the progress of black uplift, which had been the basic attraction to Islam for many African Americans. Therefore, the turn to Sunni Islam, though it was itself still heavily shaped by deterritorializing forces, was primarily a 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. Nevertheless, because the sources of Sunni Islam were diverse and knowledge of it was still fairly minimal and fragmented, ways of incorporating Sunni Islam into uplift and black nationalist ideas varied. Moreover, with personalities and private interests still inhibiting unification, African American Muslims ultimately failed to make Sunni Islam the dominant form of Islam in the AAIR.

Although there would continue to be a fairly strong interest in Sunni Islam throughout the rest of the AAIR, and even an impressive wave of conversions to it in the late 1960s and early 1970s, it was not until the late 1970s that the majority of African American Muslims would become Sunni. The path to this transformation was not at all an obvious one, however. It was the result, in fact, of one non-Sunni AAIR group being able to achieve what the Sunnis had not

228 http://www.cmac.fcwcenter.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=62&Itemid=71, last retrieved July 17, 2012.

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 book, but its rise to dominance, which would give it the ability to lead tens of thousands of African Americans into Sunni Islam, is the main subject of part 3.

PART 3

The Years 1945–1975



A Nation Reborn

Black America entered a period of enormous change in the years following the Second World War. As migrants continued to flow into cities and the numbers of urban-born increased, African American communities experienced rapid growth, and a new black consciousness was spreading. At the same time, with hundreds of thousands of African Americans having served in the military during the war, there was a rising expectation that they should be treated as full and equal citizens in their own country. Disappointed with the slow pace of progress being made by the court-based civil rights activities of the NAACP, new organizations were beginning to partake in direct action boycotts and protests. Soon, as these groups began combining with each other, a full-fledged civil rights movement had emerged, one that would permanently reshape the contours of black life in the United States. The country was thus witnessing the birth of a new generation of African Americans.

It was within this context that African American Islam went from having a small market within the black community to becoming a major shaper of the community itself. This change in the status of African American Islam was brought about by a single organization, the Nation of Islam, which during the 1940s underwent key transformations that enabled it to make a significant impact on the black community in the subsequent years. In fact, what the Nation had turned into by the late 1950s was surprisingly similar to the UNIA of the post-World War I era. It had begun making serious use of mass media; it inspired numerous proselytizers who ably recruited from preexisting social networks across the country; it offered new programs, philosophies, and folk traditions that could appeal to a wide variety of African Americans; and it brought forth a charismatic orator who possessed a unique ability to reach the souls of the new generation of black folk. Like the UNIA, then, the NOI was able to initiate a reterritorializing institutional change in African American religious life. By the mid-1960s, Islam was no longer merely a small subset within African American religion; it was a pervasive and penetrating component of black culture, and the Nation, because of its disproportionate role in this cultural transformation, had become the gravitational center of the Islamic presence.

Part 2 presents this transformation over the course of six chapters, each of which examines an important stage or component in this religio-cultural market reterritorialization. Because the NOI's influence was so significant, and because the transmutations the group and its leaders underwent were rather

complex, much of part 2 focuses on the Nation and its prominent minister Malcolm X. Nevertheless, other groups are addressed in detail as well, as are the various cultural impacts of the NOI outside of its temple walls. It is shown that as the Nation and its leaders grew in popularity, they began to take on new philosophies and practices, and as a result the kind and level of impact they would have on African American life became increasingly diversified and powerful. The present chapter traces the first step in this process: the metamorphosis and rise to prominence of the Nation of Islam in the 1940s and 1950s.

Regeneration

In the mid-1940s, the Nation of Islam was reborn. The arrest and imprisonment of several dozen of its members in 1942 and 1943 did not just fail to extinguish the group, it actually reinforced the Muslims' conviction that American society was truly unjust and that the Nation offered the only path for black salvation.¹ With renewed vigor, the NOI began practicing different forms of evangelization and instituting new programs for propaganda and black self-sufficiency. As a result, the movement quickly expanded far outside of its northern Midwest base and was soon amassing thousands of followers and significant wealth. Indeed, the 1940s experience of incarceration proved to be a watershed moment in the history of the organization.

Perhaps the most obvious outcome of the incarceration of NOI members in the 1940s is the emergence of the group's now well-known tradition of proselytizing within prisons, a practice that Elijah Muhammad himself both participated in and explicitly encouraged.² Imprisonment had brought the already-militant NOI, complete with its 'badman'/outlaw hero and protest folk connections, into extremely close contact with a population that included many who not only had identified strongly with the 'badman'/outlaw hero, but had also possessed both deep-seated anger and a more intense exposure

1 Government persecution frequently confirms the feelings of millennial religious sects; 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), 208–26.

2 Clegg, *Original Man*, 107; X and Haley, *Autobiography*, 170.

to aggressive action in their daily lives.³ As we have seen, prior to 1942, NOI Muslims, although extremely poor and uneducated and undoubtedly members of the lumpenproletariat, were mostly law-abiding; frequently their only jail sentences were short and the results of them attempting to defend what they believed were their religious and human rights. Some active criminals and ex-convicts were surely in their ranks, but since most Muslims had little contact with them, and those who did probably did not come across to such people as worthy of following, the convict and active criminal populations were not being actively cultivated for recruitment. But by the mid-1940s, having now passed through the rite of long-term imprisonment themselves, the NOI's proselytizers, who frequently recounted their own prison experiences in their speeches, were seen by many convicts and active criminals as possessing legitimate authority to speak on their condition, and a strong connection between the communities was made.⁴

This would turn out to be a key transformation for the NOI because it taught and enabled the group to reach a younger, more urban generation that was not as familiar with subtle references to Moorish Science, slave folktales, and old Christian stories.⁵ The Nation's badman-'white devils' talk and its members' shared experience in being genuine outlaws were sufficient in and of themselves to win some respect in this relatively untapped sector of black America.⁶ Malcolm X, the NOI's most famous prison convert, may have best explained why the appeals to Moorish Science and folktales were not vital for converting criminals and the incarcerated:

Usually the convict comes from among the bottom-of-the-pile Negroes, the Negroes who through their entire lives have been kicked about,

3 See, e.g., Najiy, *Nation of Islam's*, 84–85.

4 FBI reports of NOI speeches in the 1950s show this topic was indeed common, especially in Elijah Muhammad's speeches. In his autobiography, Muslim convert John W. Griffin recalls that the NOI was appealing to many African Americans precisely because it was seen as an "outlawed" group; see *A Letter to My Father* (n.p.: Xlibris, 2001), 224.

5 Dorson, *Negro Folktales*, 10, 17–18, 27–30; Dorson, "Is There a Folk," 25, 28, 45–46.

6 In his study of Muslims in California, John Robert Howard discovered that the NOI typically did not convert people to its ideology about whites as devils and African Americans as superior—in many cases, particularly among those who had been involved in criminal activities, these individuals already possessed similar ideas, and the NOI simply confirmed those notions for them; see his "Becoming a Black Muslim: A Study of Commitment Processes in a Deviant Political Organization" (PhD diss., Stanford University, 1965), *passim.*, esp. 63–64.

treated like children—Negroes who never have met one white man who didn't either take something from them or do something to them.

You let this caged-up black man start thinking, the same way I did when I first heard Elijah Muhammad's teachings: let him start thinking how, with better breaks when he was young and ambitious he might have been a lawyer, a doctor, a scientist, anything. You let this caged-up black man start realizing, as I did, how from the first landing of the first slave ship, the millions of black men in America have been like sheep in a den of wolves. That's why black prisoners become Muslims so fast when Elijah Muhammad's teachings filter into their cages by way of other Muslim convicts. 'The white man is the devil' is a perfect echo of that black convict's lifelong experience.⁷

To be sure, the numerous folk and religious elements of the NOI rhetoric continued to play a significant role in the symbolic lives of new Muslims, as these could connect with a wide range of components of black culture that were, at the very least, subconsciously absorbed by even urban-raised African Americans—the NOI message therefore continued to be packed with Apocalyptic biblical references as well as vague assertions about 'our flag' having been stolen. But now, with its new links to the imprisoned, the Nation was inclined to emphasize the more broadly-appealing white devil-righteous black man dichotomy.⁸ Soon, Muhammad even came to believe that pimps, hustlers, and the like, apparently due to their deep identification as badmen and their unmatched ability to communicate with similarly-minded black folk, made

7 x and Haley, *Autobiography*, 184–85. See also the Malcolm x interview with Kenneth B. Clark, wherein Malcolm explains: "The reason that the religion of Islam has spread so rapidly in prison is because the average so-called Negro in prison has had experiences enough to make him realize the hypocrisy of everything in this society, and he also has experienced the fact that the system itself is not designed to rehabilitate him or to make him turn away from crime. Then when he hears the religious teaching of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad that restores to him his racial pride, his racial identity, and restores to him also the desire to be a man, to be a human being, he reforms him" in Kenneth B. Clark, *The Negro Protest: James Baldwin, Malcolm x, Martin Luther King Talk with Kenneth B. Clark* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), 23.

8 In one 1954 speech, Malcolm x put it bluntly (as paraphrased by an FBI agent): "The sum of the teachings of the [NOI] was that the white man in the devil and that the black man was God"; Jeremiah x Pugh FBI file, Report, 1/27/1955, Philadelphia file 100–40129, 9. FBI summaries of NOI meetings in the 1950s reveal that the subject of whites being devils was frequently brought up, whereas most other specific folk-connected traditions were not nearly as common.

excellent Muslim proselytizers after they were reformed.⁹ Somewhat surprisingly, prior to this, no black religious or nationalist group had been willing or able to draw in this large component of the African American lumpenproletariat. Indeed not even Marcus Garvey—who had obtained some prisoner followers in the early 1920s¹⁰—had fully realized the great potential for prisoner, ex-convict, and active criminal recruitment to the extent that the Nation did after 1942. The imprisonment of a large number of NOI men in the 1940s was thus a seminal moment in the history of both black religion and black nationalism.

The value of incarceration in NOI history becomes clearest when we look at the founders and early leaders for the temples that were started in the sixteen years that followed the draft evasion convictions. Temple No. 5, the first official temple established after the arrests, was, for instance, the creation of an ex-convict who had converted in a federal prison in Michigan where he was taught directly by Elijah Muhammad.¹¹ Prior to his incarceration Asbury Williams was a pimp who, with his wife, Pauline—a woman that insisted she was Native American despite her family identifying as white and other whites assuming she was white—ran a house of prostitution in Cincinnati.¹² Upon his July 1944 parole, Asbury returned to Ohio where he utilized his street-honed skills of persuasion and connections to the lumpen to quickly build up a small

9 Evanzz, *Messenger*, 161.

10 See, e.g., James Allen Davis, “Color Line Drawn in San Quentin Prison,” *Negro World*, January 24, 1925, 9; Wm. Tucker, “A Prison a Good Place in Which to Learn to Think,” *Negro World*, August 16, 1924, 11; “Great Outpouring of People Pack Liberty Hall to Capacity,” *Negro World*, September 5, 1925, 3; “Nine Prisoners Contribute to U.N.I.A. Fund,” *Negro World*, July 3, 1926, 2.

11 Memorandum, SA Henry W. Goodson to SAC, Cincinnati, 11/13/1953, John Henry Kimble FBI file, 2; Memorandum, SA Ralph D. House to SAC, Cincinnati, 11/25/1958, Pauline Williams FBI file, 1; Wakeel Allah, *A History of the NOI Vol. 1* (Atlanta: A Team Publishing, [2014]), 325; Keith Butler, “The Muslims Are No Longer an Unknown Quantity,” *Corrections Magazine* (June 1978): 56.

12 In addition to “Prophet’ Is Freed; Didn’t Entice Woman to Leave Her Home,” *Cincinnati Enquirer*, September 26, 1946, 11, see in Pauline’s FBI file Memorandum, 4/6/1954, SAC, Cincinnati to Director, FBI; Report, 4/6/1954, Cincinnati file 100–100668; and Memorandum, SA Ralph D. House to SAC, Cincinnati, 11/25/1958. Additional information about the family of Pauline (born Pauline Strong in Kentucky in 1913) was obtained from *Ancestry.com*. Because of this background, it appears that Pauline Williams could be considered not only the first ‘white’ person in the NOI, but possibly also the first NOI member without black ancestry. As we saw in Chapter 7, in the 1930s the group did not let ‘free-born’ people join even if they were non-white and married to a Muslim.

following of men and women; by the fall of 1946 his temple had about twenty members, and by late 1953 there were around fifty Cincinnati NOI Muslims, making Williams's group one of the largest in the country.¹³

Temples No. 6, 7, and 8 also had either direct prison roots or influential leaders who had been in or would go to prison. Baltimore's Temple No. 6, for example, was led early on by two NOI ministers who had been imprisoned for draft evasion with the Washington temple in the 1940s, James 3X McGregor and Isaiah Karriem, both of whom became highly influential ministers on the East Coast.¹⁴ McGregor, who would later gain prominence as the head of Newark's Temple No. 25, is particularly notable in terms of the theme of incarceration. He had first learned about Islam in a Washington jail where he met Muhammad; soon after converting he was imprisoned for refusing to sign up for the draft; and then he was imprisoned again for draft evasion in the 1950s.¹⁵ The community that would become New York's Temple No. 7 began first developing around 1942 when a few members from the Washington temple moved to Harlem.¹⁶ By the early 1950s, the group was largely made up of former Moors, black nationalists, and gang members, and it was soon being headed by Minister Linn Karriem, one of the earliest ministers in Chicago who, with his peers, was sent to prison in the 1940s.¹⁷ Temple No. 8's key ex-convict, one

13 Letter to the author, Demetria Jasey, student intern, Office of Communications and Archives, Federal Bureau of Prisons, April 20, 2016; "Prophet' Stays at Home as Unusual Case Comes Up," *Cincinnati Post*, September 21, 1946, 1; "Prophet' Is in Jail," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, September 21, 1946, 8; John Henry Kimble FBI file, Memorandum, SA Henry W. Goodson to SAC, Cincinnati, 11/13/1953, 2.

14 There are several conflicting accounts of the early years of the Baltimore temple, but they generally agree that Shabazz served for a brief period as the group's minister in the late 1940s and/or early 1950s, being followed by Karriem, who was the group's minister for several years. See Imam Wali Muhammad Uqdah and Rashidah R. Uqdah, *A History and Narrative of Muslim Americans in Baltimore, MD from 1945–2000* (Baltimore, MD: Imam Wali Muhammad Uqdah, 2003), 15–26; James D. Dilts, "Baltimore's 300 or More Black Muslims Gather [...]," *Sun* (Baltimore), September 4, 1966, SM8; Alonzo 4X, "Met Messenger in Jail; Kept Islam Out in Front," *Muhammad Speaks*, September 28, 1973, 4, 20.

15 Alonzo 4X, "Met Messenger in Jail"; "Cult Draft-Dodger Faces New Prison Term," *San Diego Union*, March 11, 1953, A-8; Mannan, *A History*, 26n76.

16 Mannan, *A History*, 27 ff.

17 Like with the Baltimore temple, there are some conflicting reports about No. 7's founding, but Najji's account appears to be the most reliable. 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; Allah, *A History*, 326; Najji, *Nation of Islam's*, 5, 9, 50–52, 62.

Brother Howard, had converted while in prison with Muhammad, and after his release in the late 1940s began attempting to spread Islam in San Diego.¹⁸ There, Howard successfully converted a construction worker named Henry Kid Mims (Henry Majied) who then joined up with another recent convert, Joseph Riley Barnes (Yusuf Shaheed Abdullah), and the two—who would both in the early 1950s serve time in jails for attempting to stand up for their NOI beliefs—became the main forces behind the organizing of Muslim temples in California, which included San Diego’s Temple No. 8, Oakland’s Temple No. 26, and Los Angeles’ Temple No. 27.¹⁹ Although, because of few or conflicting sources, we cannot currently say whether prison connections were important for Temple No. 9 (Youngstown),²⁰ we know that Atlantic City’s Temple No. 10 had important prison roots,²¹ and it is notable that during the late 1940s and

18 Allah, *A History*, 326. It seems that the exact year was 1949; see *Bilalian News*, May 11, 1979, 23 and *Muslim Journal*, March 2, 1990, 3, 17.

19 Allah, *A History*, 326–28; Imam Aqeel M. El-Amin, “Profile of a Pioneer: Yusuf Abdullah,” *Muslim Journal*, September 30, 1988, 4; “Suspects in Shooting Held for Nov. 2 Trial,” *San Diego Union*, September 28, 1950, B-1; “Two Convicted after Resisting Police Officers,” *San Diego Union*, November 3, 1950, A-28; “FBI Jails Pair on Draft Law Violation Counts,” *Sacramento Bee*, November 7, 1950, 2; “Four Cultists Accused as Draft Foes,” *San Diego Union*, November 8, 1950, A-12; “Resisters’ Get 6 Months in Jail,” *San Diego Union*, November 25, 1950, A-6; “Two Suspects Freed, Bonds Exonerated,” *San Diego Union*, May 27, 1951, A-5; “Does Christianity Benefit the American Negro?” (advertisement), *Los Angeles Sentinel*, December 25, 1958, A9; Evanzz, *Messenger*, 453–54; Fard FBI file, Correlation Summary, 1/15/1958, 34; John Shabazz, “Reports from the West Coast,” *Muhammad Speaks*, July 23, 1965, 8. That Barnes is identical with Abdullah is confirmed in the latter’s Social Security Application, available on *Ancestry.com*. It should be pointed out that according to a 1965 article by John Shabazz, Mims/Majied first converted to Islam not in San Diego, as Allah reports in *A History*, but in Detroit (see “Reports from the West Coast”).

20 Youngstown’s temple, which had around ten members by 1951, may have been started by Minister Thomas Sharrieff (who later moved to be a minister in Florida), for whom we have almost no information; see Walter Dan Abilla, “A Study of Black Muslims: An Analysis of Commitment” (PhD diss., Case Western Reserve University, 1972), 12–13; Elijah Muhammad FBI file, Report, 11/27/1951, Cleveland file 25–11572, 1–2.

21 Atlantic City’s temple’s roots seem to revolve primarily around Woodrow x Love, who, as I understand it, had not been imprisoned. However, two ex-convicts were indeed important in the group’s early growth: Charles x O’Neil, who converted under Malcolm x while in prison in the late 1940s, help put the temple on solid ground and Baltimore’s formerly-imprisoned minister Isaiah Karriem may have been the group’s first official minister; see Allah, *A History*, 326; Amir N. Muhammad, with contributions by Abdur-Rahim (Alfred) Hasan, “History of Atlantic City Muslims Temple No. 10—Part 1,” *Muslim Journal*, October 8, 2010, 3, 7; “Love, Woodrow x” (obituary), *Press of Atlantic City*, January 18, 2005, C2;

early 1950s most of the new ministers for the original four temples had also been incarcerated for draft evasion.²²

Because the NOI's next five temples were, if not technically established by him, put on solid footing by the group's most famous ex-convict, it will be valuable to pause for a moment to discuss Malcolm X's background and his rise in the Nation of Islam.²³ Born Malcolm Little in Omaha in 1925, Malcolm experienced trauma at the age of six when he lost his father, Earl, a man who had been both a Baptist preacher and a strong advocate and organizer for the UNIA, and had even reportedly hosted Marcus Garvey in the family's home on a number of occasions.²⁴ Earl's death—so the family thought and the evidence suggests—was probably a murder committed by whites attempting to suppress black resistance in Lansing, where the family was living at the time; Michigan's Black Legion was suspected.²⁵ The loss of their father had an enormous impact on the Littles, especially on Malcolm's mother, a Grenada-born Garveyite, who,

Uqdah, *History and Narrative*, 26; Abdul-Tawwab, "Doing for Self!" 54–55. I would like to thank Dr. Richlyn Goddard for her sharing information about Temple No. 10.

- 22 Temple No. 1's post-1944 ministers were Wali Muhammad (Elijah's brother), who was succeeded (possibly after a brief stint by John X Jackson in around 1950) by Lemuel Hassan Anderson—both of whom had been imprisoned; see Allah, *A History*, 324; Ulysses Boykin, "Temple of Islam Sees Negroes Ruling World after Armageddon," *Detroit Free Press*, June 26, 1950, 21; Report, 7/17/1958, Cincinnati file 100-10668, 8–9, Pauline Williams FBI file. Temple No. 2's ministers were Lucius X Brown Bey (1947), a former Seventh Day Adventist evangelist and a thirty-second degree Mason who apparently did not go to prison, and then James 3X Anderson Shabazz (Lemuel's brother), who did—although Elijah Muhammad himself was seen as the true minister of the temple; see "Cultists 'Guilty'; 32 Given Jail Sentences," *Chicago Defender* (Ntl. ed.), October 10, 1942, 1; Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism*, 176; Allah, *A History*, 345 and 348. Temple No. 3's minister, Sultan Muhammad, had already been the local minister before his imprisonment, and simply returned to his post afterwards; see Allah, *A History*, 324. Temple No. 4's new minister was the recently-released Isaiah Karriem, who was followed by Sultan Muhammad and then Lucius X Brown Bey in 1954; see Diltz, "Baltimore's 300"; Najiy, *Nation of Islam's*, 100; Allah, *A History*, 349.
- 23 This short summary relies primarily on the following works: Evanzz, *Messenger*; Clegg, *Original Man*; Louis A. DeCaro, *On the Side of My People: A Religious Life of Malcolm X* (New York: New York University Press, 1996); Moon, *Untold Tales*, 273–78; Marable, *Malcolm X*; X and Haley, *Autobiography*.
- 24 Malcolm's mother was also involved in the UNIA as a writer of reports of division meetings. See Ted Vincent, "The Garveyite Parents of Malcolm X," *Black Scholar* (March/April 1989): 10–13; Farrell, "Malcolm X's," 132; Jan Carew, *Ghosts in Our Blood: With Malcolm X in Africa, England, and the Caribbean* (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 1994), 118.
- 25 X and Haley, *Autobiography*, 3, 9, 15.

after suffering a mental breakdown, was institutionalized when Malcolm was twelve—an event that resulted in the children being placed in foster care. Although for the next few years the young Malcolm was able to maintain a positive outlook, and even hoped become a lawyer and politician,²⁶ continued experiences of racism led to him growing resentful towards whites and society at large. By his mid-teenage years, he had turned to a life of indulgence and small-time criminal activity in Boston and Harlem,²⁷ and in 1946, after being arrested while picking up a stolen watch he was having repaired, Malcolm was sent to prison for larceny and breaking and entering. During his incarceration Malcolm underwent a rapid and profound personal transformation. Being guided by a learned older convict, he began reading voraciously, especially historical texts that discussed African American and world history; he honed his oratorical skills through the prison weekly debate competitions; and he even attempted to write a book.²⁸

Early on in his incarceration Malcolm also took an interest in Islam. Initially this was through the influence of an Ahmadi proselytizer,²⁹ but for all intents and purposes the NOI was his first significant exposure to the religion when, in 1947, he began receiving letters from his siblings who had recently joined the Detroit temple.³⁰ With his mind sharpened by his recent studies, Malcolm soon grew interested in the religion, and by 1949 he had started correspond-

26 Farrell, "Malcolm x's," 124–30.

27 There has been some debate over how deeply involved Malcolm was in the criminal underworld and the minister may have succumbed to giving some distortions on the subject. He seems to have, for example, downplayed his drug-running activities (mentioned in Moon, *Untold Tales*, 276). But he also might have sometimes overstated his level of debasement. In a 1957 article, for instance, he is quoted as saying that among the "evils and vices of white civilization" to which he had been addicted was "murder"—a claim for which I know of no evidence of him having made at another time, nor have I seen any evidence that he actually killed a person. See "Mr. x Tells What Islam Means," *New York Amsterdam News*, April 20, 1957, 4.

28 Farrell, "Malcolm x's," 124–30; x and Haley, *Autobiography*, 158–83.

29 DeCaro, *On the Side*, 135–37; Malcolm 'Shorty' Jarvis with Paul D. Nichols, *The Other Malcolm—"Shorty" Jarvis His Memoir* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 1998), 55–56, 124–26; x and Haley, *Autobiography*, 333; Abdul-Tawwab, "Doing for Self!" 42–43 and accompanying notes. Jarvis insists that they he and Malcolm x had met this proselytizer at least two times: in 1943, before they went to prison, and again during the early period of their incarceration, but compare this with the information reported by Abdul-Tawwab.

30 Malcolm reported that 1947 was when he first encountered the NOI; see Clark, *Negro Protest*, 20.

ing directly with Elijah Muhammad, and soon, after having his “pre-vision” of the “Asiatic” figure whom Malcolm would later identify as Fard (see Chapter 7), he had become convinced of the truth of the NOI’s doctrines. By 1950, he even believed that his mother had taught him and his siblings Islam without their knowing, a conclusion he came to possibly due to her having not wanted the children to eat pork and perhaps—given that what Malcolm knew of the NOI was not similar to orthodox Islam but was instead closer to black folk traditions—due to her having taught black folk traditions similar to those transmitted in the NOI.³¹ In a short time, Malcolm was both successfully evangelizing and becoming an advocate for obtaining the protection of the rights of Muslim prisoners.³² On August 7, 1952, the twenty-seven-year-old ex-hustler was paroled. Now going as Malcolm X, he headed west to join his siblings at Temple No. 1.

Malcolm exemplified the NOI’s post-1942 identity. His experiences vis-à-vis a racist and violent white world; his exposure to preaching, the black folk tradition, the UNIA, and Islamic ideas and symbols; his criminal background and imprisonment; his disciplined, intelligent mind and sharp tongue; his unrelenting passion and dedication; and even his youth all were major elements emphasized in the post-1942 Nation. Malcolm also possessed a skill that was not common even among most of the NOI ministers who had been to prison. As a participant in the underworld and a convict for several years, Malcolm had mastered the dialect and mentality of the streets and was therefore able to speak to a greater variety of people than the typical Muslim preacher. In Detroit, then, once he decided that he would truly devote himself to the movement, Malcolm quickly found his niche as someone who could convert both the youth and the city’s pimps and hustlers.³³ Soon, as the temple almost tripled in size, a ‘Malcolm cult’ had reportedly sprung up in Michigan,³⁴ and in the summer of 1953, just one year after being paroled, Malcolm was made an assistant minister. Towards the end of that year, Muhammad, tremendously impressed with Malcolm’s efforts and ability, sent him first to Boston and then to Philadelphia, where by the spring he had quickly turned small Muslim communities—

31 Farrell, “Malcolm X’s,” 132.

32 DeCaro, *On the Side*, 91–93, 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.

33 Clegg, *Original Man*, 108; Moon, *Untold Tales*, 276–77; Mannan, *A History*, 34.

34 Jeremiah X and Joseph X, “He Was No ‘Empire Builder’: Minister Exposed by Those Who Knew Him through Life,” *Muhammad Speaks*, October 9, 1964, 5; X and Haley, *Autobiography*, 201.

both of which had already been significantly influenced by individuals who had converted in prison, and Boston's early proselytizer had in fact been converted by Malcolm himself while the two were in prison together—into two full-fledged temples (No. 11 and No. 12, respectively).³⁵ This was followed, over the next two years, by Malcolm playing an instrumental role in the organizing of Temples No. 13, 14, 15, 23, and 27—in Springfield, Massachusetts; Hartford, Connecticut; Atlanta; Buffalo; and Los Angeles.³⁶ The Springfield temple founding is notable for the assistance of Osborne Thaxton, another individual Malcolm had converted back during his prison days; and if it were not for the existence of Thaxton's Temple No. 13, Hartford's temple, which was started by people who had visited Thaxton's group in Springfield, would not have been established so early.³⁷ In only three years, then, the ex-convict Malcolm X had become one of the most effective proselytizers that the NOI had ever had, and this would not go unnoticed by Muhammad. In the spring of 1954, in the midst of Malcolm's impressive run, Muhammad felt that the time was right to try to truly capitalize on the growing momentum that the NOI and Malcolm were gaining. In June, he appointed Malcolm to be the head of Temple No. 7 in Harlem; Muhammad wanted his impressive minister in the heart of black America.

Once Malcolm arrived in Harlem, he immediately set to work trying to make the NOI stand out from all the other African American-centered organizations competing for members in the city. One of his favorite practices was to preach outside of lower-class black churches as they were letting out on Sundays, while the other temple members handed out leaflets. Just as Muhammad and the other early AAIR leaders had done, he packed his speeches with passages from the Bible concerning redemption and prophecy, intentionally emphasizing

35 Clegg, *Original Man*, 108; X and Haley, *Autobiography*, 214–17; Allah, *A History*, 328–29; El-Amin, “Profile of a Pioneer”; Bashir, *Top of the Clock*, 11–17, 105–10; Andy Wallace, “Jeremiah Shabazz, 70, Former Nation Of Islam Minister, Ali Aide,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 9, 1998; Hauser, *Muhammad Ali*, 91; Benjamin Karim, Peter Skutches and David Gallen, *Remembering Malcolm: The Story of Malcolm X from Inside the Muslim Mosque* (New York: Carroll and Graf, 1992), 43–44; Fathie Bin Ali Abdat, “Malcolm X and Christianity” (MA thesis, National University of Singapore, 2008), 134; Abdul-Tawwab, “Doing for Self!” 45–56.

36 DeCaro, *On the Side*, 109; Marable, *Malcolm X*, 122–23; X and Haley, *Autobiography*, 239; Sharon R. Amos and Sharon A. Savannah, *Open Doors: Western New York African American Houses of Worship* (Buffalo: Writer's Den, 2011), 170–71; Donald Bakeer, “I, Too, Can Create Light”: *From Negro—to N*gg*—to Muslim A Memoir in Music, Poetry, & Prose* (Inglewood, CA: Donald Bakeer, 2011), 122.

37 See the sources in the previous note as well as Marable, *Malcolm*, 122–23.

themes that would appeal to Southern-born folk.³⁸ After a year and a half of slow but steady growth, Temple No. 7's following was strong enough that Malcolm was able to have it open a small restaurant.³⁹ By mid-1956, Harlem reportedly had 300–400 NOI converts, most of whom, accounts about the period indicate, were deeply devoted to their young minister.⁴⁰

Interestingly, the Muslims' affection for Malcolm seems to have evolved partly from an old mystical idea in the NOI, one that reflected the continued presence of folk beliefs in the movement. A 1949 Temple No. 7 notebook obtained by federal agents contained the following phrase: "History says that there will be some wise man coming out Temple No. 7."⁴¹ Many years later, a former member of the New York NOI community during the 1950s confirmed that Muslims in Harlem were indeed taught that their temple was special; Temple No. 7 was said to be "destined" for greatness.⁴² It appears, then, that the old folk- and MSTA-influenced tradition around the number seven had only added to Malcolm's mystique. It was perhaps partly for this reason that Malcolm claimed seven was his favorite number.⁴³

But Malcolm's transfer to Harlem was a very symbolic event from a secular historical perspective as well. No previous Islamic organization had been able to unquestionably dominate African American Islam in New York City. The MSTA groups, including Turner-El's, were fairly small and not always concentrated in Harlem, and their fragmentation had made them relatively weak. The earlier groups, the Ahmadis and Abdul Hamid Suleiman's Caananites Temple, were not able to gain a critical mass of converts in the 1920s either, 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 communities, meanwhile, because of their less militant and more democratic style, were not able to concentrate power into a single group—each African American majority mosque in New York City had only, at most, a few hundred members. Malcolm's coming to Harlem, then, signified a major turning point

38 x and Haley, *Autobiography*, 220–21; DeCaro, *On the Side*, 104; Bruce Perry, *Malcolm: The Life of a Man Who Changed Black America* (Barrytown, NY: Station Hill Press, 1991), 161–62.

39 DeCaro, *On the Side*, 109.

40 James Dancy, "What's New in New York City? The Rapidly Growing Temple of Islam," *Moslem World & the USA* (August–September 1956): 19; Mannan, *A History*, appendix. For a first-hand account from a member of the Harlem temple in the 1950s, see Najiy, *Nation of Islam's*.

41 Report, 4/12/1951, Baltimore file 25–12085, 4, notebook page 14, Elijah Muhammad FBI file.

42 Najiy, *Nation of Islam's*, 102.

43 Marable, *Malcolm*, 286.

in the history of African American Islam, since the many dynamics that flowed through the AAIR—the folk traditions, the Garvey-inspired black nationalism, the immigrant influence—were all very prevalent in New York City. With the new, more powerful NOI now there and being led by its highly charismatic minister, these dynamics could be reined in and then focused into a single form. Ultimately, Malcolm's success in what was essentially the birthplace of modern African American Islam signaled that the AAIR was changing in a fundamental way.

Networks, Programs, and Propaganda

Of course, Malcolm X was not entirely to thank for the shift in the NOI's fortunes. As we have seen, the 1940s imprisonment of several of the Nation's Muslims gave the group the power to persuade many who had not been reached before, and this seems to have renewed the members' energy and sense of mission. There are numerous reports of Muslims relentlessly preaching Islam in prisons, in their workplaces, at barbershops, in parks, on city streets, in poolrooms and clubs, and even in churches during the late 1940s and 1950s, resulting in the message of Islam rapidly spreading in black neighborhoods throughout America.⁴⁴ One California convert would later recall about this period that

any Black man who wanted to know 'what's happening' would have listened to the teachings of the Messenger. This is what was on the scene for the first time for Black people. Islam was in the streets and becoming a general practice among Black people.⁴⁵

44 See, e.g., Allah, *A History*, 328; Bashir, *Top of the Clock*, 13–17, 105–10; Najji, *Nation of Islam's*, 77–93; Karim et al., *Remembering Malcolm*, 44; Isaiah Karriem, "Minister Isaiah: With Muhammad's Teachings I Win over My Foes," *Muhammad Speaks*, November 18, 1966, 25, 27; Raymond X, "Houston Minister Tells How He Became a Member of the Nation of Islam," *Muhammad Speaks*, December 2, 1966, 25; Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism*, 191; the following reports from Elijah Muhammad's FBI file: Report, 10/15/51, Boston file 25–13999, 6; Report, 8/15/1951, Detroit file 25–17462, 2; Report, 3/31/1951, Los Angeles file 25–33105, 4–6; Szwed, *Space is the Place*, 106; Abdul-Tawwab, "Doing for Self!" *passim.*; Sahib, "Nation of Islam," 110; Mannan, *A History*, 27, 35; Wallace Muhammad FBI file, Summary Report, 3/21/1957, Chicago file, 100–32090, 7.

45 Ralph 4X Brown, "Muslim Learned to Fathom What Is Really Happening by Following Mr. Muhammad," *Muhammad Speaks*, September 26, 1969, 17. Brown does not give a precise

NOI enthusiasm was becoming so strong in fact that several African American Moors, Ahmadis, and Sunnis—the latter of whom no doubt recognized that the NOI was not an orthodox Islamic movement—were deciding to embrace Fard’s teachings in Boston, Chicago, New York, Newark, Philadelphia, and Detroit.⁴⁶

Upon close examination, it seems that the post-1942 NOI’s most effective form of evangelism—just like it had been in the 1930s—came from tapping into pre-existing social networks.⁴⁷ Now, though, the group’s ability to recruit from networks became much more complex, with multiple levels of social networks working to bring in committed converts. As we have seen, between 1942 and 1959 the NOI’s first level of social network recruitment, instead of being based on networks of former Moorish Americans like it was in the early 1930s, now was mainly comprised of the original NOI members who had stayed committed to the movement and had been incarcerated in the 1940s. These were the main ministers of the late 1940s and early 1950s, and their contact with convict and criminal social networks provided an important general recruitment pool. As a result, a significant proportion of the new converts outside of prisons were, as several observers noted, ‘street people’—individuals who generally possessed only a grade school education, were often unemployed and non-churchgoing, and frequently had been involved in unstable romantic relationships and at least some petty criminal activity.⁴⁸ The new converts, in turn, collectively became a new level of proselytizers, and they had their own social

date, but this 1969 article is written from the perspective of a much older, experienced man who is recounting what he observed when he was eighteen years old.

46 Najiy, *Nation of Islam’s*, 50, 61–65; Sahib, “Nation of Islam,” 104–06; Mannan, *A History*; Lincoln, *Black Muslims*, 23; Abdul-Tawwab, “Doing for Self!” 56–57; Madyun Abdulhaseeb, “The Qur’anic Basis for Islamic Unorthodoxy: The Application of the Rule of Necessity and Need, and Other Exceptions in the Nation of Islam” (MA thesis, California State University Dominguez Hills, 2003), 77–79, 163; Michael Nash, “‘The Son of Thunder,’ Who Was Minister James 3x Shabazz? Nation of Islam History in Newark, N.J.—Part II,” *Muslim Journal*, November 1, 2002, 11; *idem.*, *Islam Among Urban Blacks: Muslims in Newark, New Jersey: A Social History* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2008), 83–84. I have been told by various individuals that the Newark and Philadelphia NOI temples were especially notable for recruiting Moors. Interestingly, Seattle’s early minister, Charles x Perkins, had been born to a Moorish father in Philadelphia, but he himself was not a practicing Moor when he converted to Islam in prison in the late 1950s; see NOI FBI file, Memorandum, SA Erling W. Harbo to SAC, Seattle, 8/30/1962, 4.

47 See Chapter 2 in this volume for a discussion of social network theory.

48 Najiy, *Nation of Islam’s*, 50, 62; Sahib, “Nation of Islam,” 104–06; Howard, “Becoming a Black Muslim,” *passim.*; Lincoln, *Black Muslims*, 21–25, 259n40; Mannan, *A History*, appendix;

network contacts, which, of course, were largely also made up of other street people and convicts.⁴⁹ It was primarily for this reason that during the 1950s the NOI began spreading in prisons at a relatively fast rate; by 1958, for example, the movement was claiming to have recently converted 400 incarcerated African Americans.⁵⁰

Occasionally, though, the new proselytizers were tied to different sorts of social networks as well. Friend networks, for instance, were useful for bringing in youths, who were often deeply devoted to the peers from their neighborhood.⁵¹ On occasion, bonds of friendship were also important when there was an attempt to start a Muslim community in a new city. This process is perhaps best exemplified by the revival of Newark's NOI community, which had originally been formed in the early 1940s, but seems to have faded by mid-decade due to the FBI investigation and arrests. The community's revival appears to have been started by a chain of Muslim friends from Detroit. Arthur X, who had embraced Islam directly under Elijah Muhammad while the two were in federal prison together, upon his parole joined up with the temple in Detroit, where in 1946 he introduced Islam to Ralph Otto Thornton, who, prior to joining the NOI, had been imprisoned for failing to register for the draft.⁵² In the early 1950s, Thornton (later known as Rauf Abd-Allah) decided to spread Islam in Newark, where Arthur X had already relocated, and they were soon joined by James Gross (later known as Hassan Karriem), another Detroiter, who is rumored to have been a former follower of Ezaldeen.⁵³ At first the men's efforts at converting the locals had little impact, and Thornton left the cohort for the stronger Muslim community in nearby New York City—but Gross was tenacious; he fostered better ties with Ezaldeen; made a loyal convert and proselytizer out of a grandchild of an MSTA member, Yusuf Shakoor; and enticed Thornton to return

Jeffrey Ogbar, *Black Power: Radical Politics and African American Identity* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 22.

49 One individual described what was probably a typical pattern for these types of converts: His first contact with the NOI was in a Chicago jail where he was friends with a Muslim. After the former expressed some interest in the movement, the Muslim apparently informed Elijah Muhammad who in turn began writing the non-Muslim letters and sending him NOI pamphlets; see Joint Legislative Committee on Un-American Activities, State of Louisiana, *Activities of "The Nation of Islam" or the Muslim Cult of Islam, in Louisiana* (Baton Rouge: Joint Legislative Committee on Un-American Activities, State of Louisiana, 1963), 40–42.

50 Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism*, 192.

51 See, e.g., *Bilalian News*, December 17, 1976, 13.

52 Rauf Abd-Allah, "Newark's Tribute to Muslim Pioneers," *Muslim Journal*, March 29, 1991, 4.

53 Abd-Allah, "Newark's"; Nash, *Islam among*, 83.

to the city.⁵⁴ The reenergized group grew quickly; in 1956 it formally took the name Council of the Brothers and in the next year it obtained a regular meeting place, which it outgrew within a year. In 1958 or 1959, then the Council wrote to Elijah Muhammad to request a minister, and the well-respected James 3X McGregor was assigned the position; the community soon earned an official temple number: 25.⁵⁵

Sometimes, however, the key social networks were those created by shared interests. Charles X O'Neil, who had converted under Malcolm X while incarcerated in a Massachusetts prison, was a musician who, upon his parole in 1950, was able to bring in several individuals from Boston's black musician community (which, as we will see, had been predisposed to Islam due to earlier Ahmadi efforts), and later also helped spread Islam to musicians in Atlantic City and possibly New York, where former jazz performers became a notable element of the local temple.⁵⁶ Religious and esoteric organizations also served as valuable networks. In Richmond, Virginia, for example, James 3X McGregor was able to convert the head of a spiritual church whose whole congregation followed its leader and embraced Islam.⁵⁷ In early 1950s Chicago, meanwhile, virtually all of the male Muslims who were over twenty-five years of age claimed to have once been Freemasons, and in 1958, the New York temple also welcomed several Freemason converts who had been impressed with the Nation's teachings about their esoteric order.⁵⁸ This significant Masonic presence may help explain why by the 1960s some NOI Muslims were known to continue a Masonic-hoodoo tradition that Noble Drew Ali had used: standing with one's feet at a forty-five-degree angle, a practice referred to as 'standing on the square.'⁵⁹

54 Abd-Allah, "Newark's"; Ali Muslim, "Profile of Newark's Pioneering Muslims," *Muslim Journal*, March 22, 1991, 1, 25, 26.

55 I have seen an early 1958 report that lists Newark's minister as Edward 3X Robinson—I am not sure how exactly he fits into the above narrative; see NOI FBI file, Memorandum, SAC, Philadelphia to Director, FBI, 4/4/1958, 4.

56 Abdul-Tawwab, "'Doing for Self!'" 34–68; Marable, *Malcolm*, 245; Mannan, *A History*, 61; Najiy, *Nation of Islam's*, 61.

57 Yushau Sadiq, "A History of Islam among the African American Muslims of Richmond," *Muslim World* 84, no. 3–4 (1994): 258–78; Alonzo 4X, "Met Messenger"; Uqdah, *History and Narrative*, 26.

58 Sahib, "Nation of Islam," 105; Sylvester Leaks, "The Messenger Was My Savior," *Muhammad Speaks*, December 3, 1964, 5.

59 Amiri Baraka, *The Autobiography of LeRoi Jones* (New York: Freundlich Books, 1984), 216. This was sometimes called 'standing on the square of manhood' (see, e.g., *Muhammad Speaks*, April 15, 1966, 25). As was discussed in Chapter 4, it is likely that this was under-

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, the ex-convict temple leaders were also frequently able to bring in former black nationalists and members of other non-Christian organizations. We have evidence that during this period the NOI recruited former members of the UNIA, the EPM, the PME, the Ethiopian World Federation, and the Hebrew Israelites.⁶⁰ How this sort of recruitment occurred obviously varied from place to place, and it seems to have been mostly concentrated in large cities like New York and Chicago where many remnants of these groups remained, although smaller cities, such as Cleveland, also saw former Garveyites join the Muslims' ranks.⁶¹ In addition, the NOI was able to appeal to individuals who, although they had not been official members of these organizations, were raised in homes strongly influenced by them.⁶² Of course, the most famous of the latter type of recruits were Malcolm X's sibilings.⁶³ The black nationalist roots of the Littles turned out to have made them particularly effective Muslim leaders themselves, and all of the Muslim males in the family went on to become either ministers or assistant ministers.⁶⁴

Families themselves, however, were an even more important social network recruitment pool than black nationalist groups. As the example of the conversion of the Little siblings attests to, when a person converted, there was a good

stood as connected with the various four-pointed symbols and conceptual images in the black folk tradition that were associated with African American identity and its relationship with biblical redemption, such as the four winds and four corners of the Earth.

- 60 Najiy, *Nation of Islam's*, 50, 62; Sahib, "Nation of Islam," 104–06; Hubert x, "Marcus Garvey Said: 'A Messenger Will Follow Me!'" *Muhammad Speaks*, June 5, 1964, 7; Carl 2x Acker, "What Islam Has Done for Me," *Muhammad Speaks*, February 13, 1970, 18; Lincoln, *Black Muslims*, 21–25, 259n40; Nathaniel Omar, "Former Garveyite Soldiers for New World Freedom," *Bilalian News*, March 26, 1976, 1, 12; *Bilalian News*, September 23, 1977, 11; Mannan, *A History*, appendix. The Ethiopian World Federation had frequent contact with the NOI in New York; see Randal L. Hepner, "'Movement of Jah People'—Race, Class, and Religion among the Rastafari of Jamaica and New York City" (PhD diss., New School for Social Research, 1998), 118–19.
- 61 On Cleveland's former Garveyites, see *Muslim Journal*, February 9, 1990, 17 and November 2, 1990, 6.
- 62 See, e.g., Najiy, *Nation of Islam's*, 26–45.
- 63 See the discussion of the EPM and the accompanying notes in Chapter 8 for sources on Wilfred's conversion.
- 64 Besides Malcolm, whose ministerial duties have already been discussed, Wilfred was Detroit's minister for a number of years; Philbert was a minister and organizer in multiple Michigan cities: Lansing, Detroit, Flint, Grand Rapids, and Kalamazoo; and even Reginald briefly served as an assistant minister in New York before being expelled from the NOI (see Mannan, *A History*, 32–33).

chance that he or she would put great effort into trying to convert other members of his or her family. In 1959 the scholar E.U. Essien-Udom observed, in one of the earliest discussions of the topic, that twenty-nine out of his thirty Muslim respondents were first introduced to Islam by relatives.⁶⁵ Other studies and several anecdotes suggest that this was indeed a very common pattern in the NOI during the late 1940s and 1950s, and in some cases, entire nuclear families converted after one member (usually the father) joined the temple—a trend that was helped by the fact that, just as they had been in the 1930s, new NOI Muslims were willing to cut ties with those in their family who did not convert with them.⁶⁶ The phenomenon of family conversion was so important that in at least one instance a family served as the membership foundation for a new temple—that led by Minister Troy X Cade in Monroe, Louisiana.⁶⁷ Family recruitment would soon also lead to the diversification of the Muslims' demographics. Although the majority of the NOI's members were from the poor working class or unemployed, some people with college educations, affiliation with middle-class-oriented organizations like the NAACP and the Urban League, and with decent-paying middle-class jobs also joined up, frequently following lower-class family members.⁶⁸

Despite the importance of social networks, however, a community cannot grow indefinitely if it relies on such networks exclusively. The reason for this is that the typical twentieth-century person only had a limited social network, and frequently the other people in that person's network were connected to the same individuals. So, for instance, if a male convert persuaded his family and a few family friends to join, his wife and children may not have known many other people whom they could invite to the temple precisely because the father had already recruited the family's friends. Or, if a member

65 Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism*, 191.

66 See, e.g., *Bilalian News*, May 11, 1979, 23; *Bilalian News*, July 21, 1978, 7; *Bilalian News*, December 10, 1976, 10; *Muslim Journal*, January 17, 1992, 3; Lynice Shabazz, "Countless Blessings Have Been Given Me by Allah," *Muhammad Speaks*, January 3, 1969, 29; Abdul-Tawwab, "Doing for Self!" *passim.*; Sahib, "Nation of Islam," 106, 110–11; Randal Omar Ali, "The Foundation: Women in the Nation of Islam" (MA thesis, University of Iowa, 1998), 77–82; Lincoln, *Black Muslims*, 22; Howard, "Becoming a Black Muslim," 214, 222; Najji, *Nation of Islam's*, 45–47; Aubrey Barnette with Edward Linn, "The Black Muslims are a Fraud," *Saturday Evening Post*, February 27, 1965, 23–29.

67 Joint Legislative Committee, *Activities of*, 39.

68 See Sahib, "Nation of Islam," 99–112; Lincoln, *Black Muslims*, 21–23; Mannan, *A History*, appendix; Abdul-Tawwab, "Doing for Self!" *passim.*; Anderson, "Muslim Cites Goal"; Barnette and Linn, "Black Muslims."

of a local black nationalist or Masonic group brought in people from that group, the other members of that group would have typically not been able to bring in additional members. Due to this phenomenon, individuals brought in from 'off the street'—that is, people who did not already know a Muslim—represented completely new social networks for potential recruitment, and were thus invaluable resources for the NOI. Therefore, successfully recruiting and retaining these people would be vital if the movement were to continue to grow. Fortunately for the Nation, it possessed a number of tools that helped it with this type of recruiting as well.

One of these tools was the new, more refined emphasis on learning about black history and culture through lectures and reading non-Islamic texts. Drew Ali was the individual responsible for making this a prominent concept in African American Islam, although most early Moors do not seem to have made it a practice, choosing instead to focus on learning the religious and economic elements of their prophet's teachings. Fard, however, continued Drew Ali's tradition by encouraging his followers to read books on world and Islamic history. Still, early NOI members, like most Moors, although they took great pride in absorbing what Fard had to teach them about these subjects,⁶⁹ did not display a strong tendency to study secular history on their own, perhaps partly because of lack of access to works on the topic and partly because of their relatively low levels of literacy. However, Muhammad, through his years spent visiting the Library of Congress, had significantly improved his command of history, and soon was further emphasizing its study and promotion in the movement. In fact, in 1936 he strongly admonished his ministers to study history, asserting that the topic was

the most attractive, and best qualified to reward our research [...] as it develops the springs and motives of human actions, and displays the consequence of circumstances which operates most powerfully on the destinies of the human being.⁷⁰

As Malcolm X would later recall, Muhammad emphasized the notion that whites, through their tricknolleg, had 'whitewashed' history, so if African Americans were to obtain true freedom from white oppression, it was vital that they find out the truth about their people's past.⁷¹

69 Muhammad et al., *Step in the Right*, 28.

70 Allah, *A History*, 261.

71 X and Haley, *Autobiography*, 175.

Despite Muhammad's promotion of historical study, however, most of the accounts of what was taught in NOI meetings throughout the country during the 1950s do not show a consistent pattern of ministers demonstrating in-depth knowledge of history.⁷² There is, nevertheless, some evidence that knowledge of the subject was stressed by certain NOI teachers besides Muhammad, and that Malcolm x—partly inspired by Muhammad and partly driven by his own interest in the topic—may have been the person most directly responsible for this. One of the first NOI Muslims known to specifically emphasize obtaining advanced secular knowledge of black history was Malcolm's prison convert Charles x O'Neil. When O'Neil began organizing musicians in Boston upon his parole in 1950, one of the weapons in his proselytization arsenal was a set of two scrapbooks that he called a "history of 'Originals,'" which he had put together using *National Geographic* articles and pictures of Asian and African civilizations and accomplishments.⁷³ It is almost certain that Malcolm had been responsible for inspiring O'Neil to make this book, as it was Malcolm who had been fascinated with black history before his NOI involvement and who, upon his own parole two years later, would become the NOI's most well-known advocate for studying history and black culture—he emphasized these topics in his classes for assistant ministers and in his public lectures,⁷⁴ and even in as late as November 1963, he was still publicly quoting Muhammad's old admonition.⁷⁵ What most made Malcolm unique, then, was his recipe of combining the promotion of black pride through acquiring secular historical knowledge

72 The accounts I am referring to here are the numerous 1950s FBI files on members of the NOI throughout the country. This is not to say that the subject of history in general was not broached. On the contrary; by the late 1940s NOI ministers were frequently discussing the 'history' of whites to prove that they were in fact devils (see, e.g., Moon, *Untold Tales*, 274–75), but in general it does not appear that there was a tradition of getting into detailed secular study of the subject.

73 Abdul-Tawwab, "Doing for Self!" 46.

74 Karim et al., *Remembering Malcolm*, 97–100. Malcolm x, *The End of White World Supremacy: Four Speeches by Malcolm x*, ed. Benjamin Karim (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1971), 23–66. For a valuable collection of Malcolm's views on history, see Malcolm x, *Malcolm x on Afro-American History: Expanded and Illustrated Edition* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970).

75 The phrase Malcolm quotes—without attribution—in late 1963 is in his famous "Message to the Grass Roots" speech: "Of all our studies, history is best qualified to reward our research"; see Malcolm x, *Malcolm x Speaks: Selected Speeches and Statements*, ed. George Breitman (New York: Grove Press, 1966), 8. Malcolm had used this quote in previous speeches, but usually explicitly cited Muhammad when he did; see, e.g., x, *End of White*, 26.

with both the lingo and sensibilities of the streets and with the group's popular 'badman' rhetoric. Together, this fusion produced an ideological perspective and rhetorical style that would prove to be especially attractive to the new generation of African Americans, particularly the urban-born, who tended to be both more literate and much further removed from the slave-era folktales that had appealed to the early NOI converts.⁷⁶ With Malcolm's direct influence over numerous temples and his growing propensity for giving public lectures, this new potent mixture of black history, street smarts, and 'badman' protest themes was attracting people throughout the country.

In addition to its emphasis on black history, though, the NOI also offered various programs and practices that could compensate for some of the inadequacies individuals might have perceived in the movement's theological doctrines. The MGT-GCC and FOI, for example, were appealing to those who desired to take part in organizations that provided black protection, camaraderie, and discipline. Many women believed that the group's practices regarding gender-based segregation enabled them to better focus their energy on improving their own lives and those of their families; interviews with members from the period reveal, in fact, that Muslim women often felt empowered by Islam to obtain higher education and jobs, even when these were frowned upon by men in the movement.⁷⁷ The FOI, meanwhile, gave what was perhaps an even stronger impression that discipline was to be found in its ranks, as its members were almost soldier-like in their appearance and daily habits. FOI Muslims, first of all, had to make sure their clothing, hygiene, and hair were in excellent condition at all times—to help ensure this, a significant number even shaved their heads;⁷⁸ they followed the Nation's strict dietary regimen and engaged in regular martial arts training; and they were expected to keep their minds disciplined through constant study and never questioning the orders given by their supe-

76 Dorson, *Negro Folktales*, 10, 17–18, 27–30; Dorson, "Is There a Folk," 25, 28, 45–46.

77 Katherine Currin, "Portrait of a Woman: The Inaccurate Portrayal of Women in the Original Nation of Islam" (BA honors essay, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2004), 24–25, 27, 34–46, 48, 57n106.

78 On NOI head shaving, see Najjij, *Nation of Islam's*, 50; Bashir, *Top of the Clock*, 116; Harry S. Ashmore, *The Other Side of Jordan* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1960), 46. It is unclear when and why exactly this practice started; it certainly does not appear to have been universal in the NOI, as attested to in numerous photographs of Muslims from the period who do not have shaved heads. Interestingly, shaving a new Muslim convert's head was a practice well-known in West Africa; see Rudolph T. Ware, III, *The Walking Qur'an: Islamic Education, Embodied Knowledge, and History in West Africa* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 128, 134, 150.

riors. For many who joined after the group's 1940s transformation, the clean, strong, and unified appearance of Muhammad's followers were in fact by far the most attractive aspects of the movement; theological doctrines came in at a distant second.⁷⁹ Some individuals, meanwhile, found in the Nation a way to improve either their own or their children's knowledge of the world. During this period, the NOI's various education programs in the University of Islam and in the FOI and MGT-GCC meetings were strengthened; new teachers were hired for all subjects, including native-Arabic speakers for Arabic classes, and the Chicago temple's schoolroom was expanded.⁸⁰ By the early 1960s, Universities of Islam were being run in seven cities, with Chicago and Detroit's as full-time schools, and the rest as Saturday-only programs.⁸¹

Another aspect of the NOI that had a very broad appeal was its focus on black economic self-sufficiency. During his imprisonment Muhammad, who was likely inspired by Garvey's legacy and the MSTA efforts that he had learned about during his travels in the late 1930s, came to the conclusion that if the NOI was going to succeed as a movement, the group needed "to show the people something[;] we cannot progress by talk."⁸² Muhammad thus began instructing his members to establish businesses. In 1945 the Nation bought a farm and a restaurant,⁸³ and in 1947 the Chicago temple, now the NOI headquarters, launched a grocery, restaurant, and bakery, which employed a combined forty-five Muslims.⁸⁴ These enterprises, along with the new private businesses being started by NOI members attracted many people with entrepreneurial ambitions; by the mid-1950s NOI Muslims personally owned several small businesses throughout the country.⁸⁵ Such economic practices led to increased wealth for both individual Muslims and the NOI headquarters,⁸⁶ and by 1952, the Nation's leader was reportedly worth an estimated \$75,000 (equivalent to about one million dollars in 2017), not including his home and other real estate

79 Zain Abdullah, "Narrating Muslim Masculinities: The Fruit of Islam and the Quest for Black Redemption," *Spectrum: A Journal on Black Men* 1, no. 1 (2012): 141-77; Currin, "Portrait of a Woman," *passim*.

80 Zafar Ishaq Ansari, "W.D. Muhammad: The Making of a 'Black Muslim' Leader (1933-1961)," *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 2, no. 2 (1985): 255-56; Mannan, *A History*, 69.

81 Ibrahim M. Shalaby and John H. Chilcott, *The Education of a Black Muslim* (Tucson: Impresora Sahuaro, 1972), 7-8.

82 Mohammed, *As the Light Shined*, 24.

83 Sahib, "Nation of Islam," 83-84; Clegg, *Original Man*, 99.

84 Clegg, *Original Man*, 99-100.

85 Abdul-Tawwab, "'Doing for Self!'" 43-60; Mannan, *A History*, 62-67.

86 Fard FBI file, Correlation Summary, 1/13/1958, 43.

owned by temple, with his income—largely coming from donations and profits from the NOI's businesses—being approximately \$25,000 (equivalent to about \$340,000 in 2017).⁸⁷ For many Muslims, the group's numerous enterprises and the wealth of Muhammad became points of pride, as they signified both God's favor for the movement and the Muslims' ability to work together to improve the black community.

During the late 1940s and early 1950s, Muhammad also introduced a number of changes that would help consolidate, redirect, and expand various ideological elements of the movement, all of which further helped enhance the group's appeal. One of the first was regularly issuing new members an 'x' to replace their 'slave name.' It seems that, although there were a few exceptions, even into the late 1940s new members were given Muslim last names;⁸⁸ but by the 1950s Muhammad was arguing that only Fard had the power to confer these 'original' names, and the official line was that the 'x' was a placeholder, representing the unknown past of African Americans, and Fard would replace the xs upon his return as the Mahdi (messiah) at Armageddon.⁸⁹ Temple officials, though, were still occasionally given Muslim surnames, usually Shabazz, in order to signify their authority.⁹⁰

87 Clegg, *Original Man*, 100.

88 Recall from Chapter 8, for example, the fact that in 1947 Malcolm x's brother Wilfred was using the surname Bey.

89 The earliest evidence of the use of the 'x' that I have seen is a 1942 FBI report that says in 1937 the 'x' was being employed in the Milwaukee temple (Fard FBI file, Report, Milwaukee 14-4, 6/1/1942, 4). In a recent book, Allah claims (in *History*, 210) that the 'x' was present during Fard's time, but was not used then; however, his source is not cited and he seems to have relied on oral narratives, the accuracy of which is unknown. I have only seen one additional piece of evidence concerning the pre-1945 use of the 'x': In 1945, Arna Bontemps and Jack Conroy, who studied the NOI in the late 1930s and early 1940s, implied (in their *They Seek a City*, 180) that the 'x' was indeed used back in the group's early years while Muslims waited for Fard to give them their 'righteous' names. Interestingly, though, they make no mention of it being used after Fard's disappearance, and, when they edited their book for a re-release under the title *Any Place but Here*, they pointed out that it was only "later" that the NOI started saying that the 'x' stood for the 'unknown' (page 219)—a fact that lends credence to my theory that early on the 'x' was probably informally understood as a hoodoo-based magical talisman or seal, similar to the MSTA's circle seven (see Chapter 4 for a discussion). I have seen no other record of the use of the 'x' before the late 1940s, and it was not apparently used by any of the dozens of Muslims whose names were published when they were arrested in 1942. See also Maceo Hazziez, *The Book of Muslim Names* (Chicago: Specialty Promotions Company, [1976] 2004), vi–viii.

90 Najiy, *Nation of Islam's*, 221.

To better connect the second generation of Muslims with the figure of Fard, Muhammad also established an annual gathering in Chicago around the time of Fard's birthday in February, what was called 'Saviour's Day.' Besides reinforcing the concept of Fard's status as the Mahdi and providing a celebration familiar to former Moors, UNIA members, and Christians who had celebrated the births of their groups' founders, this mass meeting helped demonstrate to the Muslims that their organization was not limited to their small local branch—it was a movement of respectable size that had impressive preachers who had suffered for the cause from all across the country. These meetings were thus very similar to the UNIA conventions of the 1920s, and had similar effects on members' enthusiasm.

At the same time, Fard's "Lessons" were removed from circulation so that Muhammad could, as his son Wallace later explained, "interpret [them] [...] and put the emphasis where he wanted the emphasis to be."⁹¹ Muhammad seems to have had multiple motivations for doing this. There was, first of all, a desire to combat the presence of diverse interpretations of the Muslims' doctrines that were circulating in several temples, apparently due to ex-members of the MSTA and other groups combining their old teachings with those of the NOI.⁹² The practice of using the *Holy Koran of the Moorish Science Temple of America* was, notably, completely eliminated, and the remaining Moorish holdovers, such as rank-and-file members wearing fezzes, turbans, and colorful ties and robes, were for the most part wiped out (red ties, however, were retained as part of the accepted male attire).⁹³ Muslim women, furthermore, now typically only wore white dresses, which gave them an appearance that was noticeably similar to the UNIA's Black Cross Nurses.

Muhammad also began putting some emphasis on orthodox Islamic teachings, perhaps in an attempt to have the NOI's Islam appear more legitimate to non-Muslims. In multiple temples, members were shown films about Islamic practices in the Middle East, they consulted with immigrant Muslims, and

91 Mohammed, *As the Light Shineth*, 24. It was probably at this point when the slave folk tradition of Africans boarding slave ships primarily due to white people flying a red flag was all but eliminated from the group's official doctrines.

92 The lack of doctrinal stability in the postwar NOI is attested to in Najiy, *Nation of Islam's*, 50, 61–65, 101.

93 During the 1950s, prior to Muhammad eradicating such garments, there were a few exceptions to this trend; see "Men in Train Melee to Get Trial by Jury," *Evening Star*, March 6, 1951, B4; "Cultist Convicted Of Snubbing Draft," *Washington Post*, October 18, 1951, B5; "Islamist 'Struck Me' Says Cop," *Afro-American*, April 21, 1956, 12; Najiy, *Nation of Islam's*, 132.

they learned basic Arabic, Islam's five 'pillars,' and the religion's traditional five daily prayers, for which Muhammad issued a pamphlet in 1957 and had his converts from Sunni Islam in Detroit try to teach other Muslims.⁹⁴ When Dr. Mahmoud Youssef Shawarbi, an Egyptian scholar teaching in the US at the time, visited the Chicago University of Islam along with the immigrant Muslim director of Washington's Islamic Center, the two observed that some of the NOI children could recite in Arabic full chapters from the Qur'an and most students were knowledgeable of orthodox Islam's basic principles and beliefs.⁹⁵ By the end of the 1950s, Shawarbi had visited Elijah Muhammad himself as well as several other NOI temples in an attempt to, in his words, "correct" the group's non-orthodox beliefs, particularly the concept that Muhammad had received knowledge directly from God Himself; Shawarbi reported that although Muhammad seemed unwilling to reject Fard as God on Earth, overall his ideas were well-received, especially in the Washington temple, where the NOI formed a branch of the Dissemination of Islamic Culture, a Cairo-based Sunni organization.⁹⁶

Besides making the Nation more appealing for the masses, one of the motivations for altering the teachings and practices appears to have been to reconfigure the NOI's eschatology. As we have seen, in the 1930s Muhammad constantly proclaimed that the Armageddon would arrive at some point that decade, but since that did not occur, there had to be adjustments made. Although it is unclear whether new specific end-of-times dates were prophesized in the 1940s and early 1950s, by the late 1950s Muhammad was verifiably saying

94 Anderson, "Sociological Analysis," 50; Anderson, "Muslim Cites Goal"; Abdulhaseeb, "Qur'anic Basis," 75–81; Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism*, 191–92; Elijah Muhammad, *Muslim Daily Prayers* (n.p.: Final Call, [1957] 1991). Muhammad's knowledge of the five daily prayers for this book was most likely provided to him by Abdul Basit Naeem (see Evanzz, *Messenger*, 509), but in actual practice the NOI prayer style was unlike the prayer style of any other Muslim community: members were typically told to simply stand facing east and pray silently. Interestingly, although some people have asserted that the NOI did not teach the famous five 'pillars' of Islam, this is incorrect. In a 1942 interview, Elijah Muhammad referred what we today generally call the five 'pillars' as five 'principles'—a term Fard had used (see Wallace D. Fard FBI file, Report 2/21/1957, Chicago file 25–206607, 5). Nevertheless, although they were usually equivalent to the five pillars, the NOI's five 'principles' were sometimes composed of a different set of teachings; see, e.g., Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism*, 192.

95 Maytha Alhassen, "Islam in America by Mahmoud Yusef Shawarbi," *Comparative American Studies* 13, no. 4 (2015): 259.

96 Alhassen, "Islam in America," 259–61.

that the Armageddon would come in 1970.⁹⁷ Belief in the imminent Armageddon was in fact stressed greatly in the NOI during this period, and every temple had either a large blackboard or bulletin board with the phrase, written in large letters, ‘Who will survive the war of Armageddon?’ Accompanying this were two sets of images: One was a picture of a black man being lynched next to an American flag and a Christian cross, below which were written the words, one on top of the other, ‘Christianity, Slavery, Suffering, Death.’ The other image depicted the NOI flag and the words ‘Islam, Freedom, Justice, Equality.’⁹⁸

The fact that so much stress was put on a soon-arriving Armageddon may give insight into why it appears to be only in the mid-to-late 1950s that the story of John Hawkins’ arrival in Africa in 1555—a doctrine Fard had taught, but which has no known connection with Hawkins’ historically-recorded slave activities or even with North American slavery generally—was now being linked to the Nation’s Armageddon rhetoric.⁹⁹ The connection between the Armageddon and the 1555 date is suggested in the second book Muhammad published in 1957, *The Supreme Wisdom: Solution to the So-Called Negroes’ Problem*, wherein Muhammad asserts that the “prophesized 400 years of slavery [...] ended in 1955.”¹⁰⁰ By emphasizing the date of 1955, Muhammad could connect an easy-to-remember and seemingly symbolic number—the 400 years that, according to Genesis 15:13, Abaraham’s descendants were to be slaves in a foreign country and which Muhammad undoubtedly said was actually a message about African Americans—with both Fard’s teachings and the concept of an Apocalypse, thereby making Fard and the Armageddon relevant for the new generation of Muslims. Such a teaching could convince some Muslims and potential Muslims that black people had a very limited time to return to their original religion, and this in turn could generate a great feeling of urgency,

97 Clegg, *Original Man*, 121, 126.

98 There were occasionally small variations in this between temples. For instance, sometimes the cross was not depicted, sometimes not all of the words were listed, and sometimes additional words were listed. These images and statements appear to have been first used in the NOI in the late 1930s or early 1940s.

99 It is possible that 1555 was originally chosen for its numerological significance, as it contains three fives. Since in NOI thought the number six is seen as representing whites and their dominance, perhaps the number five represents the time just before the rise of white power over blacks via slavery in North America. Note that, as pointed out in Chapter 6, Christianity was said to have been invented 550 years ago—again, the number five is emphasized.

100 Muhammad, *Supreme Wisdom*, 16.

which would make certain individuals more willing to convert. Even Malcolm X himself, then, was known to emphasize this sense of millennial imminence in some of his speeches.¹⁰¹

But Muhammad was also hedging his bets. It seems that it was starting in the mid-to-late 1950s, after a number of African countries had achieved independence and several African Americans had left the Communist Party, a movement that had promoted the notion that African Americans should be given a separate state in the American South,¹⁰² that Muhammad began teaching that the Armageddon could be staved off, not through the civil rights movement's goal of integration with whites—because of whites' devilish nature, Muhammad explained, they would never permit blacks to live in true peace and equality—but rather by African Americans obtaining “a country to ourselves.”¹⁰³ Muhammad would rarely give details about how exactly obtaining and running this country would work.¹⁰⁴ Since he had no faith in the white political system, he completely rejected the possibility of forming a political movement to obtain it,¹⁰⁵ yet he would frequently stress that the US government was responsible for providing the country—a concept that was surely attractive to African Americans who felt that whites at the very least owed them land.¹⁰⁶ In the meantime, Muslims were expected to work hard to ‘do something for self’ and help develop the black community through creating businesses, improving morality, and gaining education so that the community would be prepared to be completely self-sufficient when it finally obtained its independent country. Ultimately, then, Muhammad's reshaping of the NOI's eschatology in the 1950s seems to have been used largely to convince many

101 See, e.g., “Mr. X Tells What.”

102 Theodore Draper, *American Communism and Soviet Russia: The Formative Period* (New York: Viking Press, 1960), 315–56; Joseph R. Starobin, *American Communism in Crisis, 1943–1957* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), esp. 94–95.

103 Muhammad, *Supreme Wisdom*, 41.

104 In early 1957, the thinking was that the Muslims should be given the state of Texas and by 1958 Muhammad was proposing Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Florida, and Georgia; see Wallace Muhammad FBI file, Report, 5/9/1957, Chicago file, 100–32090, 4; Joint Legislative Committee, *Activities of*, 105.

105 As Chicago's Minister James 3X Anderson put it, the NOI's view was that “politics is the white man's game”; see James 3X Anderson FBI file, Report 1/28/65, Chicago file 105–52477, 21.

106 It remains unknown how many ex-Communists and sympathizers of the Communists and Socialists joined the NOI after it began promoting the separate state message. As we will see, there seems to have been several in the Northwest Muslim communities in the early 1960s.

who might otherwise have cared little about improving the black community to devote themselves to that very mission.

During this period, the NOI's national headquarters was also working on more direct evangelization strategies. Muhammad, for instance, now encouraged proselytizers to focus on bringing in the youth, famously telling Malcolm X early in his career that "Once you get [the youth], the older ones will follow through shame."¹⁰⁷ Male NOI members were required to partake in street and door-to-door preaching—what was called 'fishing'—every Tuesday, Saturday, and Sunday, and young people were frequently the focus of these efforts.¹⁰⁸ To better reach the broader public, meanwhile, the Chicago headquarters began working on a program that built on the group's experience of employing propaganda in the 1930s. From late July through October 1955 the NOI ran a weekly advertisement in the national edition of the *Chicago Defender*, promising that those who joined the movement would be "forever blessed and Successful."¹⁰⁹ Putting out this advertisement, which also claimed that Islam was "The Religion of Our Forefathers" and listed the addresses of the first twelve temples, was perhaps the NOI's first systematized attempt at using secular mass media for self-promotion. And it appears to have helped increase interest in the movement: by February of the next year, reportedly over 3,000 people—the majority of whom were not registered NOI members—showed up to the Saviour's Day meeting.¹¹⁰

With the NOI becoming increasingly well known in Chicago, Ted Watson—who had 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—thought this rather novel organization would make a good subject for a series of articles.¹¹¹ So in April 1956 the *Courier* ran three rather favorable feature stories on the NOI by Watson, complete with several large photographs of the community.¹¹² The newspaper's interest in the NOI perfectly

107 X and Haley, *Autobiography*, 200.

108 Abdul-Tawwab, "Doing for Self!" 84; Mannan, *A History*, 36–37. Adults, however, were not ignored, and in the mid-1950s Muslim men had to take what were called "Bible Study Classes" in which they learned which bible verses to use to best reach the believing Christians; see Jeremiah X Pugh FBI file, Report, 9/9/1955, Philadelphia file 100-40129, 33.

109 "Muhammad's Temple #2, Illinois," *Chicago Defender* (Ntl. ed.), July 30, 1955, 4.

110 Abdul Basit Naeem, "The Rise of Elijah Muhammad," *Moslem World & the USA* (June–July 1956): 22.

111 "Ted Watson of Defender," *Chicago Tribune*, December 15, 1987.

112 See Watson's "The Rise of Muhammad Temple of Islam," *Pittsburgh Courier*, April 7, 1956,

aligned with the Nation's desire to utilize mass media, and it appears that it was as a result of the two organizations connecting at this time that Watson and the *Courier* worked out an agreement with the NOI wherein they would publish a weekly column written by Muhammad in exchange for having NOI members sell the newspaper on street corners.¹¹³ "Mr. Muhammad Speaks," which was essentially a condensed sermon, began appearing in the weekly magazine section of the *Courier* in June,¹¹⁴ and by July it was one of the paper's most popular and controversial columns.¹¹⁵ Letters poured in praising Muhammad's "fearless" straightforwardness about the racial situation in the US and thanking him for "uplifting" and "opening the eyes" of the *Courier's* readers.¹¹⁶ 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 Muhammad praised Garvey in his own speeches—even borrowing Garvey's famous motivational proclamation "Up, you mighty race. You can accomplish what you will"¹¹⁷—and when Malcolm stressed the Islamic influence on Garvey from Dusé Mohamed Ali.¹¹⁸ For many, Elijah Muhammad was becoming a sort of contemporary Garvey and the NOI Muslims were, in a way, regarded as the modern equivalent of the North African Moors.¹¹⁹ Some readers, however, were far less pleased with

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.

113 Bashir, *Top of the Clock*, 19–20; Abdul-Tawwab, "Doing for Self!" 92; Mannan, *A History*, 39.

114 June 9, 1956, B3; "Our Platform," *Muhammad Speaks*, October–November 1961, 10.

115 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.

116 Reader letters about Muhammad's column appeared almost weekly for the next year.

117 Allen 3X, "Messenger Directs Progress of Muhammad Speaks Pressmen," *Muhammad Speaks*, December 18, 1970, 18; NOI FBI file, Airtel, SAC, Chicago to Director, FBI, 8/12/1964, enclosure, 17; Currin, "Portrait of a Woman," 24–25, 27, 34–46, 48, 57n106.

118 "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.

119 One man, for instance, remarked, "We could use a man like [Garvey] today to go along with Dr. Martin Luther King and Elijah Muhammad"; Lee Blackwell, "Off the Record," *Chicago Daily Defender*, August 27, 1957, 10.

Muhammad's rhetoric, and found his racial separatism message and biblical interpretations somewhat questionable and even potentially dangerous. Still, the positive feedback significantly outweighed the negative, and, taking into consideration the circulation boost provided by the NOI sales of the newspaper, the *Courier* reasoned that it would be in its interest to continue the column, which it did for the next three years.¹²⁰

This was an incredibly important moment in the history of African American Islam. Prior to this time, though several African American Muslims, including Muhammad 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 Muhammad 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 the proselytizing efforts of Malcolm X and other Muslims were surely important for recruiting core members at this time, their ability to spread the name and message of the NOI paled in comparison to Muhammad's column. The *Courier* column was thus, effectively, Muhammad's equivalent of Garvey's *Negro World* in the 1950s.

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 USA*, a bimonthly magazine for American Muslims published by Abdul Basit Naeem, a Pakistani Muslim missionary and entrepreneur who had been working with US Muslims—including African American Sunnis—since the early 1950s.¹²¹ Naeem, seeing a growing Muslim movement that could be used as an example of Islam's success

120 Min. Jeremiah Shabazz claimed that the NOI's efforts increased *Courier* sales by 100,000 (see Bashir, *Top of the Clock*, 19–20); in 1961 the NOI insisted that the Muslims had sold 1.25 million copies during their final year of working with the *Courier* ("Our Platform"); and Mannan reports that the newspaper was so pleased with the Muslims' sales that it awarded Muhammad a special plaque in 1957 (*A History*, 39). Lincoln reports that the *Courier* cancelled the column in 1959 when the paper's controlling interest was changed (*Black Muslims*, 122), but in 1961 the NOI insisted that it had been the party that decided to end its relationship with the *Courier*, when the newspaper began printing stories critical of Muhammad ("Our Platform").

121 The NOI first appeared in the April–May 1956 issue. For more on the NOI's relationship with this magazine, see DeCaro, *On the Side*, 137–39, 150–51. For more on Naeem, see Bowen, *HCTIUS*, 1:312–16.

in America, for the next two years regularly featured in his magazine stories about the NOI as well as a number of Muhammad's writings, placing them next to articles about immigrant and international Sunnis. In 1957, Naeem was also responsible for printing Muhammad's *Supreme Wisdom*, which became the central text of the movement for the next several years. With the relatively wide circulation of these works, Naeem's publications played an important role in making the NOI known to international Muslims both inside and outside of the US, although the Muslim immigrant community, which at the time was striving to be accepted in US society, grew angry over the NOI's claim about being Islamic, a claim—due to the Nation's anti-white teachings—that was thought to give all Muslims a bad name. This resulted in immigrant Muslims speaking out publicly against the legitimacy of the NOI's Islam—a controversy, however, that, as we will see, ended up giving the Nation even more press.

In December of 1956, Muhammad 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.¹²² With these articles, Malcolm, who had penned essays defending the Muslims as far back as his prison days, confirmed that he too was an effective writer for the NOI—and he would soon have his chance to demonstrate his skills on a weekly basis. In March 1957, Malcolm made national headlines when he led a largely non-Muslim crowd of at least several hundred to a local police department in order to ensure that a Muslim who had that day been beaten by police, Johnson X Hinton, would receive hospital care.¹²³ By using the resulting increased interest in the local NOI as leverage, Malcolm approached the black-run *New York Amsterdam News* and made a proposition similar to the one Muhammad had made with the *Pittsburgh Courier*: the local temple would sell the *Amsterdam News* in exchange for the paper running a Malcolm-written column entitled "God's Angry Men."¹²⁴ Like Muhammad's "Mr. Muhammad Speaks," Malcolm's column inspired many and angered others, but most importantly, it further exposed the wider African American public in New York to the NOI message. And, having finally gotten Harlem's ear, in July Muhammad took over the NOI column-

122 "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.

123 "400 March to Sore Police in Harlem," *New York Times*, April 29, 1957, 12.

124 X and Haley, *Autobiography*, 236–39. This column was syndicated in various black newspapers throughout the country; see DeCaro, *On the Side*, 108–09.

writing in the *Amsterdam News*, while Malcolm's column was transferred to the Los Angeles *Herald Dispatch*.¹²⁵

The popularity of Muhammad and Malcolm's essays led to black newspapers throughout the country starting to print their now syndicated columns and showing a greater willingness to run news and feature pieces about the NOI.¹²⁶ Not only were the relatively interesting Nation-related stories being picked up more often, but minor stories that would have been easily overlooked in the past, such as information about the numbers and types of people at NOI conventions, were given at least a few inches of print space and a headline. In only two years (1956 and 1957), the NOI had impressively eclipsed the MSTA as the African American Islamic group most consistently mentioned in newspapers. Interest in Muhammad was now so widespread that in July 1958 an estimated combined 13,000 black Americans visited a two-day Moslem Unity Feast in Harlem to honor Muhammad, with the *Pittsburgh Courier* reporting that over 500 people converted during the affair.¹²⁷ A year later, Muhammad's speech at Washington, DC's Uline Arena, a single-day event, drew 10,000 people, and was followed by Muhammad's first television interview.¹²⁸ In it, the Messenger made sure to inform the interviewing reporter that Armageddon was at hand and that by 1970 there would be no more white America.

Interestingly, this unprecedented level of media exposure to the African American community did not automatically translate into an unprecedented level of growth in official NOI membership numbers. There are, notably, very few accounts of individuals who converted after learning about the NOI in 1950s columns written by Muhammad or other Muslims and, as we will see, available data about NOI membership from the period does not suggest the Nation's 1950s expansion was anything close to Garvey's peak.¹²⁹ This is not to say, however, that the NOI's development was insignificant during the 1950s.

125 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. On Muslims selling the *Amsterdam News*, see "Our Platform."

126 That their columns boosted reader interest in multiple black newspapers is attested to in *Muhammad Speaks*, March 15, 1974, 11.

127 "Mr. Muhammad Calls for 'United Front of Black Men' at New York City Rally," *Pittsburgh Courier*, July 19, 1958, B2; Al Nall, "13,000 Hear Elijah Muhammad," *New York Amsterdam News*, July 12, 1958, 1.

128 Clegg, *Original Man*, 119–21.

129 There are, nevertheless, a few accounts of individuals converting after having read Mu-

The result of the group instituting its increasingly diversified recruiting and propaganda efforts was that the movement had started to expand much faster than it had during the late 1930s and most of the 1940s. In 1952 the number of official NOI members almost certainly still did not yet exceed 700,¹³⁰ but by 1958 the Nation had mushroomed to roughly 3,200 Muslims.¹³¹ During this same period the number of official temples jumped from thirteen to twenty-eight, to which was added thirty-two unnumbered 'baby temples.'¹³² This meant that the

hammad's 1950s columns; see, e.g., Howard, "Becoming a Black Muslim," 221–22, 227; Rebecca x, "After Years of Illness, Good Health Just One of Islam's Many Blessings," *Muhammad Speaks*, September 30, 1966, 25; Mary Tessie x, "Signs of Divine Power and Guidance," *Muhammad Speaks*, October 14, 1966, 25. Muhammad's columns were also noted as popular reading materials among Muslim prisoners; see State of California Department of Corrections, Administrative Bulletin No. 58/16, 2/25/1958, reprinted in Adam Daniel Morrison, "Religious Legitimacy and the Nation of Islam: *In Re Ferguson* and Muslim Inmates' Religious Rights in the 1950s and 1960s" (MA thesis, University of California Santa Barbara, 2013), 72.

130 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, "Nation of Islam," 57). Most other temples at that time, with the exception of Washington's (which probably had close to 150) and maybe Detroit's, typically had fewer than 100 members, and often fifty or fewer, if we are to judge by early 1950s reports in Elijah Muhammad's FBI file and other statements concerning various temple sizes at the time (see, e.g., "FBI Jails Pair"; Mannan, *A History*, appendix; Bruce Perry, *Malcolm: The Life of a Man who Changed Black America* [Barrytown, NY: Station Hill Press, 1991], 161; Muhammad, *History of Masjid Muhammad*, 25). 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, *On the Side*, 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, *Original Man*, 107–08), whereas meetings later in that decade would have over 1,000 people, even when total membership was probably no more than 10,000.

131 Evanzz, *Messenger*, 453–62; Mannan, *A History*, appendix; "Headquarters of Muslim Sect," *Michigan Chronicle*, July 13, 1957, 4.

132 Evanzz, *Messenger*, 453–62. Regarding 'baby temples': one source says that during the 1950s, temples needed to have at least twenty-five members to become official and obtain a 'number' (Bashir, *Top of the Clock*, 20), but other sources report that in the Nation (they do not usually say when the rule was instituted) there had to be either thirty or forty members for a number to be issued (see, e.g., COINTELPRO file, Memorandum, SAC, Indianapolis to Director, FBI, 12/22/1970; Abdul-Tawwab, "'Doing for Self!'" 67n51; and Allah, *A History*, 325). Also, in a letter written around 1968, Elijah Muhammad explains

NOI had more than quadrupled in size and, having temples in Boston and San Diego, it was now spread further across the country than any single faction of an African American Muslim group had ever been before. Still, by late 1959, after the Nation's name had become so well-known that most African Americans and many whites had some familiarity with it, the group probably only had 5,000 active members.¹³³ Even if that number were doubled, it would not have made the NOI technically that much larger than the early 1930s NOI or the late 1920s MSTA.

Yet these numbers are deceiving. In the late 1950s, the NOI was undeniably more influential, and it could even legitimately be said to have been 'larger' than its predecessors in the AAIR. What all the press attention and the various proselytizing efforts had helped produce was an unprecedented level of unregistered believers and sympathizers, what NOI members sometimes referred to as the 'uncommitted masses.'¹³⁴ These were people who, for example, eagerly awaited Muhammad's weekly columns and Malcolm's speaking engagements and may have even followed some of the NOI's behavioral and dietary suggestions, but did so without officially joining the movement. By the early 1960s, tens of thousands believed in the NOI doctrines, perhaps even going as far as teaching them to their children, but they were not willing to make the numerous sacrifices that being a true member of the NOI meant.¹³⁵

The NOI, in other words, had captured—had reterritorialized—the African American Muslim market. The group's transformations in the 1940s and 1950s gave it the power to attract black America to a degree never seen before in a single Muslim organization. It had not yet reached the point of creating a true institutional change, but it was certainly on that path.

that he does not allow individuals to become ministers who have only a half dozen or so followers "anymore"—implying that at one point he was much more lenient when it came to organizational requirements (see Betty Muhammad, *Dear Holy Apostle: Experiences, and Letters of Guidance with the Honorable Elijah Muhammad*, 2nd ed. [Gilbert, AZ: Ashanti Enterprises, 2004], 53). Perhaps, then, the requisite membership number was changed during the 1950s. On the term 'baby temples,' see Karim et al., *Remembering Malcolm*, 104.

133 Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism*, 70–71; Mannan, *A History*, appendix; "Trouble Is Old Stuff for Secret Cult," *Detroit Free Press*, August 14, 1959, 3; "Once-Troublesome 'Moslem' Cult Still in Existence Here," *Cincinnati Post and Times Star*, August 6, 1959, 37.

134 Najiy, *Nation of Islam's*, 160, 162. They were also apparently sometimes called 'sympathizers'; see Abdul-Tawwab, "'Doing for Self!'" 85–86, 98n40.

135 See Chapter 14 for further discussion of this phenomenon.

Non-NOI Muslims in the Postwar Period

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."¹ Indeed, at first glance it is rather surprising that the NOI—with its separationist, anti-integrationist, and deeply racialized rhetoric—was growing by leaps and bounds precisely when African Americans were winning social and political victories for equality through the integrationist-based civil rights movement.

The post-1942 NOI's unique proselytization pattern—with its relatively heavy reliance on convicts and street people, along with its ability to bring in former black nationalists, non-NOI Muslims, and the social networks of all of the above—certainly explains some of this phenomenon. In the 1950s, no civil rights organization was making serious headway among such populations. On the contrary, *church* ties were key for the development of the early civil rights movement; according to one estimate, over ninety-eight percent of the civil rights activists in Birmingham and Montgomery—the sites of two of the largest civil rights activist communities of the 1950s—were church members.² Still, this does not seem to fully explain how it was that the NOI's 'uncommitted masses' came to number probably tens of thousands.

One of the factors that can help shed light the NOI's enormous popularity is region. Particularly before the 1960s, the NOI was an overwhelmingly Northern and Western phenomenon, whereas the civil rights movement was concentrated primarily in the South. Although Northern churches and other voluntary organizations supported the civil rights movement, they generally did so from afar; the vast majority of the movement's nonviolent direct action activities were located in the South. The South provided the movement's mass base and organizational core, and it was there where whole communities were sometimes mobilized behind church leaders to march in the streets and hold sit-ins. This phenomenon did not occur in the North even close to the same extent;

1 Louis E. Burnham, "The Spectator: Our Own Islam," *National Guardian*, July 28, 1958, 8.

2 Morris, *Origins*, 74.

therefore outside of the South there was far less social pressure pushing, and social networks pulling, African Americans to join up with the Christian-based movement. Northern and Western African Americans were thus freer to follow other paths that appealed to them. And since, as we have seen, the Nation's programs and the folk basis of its doctrines were deeply attractive to many people, it is easy to understand how African Americans might have ended up at least interested in the Muslims' teachings.

At the same time, one of the inadvertent effects of the successes of the civil rights movement was the raising of expectations, which produced a growing desire for more aggressive approaches to black liberation. The civil rights movement's hallmark of nonviolent direct action was itself partially birthed by this very phenomenon. When states failed to immediately implement school desegregation after the Supreme Court's 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, many African Americans realized that although the legalistic approach of the NAACP had indeed made significant progress for blacks, now what was needed were additional, on-the-ground activities to force the changes that were not being applied. Then, after local civil rights movements began succeeding in shifting business and city policies regarding segregation, this emboldened activists to take ever more daring actions in the name of obtaining equality. The 'fearless' views of the Muslims, then, were probably often seen as the next logical step in the struggle for black liberation. The civil rights movement had, in effect, begun shattering many African Americans' notions regarding what was 'impossible.' It had, to put it in sociological terms, led to the *de facto* deregulation of African American identity, philosophy, and religiosity—and this, in turn, produced an increase in both religious diversity and commitment.

According to sociologists of religion Rodney Stark and Roger Finke, the reason that there is not just increased religious diversity but often increased religious commitment in a time and location with recently-deregulated religion is that

a) Even though the religious market expands as a result of deregulation, 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, increased competition between these groups to gain followers from their niche, and competition, in turn, gives members an elevated sense of commitment to their religion.

b) Furthermore, even if new competitors do not appear, because the number of people now 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 name and ideas. These groups will generally prosper over similar, less active groups with weaker motivation and less effective exploitation of media.

c) And finally, the new recruits in the religious 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 will be able to help the group continue to grow and compete.³

The NOI's 1950s rise fits this model extremely well, as we have seen. Not only was the group highly motivated due to a large proportion of its membership having been imprisoned in the 1940s, it required its followers to constantly 'fish,' and it certainly made effective use of mass media. But what was also of great importance was the fact that, when it came to the niches, markets, and consumer bases that the Nation appealed to most—people interested in black nationalism and Islam, the unchurched street people, and prisoners—the NOI had very few strong competitors. Black nationalism in the 1950s was a far cry from that of Garvey's heyday. There were a few remaining UNIA divisions, but they were small and largely ineffective. Occasionally, spinoff groups, such as Carlos Cooks' African Nationalist Pioneer Movement and James Lawson's Universal African Nationalist Movement, remained somewhat active in New York, but none obtained a large following.⁴

As for the other African American Islamic groups, the 1950s was a period of either small growth, stagnation, or decline. Many of the non-NOI African American Islamic organizations that existed at the time had been experiencing a slight loss of membership since the mid-1940s due to their inability to replenish members after older ones, who had joined back in the 1920s and

3 Stark and Finke, *Acts of Faith*, 198–202.

4 For a discussion of Cooks and his organization, see Robert Harris, Nyota Harris, and Granddassa Harris, *Carlos Cooks and Black Nationalism from Garvey to Malcolm* (Dover: Majority Press, 1992). For descriptions of various New York black nationalist movements that were in existence by the early 1960s, see Peter Kihss, "Negro Extremist Groups Step up Nationalist Drive," *New York Times*, March 1, 1961, 1 and Klytus Smith and Abiola Sinclair, *The Harlem Cultural/Political Movements 1960–1970: From Malcolm X to "Black is Beautiful"* (New York: Gumb & Thomas, 1995).

1930s, began dying off. The FBI had observed, for example, that the MSTA population had decreased since reaching its second peak in the early-to-mid 1940s; several of its temples had dwindled to only a handful of members, and some simply closed.⁵ The available evidence suggests, furthermore, that, with the exception of Turner-El's faction, which held the interest of some smaller newspapers, proselytization efforts were essentially limited to the occasional word-of-mouth promotion. In other words, no organization was doing anything close to what the NOI was accomplishing in terms of spreading its message throughout America.

Still, the non-NOI Islamic groups were not completely inactive. On the contrary: although their impact was not nearly as significant as the NOI's, several Muslim organizations were leaving notable marks on African American Islamic history. The present chapter provides an overview of the activities of the non-NOI African American Muslims in the postwar period, paying special attention to currents, groups, and figures that experienced some growth and made important innovations in the Muslim community. As we will see, not only were new teachings and new organizations created, some individuals took older notions further than anyone else had gone before, and in the process began quietly transforming the larger cultural terrain in unprecedented ways.

Sunnis and Ahmadis

During the postwar period, no new major national African American Sunni organization would be formed, although there were a number of efforts being made to try to bring together African American Sunni communities with each other and sometimes with immigrant Muslims. In the 1950s, for example, as the AAUAA slowly expanded in the Northeast and possibly became the group responsible for producing perhaps the first African American to attend al-Azhar, Faiz Mahmud Shukair al-Muatai,⁶ it seems to have influenced the creation of what was essentially a Muslim fraternal and community service organization in Newark called the Council of Brothers, which formed out of a group of about twenty men who had been influenced by both Muhammad Eزالdeen and Elijah Muhammad.⁷ Meanwhile, in other parts of the country,

5 See the MSTA FBI file, *passim*.

6 "Winds of Change," *Newsweek*, September 25, 1961, 106.

7 Nash, "Son of Thunder," 11; *idem.*, *Islam Among*, 83–84. For more on this group, see the previous chapter.

some of the most influential African American Sunni leaders and groups joined a national Islamic organization that was primarily led by immigrant Muslims, the Federation of Islamic Associations of the United States and Canada (FIA),⁸ which, after its establishment in 1952, became the first long-lasting national immigrant-led Islamic umbrella organization.⁹ Representatives from 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.¹⁰ In 1954, most of the same organizations returned to that year's convention, during which the FIA created its constitution, a document that 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."¹¹ Interest in uniting Muslim communities therefore continued to increase, and, despite some complaints that the FIA—at least its magazine—focused too much on Arab Muslims and not enough on black Muslims,¹² many of these groups remained affiliated with the FIA into the 1960s, when the organization reached its peak of over 2,000 members.¹³ These groups were eventually joined by a few other African American-majority Islamic organizations, such as Detroit's Masjid al-Mu'mineen (see below) and Hameed Wahab Bey's Philadelphia-based Moorish American Islamic Society.¹⁴

8 The FIA was originally called the International Muslim Society, not to be confused with the Somali-led IMS in New York.

9 On the Federation, see Howell, *Old Islam*, 150–60 and Bowen, *HCTIUS*, 1:293–351.

10 "Moslem Unity Advanced," *New York Times*, July 5, 1953, 36; "Islam Crisis Discussed," *New York Times*, July 6, 1953, 3.

11 Al-Maqdissi, "The Muslims," 31.

12 Rasheed N. Ali, "My Complaint is This," *Muslim Star* 6, no. 14 (1966): 3, IMJC Papers, Box 8, BHL.

13 Report, 3/15/1961, Chicago, 1, FIA FBI file; "International Muslim Brotherhood in Philadelphia," *Muslim Star* 6, no. 14 (1966): 5, IMJC Papers, Box 8, BHL; "Philadelphia, Pa.," *Muslim Star* 6, no. 16 (1966): 4, IMJC Papers, Box 8, BHL; Yusuf Sadiq, "Philadelphia, PA.," *FIA Journal* 1, no. 2 (January–March 1965): 31, Aliya Hassen Papers, Box 1, F.I.A. Journals, 1965, BHL.

14 Howell, *Old Islam*, 201–08; Haitama Sharef, "Al-Mu'mineen Mosque Cooperates with MSA," *Muslim Star* 10, no. 45 (1969): 8, IMJC Papers, Box 8, BHL; "Attend Dinner, Send Donations," *Muslim Star* 11, no. 61 (1970): 3, IMJC Papers, Box 8, BHL; *Washington D.C. 1958, Seventh Annual Convention, The Federation of Islamic Associations in the United States and Canada* ([Washington, DC]: Federation of Islamic Associations in the United States and Canada, 1958), [24], BHL; *The Federation of Islamic Associations in the United States and Canada, nth Annual Convention, August 10th, 11th, & 12th, 1962, Philadelphia, Penna.* ([Philadelphia]: Federation of Islamic Associations in the United States and Canada, 1962), [17], BHL;

Apparently inspired by the FIA's program, when the New York City attendees returned home after the 1954 convention they, along with the IMS and other New York Islamic organizations, started both a local Muslim Council to coordinate the public relations, social work, and missionary efforts of the city's various Islamic organizations as well as a campaign to build an Islamic center in Manhattan.¹⁵ Besides having a relatively large concentration of Islamic organizations, 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 IMS, AOI, IMA, and al-Rawaf's YMMA, along with a few other groups, were members of New York's (apparently short-lived) Inter-Muslim Societies Committee, an organization that brought to speak at the IMS that year the Indian scholar Muhammad Abdul Aleem Siddiqui, who encouraged US Muslims "to unite and establish a powerful movement of enlightenment on Islam."¹⁶ Also, throughout the decade Sheikh Daoud Faisal regularly appeared at the city's various African American mosques—it is even said that he studied at the AOI into the late 1950s—a habit that helped solidify a feeling of connection between the communities.¹⁷

Sheikh Daoud, meanwhile, seems to have been one of the most active Sunni AAIR leaders during this period, 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*,"¹⁸ a nearly 200-page collection of a few dozen short essays on basic Islamic topics, including early Islamic history, the Islamic view of Jesus, and the proper practice of prayer. Being one of the first significant-sized Islamic books to be written by a US Muslim leader—and a black one at that—*Al-Islam* helped further establish Sheikh 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 fes-

"F.I.A. Delegates at Washington Meeting Act in Harmony on Important Agenda," *Muslim Star* 6, no. 22 (April–May 1967): 1, IMJC Papers, Box 8, BHL.

15 Ibid.

16 "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."

17 "Moslems Observe Day of Sacrifice," *New York Times* September 1, 1952, 28; Dannin, *Black Pilgrimage*, 62.

18 Daoud Ahmed Faisal, "*Al-Islam, the Religion of Humanity*" (Brooklyn: Islamic Mission of America, 1950).

tivals, proselytized to African Americans in prison,¹⁹ and ensured 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 he frequently traveled to Sunni mosques across the US, keeping the African American Sunni network alive.²⁰ During this period, he also was one of the early black Muslim advocates for developing ties with the United Nations, speaking in front of UN delegates in 1949 and serving as part of the Moroccan UN delegation in 1953.²¹ Through these efforts Sheikh Daoud became one of the few Sunni leaders of African Americans to maintain a regular presence in newspapers, and, partly as a result, his IMA gained a small number of new black members; in the mid-to-late 1950s his following in Brooklyn came to around 300 Muslims.²²

Another important example of the development of multi-ethnic Sunni ties during this period was the Detroit Sunni community centered around Ishmael Sammsan.²³ Information about Sammsan's life before arriving in Detroit is still incomplete; the available evidence shows only that he was born in Arkansas in 1894 and he was living in Detroit by the late 1930s, where he, like a few of the early MSTA leaders, started claiming to be a born-Muslim from Arabia and where he appears to have had some affiliation with the NOI or a related group, perhaps the Sunni-leaning DOO.²⁴ By 1948, however, Sammsan, who

19 Curtis, "Urban Muslims," 54.

20 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."

21 A copy of his 1949 speech is contained at the end of *Al-Islam*, 173 ff. See also "Islam Crisis Discussed."

22 "About New York"; "Eyes to the East."

23 On Sammsan, see Howell, "Inventing," 239 ff. I am also grateful to Akil Fahd who provided me with additional data about Sammsan.

24 See his Social Security Death Index and his entry in the 1940 census, both available on

was traveling in Egypt at the time, had obtained a well-developed understanding of orthodox Islam and may have even taken the hajj pilgrimage.²⁵ After returning to the US in September of that year—and doing so in the accompaniment of one of Iowa’s prominent immigrant Muslim families, the Aosseys²⁶—Sammsan went to Detroit where he organized both a group, the Universal Muslim Brotherhood of Al-Islam, and, in 1952, a mosque, called, initially, the Hajj Sammsan Abdullah Mosque (Islamic Mission) and, later, Al-Mu’mineen Mosque.²⁷ Sammsan’s main followers, unsurprisingly, were African American Sunnis, many of whom had been in the early NOI; but over the next few years a wide variety of immigrant Muslims began attending the mosque as well, and Sammsan became one of Detroit’s leading Muslim figures.²⁸ Despite his prominence, however, there was some membership fluctuation in the mosque due to the fact that at mid-decade the community lost a few Muslims to both the NOI and, apparently, emigration, when a family of fifteen black converts immigrated to Cairo.²⁹

In general, throughout the US there was a growing sense of unity between African American and immigrant Sunni Muslims during the 1950s. Several AAIR groups, for example, were represented at the 1957 official opening and dedication of the Islamic Center in Washington, DC, which had been established by diplomats from Muslim-majority countries.³⁰ Out in Chicago, a number of black Ahmadis joined the Sunni mosque started by Jamil Diab, the NOI’s for-

Ancestry.com, as well as Ismail Sammsan, “No Harm Intended,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, May 22, 1937, 14; Ray Davis, “Cassius Clay’s Challenge: A Muslim Answers—‘Look for the Truth,’” *Michigan Chronicle*, April 25, 1964, sect. A, page 5; Howell, “Inventing,” 239; Howell, *Old Islam*, 188; Sammsan, “No Harm.”

25 Dennis Walker, email correspondence with the author, September 10, 2011; Davis, “Cassius Clay’s.”

26 Passenger list for the Khedive Ismail, 28 September 1948, available at *Ancestry.com*.

27 Howell, *Old Islam*, 189.

28 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. Interestingly, some members left his group during the 1950s to join the NOI; see Madyun Abdulhaseeb, “The Qur’anic Basis for Islamic Unorthodoxy: The Application of the Rule of Necessity and Need, and Other Exceptions in the Nation of Islam” (MA thesis, California State University Dominguez Hills, 2003), 77–79, 163.

29 Abdulhaseeb, “Qur’anic Basis,” 75–81; “Miscellanea,” *Muslim World* 46 (1956): 183.

30 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

mer Arabic teacher.³¹ In Massachusetts, meanwhile, Ella Collins, Malcolm X's half sister, after a brief period as a member of the NOI, became a Sunni at the immigrant-majority mosque in Quincy,³² 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 a Pakistani named Syed Nadwi.³³ The main center of inter-ethnic Muslim activity, however, continued to be New York, which saw several African Americans join up with new immigrant-populated groups like the mixed African American-Somali community called Jama Diria and the organization known as African Drums, which was run by a Mr. Naim and Saudia Masoud, who encouraged Africans and Americans—both Muslims and non-Muslims—to study Islam and discuss political issues.³⁴ In addition, Dr. Mahmoud Youssef Shawarbi, the Egyptian scholar who had met members of the NOI in the 1950s and had served not only as a UN advisor, a member of the board of the DC Islamic Center, and a member of the Muslim Council in New York, but also as a leader of the FIA, made several personal connections with Sunni and Ahmadi African American Muslims, including the famous Ahmadi jazz pianist Ahmad Jamal, whom he helped convert to Sunni Islam.³⁵

the New York-based Moslem Brotherhood. Muhammad Abdul-Rauf, *History of the Islamic Center: From Dream to Reality* (Washington, DC: The Center, 1978), 72.

- 31 Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism*, 318–19.
- 32 Rodnell P. Collins with A. Peter Bailey, *Seventh Child: A Family Memoir of Malcolm X* (Secaucus, NJ: Carol Publishing Group, 1998), 153–54.
- 33 Mary Lahaj, “Building an Islamic Community in America: History of the Islamic Center of New England, 1931–1991,” Microsoft Word file, 2009, 20. Lahaj’s wording is a little vague and seems to suggest that another person who helped found the group was Ahmed Osman, a Sudanese Muslim who in 1965 would speak at Malcolm X’s funeral. However, we know Osman was attending Dartmouth in 1962, and presumably as an undergrad, so it seems unlikely that he had helped form the Harvard group. Lahaj may have meant to convey that Osman was later only a member of the group.
- 34 “Principal: Muslim Organizations in the New York Area,” Aliya Hassen Papers, Box 1, Malcolm X (Articles and Correspondence), 1959–1965, BHL. According to a 1958 newspaper article, the name of the last group was actually ‘Asian-African Drums,’ and its executive secretary (apparently Saudia Masoud) attended an NOI Unity Feast that year—all of which suggests an NOI influence; see “Mr. Muhammad Calls for ‘United Front of Black Men’ at New York City Rally,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, July 19, 1958, B2. As we will see in Chapter 8, this was not the only ‘African’ group in Harlem with a focus on drums and religion to which the NOI was connected.
- 35 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; Jay Walz, “Pianist-Investor is a Hit in Cairo,” *New York Times*, November 20, 1959, 14; “Federation of Islamic

Despite these numerous ties, however, the growth of the individual mixed immigrant-African American Sunni groups was relatively slow. In fact, many of the Sunni conversions during this period occurred in places where there was minimal contact with immigrants: prisons. Hassan Bey (born William Edward Hartzog), who was probably a former Moor but had converted to Lahori-influenced Sunni Islam behind bars in 1954, was responsible for establishing throughout the decade a sizeable Sunni community among New Jersey convicts.³⁶ Sheik Daoud, the MSTA, a few immigrant Muslims, and even the Ahmadis were also all attempting to spread Islam in American prisons at that time, perhaps partly inspired by the NOI's example.³⁷ In some cases, though, it seems that prison conversions were produced not by formal leaders, but by rank-and-file Muslims who were knowledgeable enough to teach others about the Qur'an and how to pray that others looked at them as religious authorities. Inmates Judson Broadus and Wendell McIntosh, for example, had probably at one point come into contact with a Sunni group, and, after being placed in a Kentucky hospital prison, decided to form and become the imams of a prison organization called the Moslem Brotherhood of Lexington, Kentucky, whose "aim and purpose," they announced in a letter to the *Moslem World & the USA*, was "to promote goodwill and propagate the truth concerning Islam."³⁸ Still,

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.

- 36 See William Edward Hartzog, "A New Brother in the Fold," *Light*, June 1, 1954, 4; "A Newcomer to Islam," *Islamic Review* 42, no. 7 (1954): 40; Vernon Morris, "New Jersey," *Light*, June 16, 1954, 9; William Hassan E. Hartzog, "Upon Receiving a Copy of the Holy Qur'an," *Islamic Review* 42, no. 10 (1954): 38; Hassan Bey (Wm. E. Hartzog), "12th August, 1954," *Light*, October 16, 1954, 2; "New Members of the Universal Brotherhood of Islam," *Light*, November 1, 1954, 6; "Letters to the Editor," *Light*, January 8, 1955, 7; "Islam in England," *Light*, February 1, 1955, 6; Hassan Bey, "Jersey City, N.J.," *Light*, June 1, 1955, 7; Jaffar Hussain, "Islam in United States," *Light*, July 16, 1955, 8; R. Bell, "A Newcomer to Islam on the Beauties of Islam," *Islamic Review* 46, no. 3 (1958): 35; "New Comers into the Islamic Brotherhood," *Light*, May 16, 1959, 4.
- 37 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; Dannin, *Black Pilgrimage*, 32, 62; Donald Clemmer, *The Muslim in Prison* (Washington: Institute for Criminological Research, [1960]), 3, reprinted in Adam Daniel Morrison, "Religious Legitimacy and the Nation of Islam: *In Re Ferguson* and Muslim Inmates' Religious Rights in the 1950s and 1960s" (MA thesis, University of California Santa Barbara, 2013), 81; "'Muslims,' Disciples of Hate," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, June 12, 1961, 12.
- 38 "The Moslem Brotherhood of Lexington, Kentucky," *Moslem World & the USA* (May–

despite these various efforts, the Sunni prison converts of this period probably came to no more than a few hundred. Overall, it seems that African American conversion to orthodox Islam had essentially stagnated.

Qadiani Ahmadis, meanwhile, saw a slight revival in interest in their movement. Part of this was due to four new missionaries having come to the country in 1946.³⁹ Sufi Bengalee made each the head of one of the group's larger American mosques and then traveled across the country to visit and help train the missionaries until 1948, when he departed from the US for the final time. Dr. Khalil Ahmad Nasir was left in charge of the US mission and in 1950 moved the headquarters from Chicago to Washington, DC. From the latter location, he was able to increase membership numbers in the main body of the movement.⁴⁰ At the same time, several African American jazz musicians had started converting to Islam outside of the main missionary channels, leading to the development of a wholly unique movement, which will be discussed below.

The period also saw a second wave of Lahori Ahmadi missionizing. The Lahori efforts of the 1930s and early 1940s had not produced many results, but the group's American prospects changed in 1947 when one of its missionaries, Bashir Ahmad Minto, arrived in San Francisco and incorporated the Moslem Society of the USA, Inc.⁴¹ Although he would focus his efforts on whites, African Americans were known to have started joining his group by the 1960s, and Minto's having set up a permanent organization helped cement the Lahori presence in the country.⁴²

June 1957): 22. Judson's race is confirmed by genealogical records available from *Ancestry.com*.

39 American, "A Brief Summary," 13; Anees, "Ahmadiyyat," 12–13.

40 In 1950, the group had five official mosques (Chicago, New York, St. Louis, Cincinnati, and Washington, DC) and probably a few smaller communities (such as the one in Boston); its largest group, the Chicago mosque, 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, "Nation of Islam," 54.

41 See the incorporation record of the Moslem Society of the USA, 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.

42 Bowen, *HCTIUS*, 1:287–89; Sadat Ahmad, phone interview with the author, June 7, 2011.

The Achievements of Grand Sheik Frederick Turner-El

As has already been noted, the MSTA community did not experience significant growth in the 1950s. There seems to have been some minimal expansion on the East Coast, particularly in the Givens-El and Johnson Bey-connected temples, but overall the evidence suggests the Moors were not significantly increasing their numbers. But this is not to say that Moorish Americans did nothing of importance in the postwar period. On the contrary, it was during the late 1940s and 1950s that Grand Sheik Frederick Turner-El, the leader of the MDNMNA, became an important trailblazer in African American Islam, accomplishing things that would be very similar to those that the NOI and Malcolm X would achieve only later. Because Turner-El did not attain nearly the same prominence as the NOI or Malcolm, his activities in the 1940s and 1950s serve as an excellent demonstration of the importance gaining a strong market position before a group's new ideas and practices can have a powerful influence.

To appreciate how Turner-El was able to attain the achievements that he would in this period, it must first be understood that by 1945 the grand sheik had extensive experience in dealing with courts, politicians, and racism. After his numerous court appearances in the 1930s, during which time he “represented in legal and other conflicts [...] all members of the sect,”⁴³ Frederick understood well the value of Drew Ali's political/legal message and had begun cultivating political ties. As was shown in Chapter 5 Drew Ali had provided the example, fostering connections between his MSTA 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 MSTA would have Moorish American candidates for the 1940 US presidential election.⁴⁴ But by 1941, Turner-El had realized that, at least for its circumstances at the time, his group would be better served by gaining friendly relations with non-Moorish 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—almost certainly at the the invitation of the grand sheik.⁴⁵ This was followed, in March of the following year, by Turner-El joining several other black leaders from Brooklyn in supporting an African American candidate for the local

43 “Harlem Moors.”

44 “Harlem Moors.” The reporter of the story noted, however, that the Moors were far from gaining the requisite number of signatures to add their party.

45 “Moorish-Americans End Anniversary Celebration,” *Hartford Courant*, January 12, 1941, A13.

assembly.⁴⁶ Later in 1942, a Hartford lieutenant governor, acting as the mayor's representative, gave a speech at the first MDNMNA convention,⁴⁷ and the 1944 convention—the one at Becket—hosted a representative of Massachusetts's governor.⁴⁸

With this experience behind him, in 1945 the grand sheik arranged for a conference with the Massachusetts governor during which he complained that the taxes on the Moorish Homestead had been unfairly raised and accused officials in Great Barrington of conspiring to run the Moors out of town. The governor assured Turner-El, the latter told a reporter, that the MDNMNA would be protected, and that Turner-El's complaints were being 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."⁴⁹ 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," which included both politicians and a local judge.⁵⁰ 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.⁵¹

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, appealed to the State Tax Appellate Board.⁵² The

46 Tommy Watkins, "Brooklyn Launches Drive for Colored Assemblyman," *New York Amsterdam Star-News*, March 14, 1942, 2.

47 "Moorish Science Temple Holds First Convention," *Hartford Courant*, September 16, 1942, 11.

48 "Mohammedan Moors Come."

49 "Moorish Sheik Charges"; "Town Agog at Sheik's Claim of Prejudice," *Berkshire Evening Eagle*, August 24, 1945, 8.

50 "Moors Seek Exemption of Taxes," *Berkshire Evening Eagle*, February 4, 1946, 8.

51 "500 Dedicate Moorish Property," *Berkshire Evening Eagle*, June 1, 1946, 5.

52 "Moorish Science Temple Wants all Taxes Abated," *Berkshire Evening Eagle*, February 4, 1947, 7.

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.⁵³ Then, in June, a few dozen teenagers taunted the Springfield temple leader as he walked along the streets of Great Barrington during a visit.⁵⁴ 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,⁵⁵ but he would not let the issue be swept under the rug. He was apparently attending the weekly meetings of the local selectmen,⁵⁶ and in September invited them to the annual convention,⁵⁷ along with the governor and lieutenant governor.⁵⁸

The troubles in the Berkshires, 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.”⁵⁹ In addition, because the Home had failed to keep up on its mortgage, an 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 MSTA, 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.⁶⁰ By June 1949, after a spring in which Turner-El and another Moor were in an automobile accident,⁶¹ the home had been foreclosed on and Stanton outbid the

53 “Grand Sheik Charges Racial Antagonism,” *Berkshire County Eagle*, February 5, 1947, 1.

54 “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.”

55 “Turner-El Invites Bradford to Moors’ Convention,” *Berkshire County Eagle*, September 10, 1947, 5.

56 “Relocation of Road Sought,” *Berkshire County Eagle*, August 20, 1947, 16.

57 “23 Lights to Be Installed,” *Berkshire Evening Eagle*, September 9, 1947, 4.

58 “Turner-El Invites.”

59 “Moorish Temple Grand Sheik Proclaims His Monroe Doctrine,” *Berkshire Evening Eagle*, September 7, 1948, 11.

60 “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.

61 “Auto Strikes Pole Causing Blackout in Winsted Area,” *Hartford Courant*, April 23, 1949, 2.

Moors for the property in the foreclosure sale.⁶² In July an eviction hearing was initiated, and, with only a few hours to spare, the Moorish Americans finally left their Homestead before the town could forcibly remove them.⁶³ Within months, the MDNMNA had set up its new 'National Home,' now alternatively known as the 'National Shrine,'⁶⁴ in Norfolk, Connecticut, where it would stay for the next fifteen years.⁶⁵

By this point, Turner-El and his program had begun undergoing significant transformations. After a decade of battling racism via legal and political activities grounded almost exclusively in religious rhetoric, Frederick, now a seasoned activist and advocate, was beginning to 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.⁶⁶

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 US blacks. And it seemed to be inspiring many.

62 "Stantons Bid \$25,000 for Moors' Temple," *Berkshire Evening Eagle*, June 21, 1949, 4.

63 "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.

64 Advertisements for the Shrine appeared in the black newspaper *The New York Amsterdam News*. They portrayed the Shrine as a secular summer vacation resort.

65 "Two Large Properties Change Ownership," *Hartford Courant*, May 21, 1950, B3; "Moroccans Open Shrine in Norfolk," *Hartford Courant*, May 15, 1950, 15.

66 "Brotherhood Meet in Massachusetts," *Atlanta Daily World*, June 19, 1947, 1, 7.

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 US, Bishop Plummer, who pledged the loyalty of his churches (which he said numbered 132) to Turner-El's vision.⁶⁷ Plans were introduced for organizing economic and education programs and an MSTA 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.⁶⁸

Although the immediate outcome of this conference is not clear, in the fall of the following year, over 1,000 people reportedly came to the Home at Great Barrington for the next conference.⁶⁹ It was at this September 1948 conference where Turner-El, apparently heartened by his success in organizing African Americans, warned his Berkshire County 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.”⁷⁰

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.⁷¹ While the meaning of the term was close to the same as the one that had been used by Drew Ali’s followers,⁷² the change seems to have been a strategic shift in identity, one that was likely connected to other developments that Turner-El was instigating.

In 1949, two years after the initiation of Turner-El’s unity movement, at the annual MDNMNA convention, which leaders from various African American

67 “Moors, Christ Church Affiliate,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, June 28, 1947, 12.

68 “Brotherhood Meet.”

69 “Moorish Temple Grand.”

70 Ibid.

71 Turner-El may have used the word ‘Moroccan’ for the previous year’s conference; see “Moorish Home Conclave to Be Held in Mid-June,” *Washington Star*, June 1, 1947, A2.

72 The Drew Ali-era MSTA did sometimes refer to ‘Moroccans,’ but this was only on very rare occasions.

religious communities attended,⁷³ 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,⁷⁴ "with the purpose of uniting all Moroccans in the United States and [peacefully] combating racial and religious prejudice in this country."⁷⁵ In addition to inspiring the MUOF's charter, the UN had, with its Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), also influenced the "fundamental philosophy" of the MUOF, which was:

1. The teaching of the [UN'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 goodwill 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.⁷⁶

Turner-El and those who joined the MUOF (including, it appears, some whites from Hartford)⁷⁷ had found in the UN 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 UN 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 blazing the trail.

73 "Principal Speakers at Moorish Convention," *Hartford Courant*, September 19, 1949, 15.

74 "'Moroccan Tulip,' 'Arab Rose' Furnish Exotic Backdrop for Moors' Meeting," *Springfield Union*, April 13, 1949, 5.

75 "Vice-Consul of Pakistan Visits City," *Hartford Courant*, September 18, 1949, B8.

76 "MUOF Philosophy," *Afro-American*, July 20, 1957, 4.

77 "Moroccans Open"; "Symbol Gift at Shrine Opening," *Hartford Courant*, May 15, 1950, 15. These individuals were likely honorary members only.

Turner-El had wasted no time in putting his new international position to use. Back in 1948, he, acting as spokesman for “new voters of Moroccan descent,” had presented to the Connecticut registrar of voters a petition that supported individuals’ rights to register to vote using their MSTA suffix, El or Bey.⁷⁸ 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 US vice president and a senator a petition asking for the approval of ‘Moroccan American Rights.’ At this important meeting in Washington, DC, Frederick pointed to the UDHR, explaining that all people have a right to have a nationality,⁷⁹ and encouraging 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.”⁸⁰ In 1958, he addressed the US Justice Department, identifying the UN genocide declaration as a legal and ideological base on which the US could begin preventing the further “physical and mental destruction” of African Americans.⁸¹

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.⁸² 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),⁸³ been able to build bonds with Moors from different communities, even the MSTA, Inc.⁸⁴ And, in addition to making these connections, Turner-El was establishing a new dimension to his movement,

78 “5304 Voters Added to List in Week,” *Hartford Courant*, October 17, 1948, 1.

79 “Morocco-American Group Asks Rights in Barkley Visit,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, June 16, 1951, 2.

80 *Bridgeport Telegram*, June 12, 1951, 15.

81 “Covering the International Front,” October 11, 1958, 5.

82 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.

83 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.

84 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 MSTA 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.

one that makes him particularly important with regards to Islamic diversity in the AAIR: ties with immigrant and diplomat Muslims.

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 assertions that he was affiliated with the ‘Counsel Royale of Egypt,’ the ‘Supreme Moslem Council of the World,’ or other influential international Muslims prior to 1949.⁸⁵ But by 1947, when the seasoned politician 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 Muslim 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.⁸⁶ Although there is no evidence that they did indeed arrive at the convention either that year or in 1948,⁸⁷ it seems that by his appealing to the UN and international politics, Turner-El now had a tool that might persuade Muslim diplomats to take him seriously—and this new strategy seems to have paid off. Just prior to the September 1949 convention, Turner-El announced that he had become a ‘member’ of the UN Commission on Human Rights and that he had invited to the convention several international Muslim officials,⁸⁸ and at least one of these officials attended: Aftab Ahmad Khan, Pakistan’s vice-consul in the US, who had already attended two large Turner-El-led meetings earlier in the year.⁸⁹ 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 Muslim governments’ international

85 MSTA 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 US Muslims.

86 “Turner-El Invites.”

87 On the 1948 convention, see “Moorish Temple Grand.”

88 “Moroccans Meet Here on Thursday,” *Hartford Courant*, September 13, 1949, 22. I have not been able to confirm this.

89 “Vice-Consul”; “Principal Speakers”; “Moroccan Tulip”; “Great Barrington Moors Hear Brotherhood Urged,” *Springfield Union*, May 16, 1949, 1, 8.

political agendas. In Norfolk in May 1952, Turner-El put on what was called the Moroccan Inter-Religious and International Conference (MIIC)⁹⁰ 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 delegate to the UN; El Aboud Bouhafa,⁹¹ representative of Abd el-Krim; and Bahi Laghdi, head of the Tunisian delegation to the UN who, notably, spoke in Arabic, using an interpreter for the audience.⁹² 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 distinguished guests included both Bouhafa and Butts (who had both come in

90 The name adds an "and International" to the title of the conference previously discussed.

91 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 UN lounge, he pounded on the theme that the Secretariat of the UN 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 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 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," but also 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 and somewhat inaccurate. 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. Unfortunately, Bouhafa's relatively extensive FBI file does not provide any information about this connection with Turner-El or any other African American. See Arnold Forster and Benjamin R. Epstein, *The Trouble-Makers* (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday and Company, 1952), 175–76.

92 "Call Sounded to Liberate North Africa," *Hartford Courant*, May 19, 1952, 9B.

May) as well as Dr. El-Mehdi Aboud, representative of the Sultan of Morocco.⁹³ There, a committee drafted a petition to be presented to the UN asking for Moroccan freedom.⁹⁴ In the following May, for the MIIC guests included “delegates from the UN staffs from Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Israel, India, Pakistan, Liberia and Ethiopia” as well as Moroccan Secretary-General Hajj Ahmed Bal-farej, who was the conference’s principal speaker.⁹⁵ At the fall MUOF convention that year, representatives from India, Indonesia, Egypt, and Iran were expected to attend.⁹⁶ One year later—again at the MUOF convention—Balafrej returned, as well as a number of other Asian and African UN delegates. Here, preparations were begun by the MUOF’s Asian-African Committee for a presentation to be given to the UN demanding Morocco’s liberation.⁹⁷ In June 1956, the Moroccan Americans were visited by the minister of the interior of the Moroccan government Mohammed La Zoizi as well as an individual going by the title of ‘Princess Hamini of Pakistan.’⁹⁸ Finally, in 1957, Turner-El was vocal in his support of Algerian independence and invited UN delegates from several Muslim countries to various MUOF and MIIC meetings.⁹⁹

Turner-El, emboldened by his numerous alliances with international Muslim political figures, was now making strong assertions directed to the US government. For instance, in 1952, on a visit to the UN where he told a reporter that he was organizing an American branch of the Hassan al-Banna’s Muslim Brotherhood to help with the liberation of North Africa, he asserted that “The Middle East and Far East will not help in the fight against communism until they are completely free from European colonialism.”¹⁰⁰ Then, in 1956, he advised the Justice Department that if the US desired the friendship of the African, Arabian, and Asian peoples, “a thorough investigation must be made

93 It is unclear whether a) this convention was what had previously been the MSTA convention or b) ‘Cr. El-Mehdi Aboud’ was identical with the ‘Dr. Ben Aboud’ who had appeared at the MIIC meeting in May.

94 “Moroccans Ask Freedom at Norfolk Convention,” *Hartford Courant*, September 17, 1952, 17B.

95 “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.

96 “Convention,” *Naugatuck Daily News*, September 15, 1953, 5.

97 “Moroccan Federation Opens Norfolk Meeting,” *Hartford Courant*, September 16, 1954, 4.

98 “One Way to Solve.” Since Pakistan, as a republic, has no royalty, this claim of being a princess was not accurate.

99 Ibid; “Moroccans Set for May Meeting,” *Afro-American*, April 27, 1957, 13.

100 Ernie Hill, “American ‘Grand Sheik’ Pushes Moslem League,” *Corpus Christi Times*, August 11, 1952, 23. There is no evidence that Turner-El ever got this branch off the ground.

of ‘the inhuman crimes continually being committed behind the iron curtain of Mississippi, Alabama, South Carolina and other areas.’¹⁰¹

Even the MDNMNA’s religious ideas had begun transforming to be more in line with the Sunni Islam that his allies practiced. Although Frederick claimed to have been taught by a Sunni (presumably) in the MSTA temple Newark in the 1920s, was teaching Arabic to Moors in the 1930s, and in 1944 claimed both 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 the country,¹⁰² at least through the 1940s Turner-El still primarily used Noble Drew Ali’s *Holy Koran* and the MSTA catechism. But by the late 1940s things had started to change. In 1947, the prominent New York Sunni Muslim leader Dr. George Kheirallah was expected to attend Turner-El’s first inter-organizational conference.¹⁰³ Then, sometime during the 1950s, Dr. Shawarbi, the highly influential Sunni Egyptian immigrant visited the MDNMNA’s Brooklyn headquarters. Dennis Walker has described the encounter as follows:

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 US North East could be equipped and motivated to propagate Arab-style Sunni Islam among African-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.¹⁰⁴

101 “US Warned,” *Afro-American*, May 19, 1956, 1.

102 See his Selective Service hearing transcript.

103 “Moorish Home Conclave.” On Kheirallah, cf. Bowen, *HCTIUS*, 1:261–66.

104 Walker, *Islam and the Search*, 247.

By the early 1950s, Turner-El, who soon began sometimes using the name Grand Sheik Omar Abdul Hamied Turner-El,¹⁰⁵ was also now promoting in his organization the speaking of Arabic and, possibly, a mix of Sunni and MSTA teachings, or as he put it, “Education relative to the Koranic Islamic Law and Islamic sciences pertaining to ancient Adept philosophy.”¹⁰⁶ One of his group’s grand sheiks, Richard Countryman-Bey, even read and wrote to the Naeem’s Islamic periodical the *Moslem World & the USA*.¹⁰⁷ However, the most interesting connection between Turner-El and Sunni Islam appeared in 1951. That year, as mentioned above, he traveled to Washington, DC where he presented to a senator and Vice President Alben W. Barkely a copy of “*Al-Islam, the Religion of Humanity*,” Sheikh Daoud’s Sunni-based book—suggesting that Turner-El had been significantly influenced by his Sunni neighbor in New York City.¹⁰⁸

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.¹⁰⁹ Frederick’s movement—which had no more than, at its peak, ten temples and 1,200 followers, and all were concentrated in the Northeast—had lost its influence and would never recover the prominence it once had. Although, with the exception of perhaps Satti Majid, Turner-El had done the most to spread awareness about African American Muslims to US non-Muslim and international Muslim politicians prior to the NOI in the late 1950s, because he had generated virtually no mass base, he could not compete in the Islamic market that was developing in the 1950s. No matter how much politicking and deal-making he did, Turner-El was no match for the tidal wave of the NOI that was hitting the scene in the late 1950s. By the early 1960s, evidence suggests, his faction had dwindled to almost nothing, and most of Turner-El’s earlier programs had to be abandoned.

105 See Swain, “In North Jersey.”

106 Ralph Matthews, “One Way to Solve the Race Problem,” *Afro-American*, March 16, 1957, 11.

107 “Letters to the Editor,” *Moslem World & the USA* 2, no. 5–6 (1957): 2.

108 “Norfolk Leader of Muslim Group Urges Equal Rights,” *Hartford Courant*, June 12, 1951, 24.

109 “Civil Rights Discussed at Norfolk Parley,” *Hartford Courant*, September 28, 1959, 18C.

The Clock of Destiny

The direction in which Turner-El had taken his MDNMNA was by no means representative of a dominant trend in African American Islam. Out in Cleveland, in fact, a new MSTA-influenced sect emphasized not political influence, but rather esotericism and the complete rejection of identification with mainstream politics. In 1947, the fez-wearing Cleveland resident C.M. (Charles Mosely) Bey published *Clock of Destiny*,¹¹⁰ a booklet that, though it was clearly influenced by both MSTA and NOI teachings, contained what was virtually a complete new set of doctrines. Bey, who claimed to be an astrologer and a “3rd 33rd 360 Degree Master Mason,” explained, following the NOI, 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.”¹¹¹ 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.¹¹² In the year 580 AD,¹¹³ 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 (also known as “I AM”),¹¹⁴ which is not a “mystery religion” that revolves around a “God,” but rather a “Universal Law”—or “mathematics”—based on “facts.” 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 said to be determined by the position of the earth relative to astrological constellations.¹¹⁵ According to Bey, once a person understands these teachings, he or she can fulfill his or her destiny and help create peace on the earth.

110 C.M. [Charles Mosely] Bey, *Clock of Destiny* ([Cleveland]: Clock of Destiny, [1947] 200–).

111 Bey, *Clock of Destiny*, 60.

112 Bey, *Clock of Destiny*, 60–62.

113 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.

114 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).”

115 Fard, as we have seen, claimed that history worked in 25,000-year cycles, which affirmed many astrological-mythical theories popular in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and thus served as a basis for building astrological notions on the NOI’s concepts.

However, the story goes, around the sixteenth century, many of the Moorish rulers had become corrupt, despotic, and greedy.¹¹⁶ To increase their 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.¹¹⁷ To resist their rulers’ tyranny, a group of blond women in Patagonia (in South America) invented the “mystery” and aggressively emotional doctrine that promoted a white Christ and his mother Mary: Christianity. This was a racist and destructive religion inspired by Islamism, and it helped the Patagonians mobilize so that they could liberate themselves from their oppressive Moorish rulers.¹¹⁸ The creation of this 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 US, in 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,¹¹⁹ the latter being the only true constitution because it is based on Universal Law and 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.¹²⁰ 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,¹²¹ and therefore should work to help inspire whites to denounce both their unjust religion and the country that uses that religion as its foundation.¹²²

116 The dating of this is not clear in Bey’s book, but there are frequent references to events taking place around 400 years ago—the same time period Muhammad taught had passed since John Hawkins first landed in Africa.

117 Bey, *Clock of Destiny*, 16.

118 Ibid.

119 Also sometimes referred to as the Universal Constitution.

120 Bey, *Clock of Destiny*, 16.

121 Bey, *Clock of Destiny*, 62.

122 Bey, *Clock of Destiny*, 62.

Although by itself this doctrine's uniqueness made it worthy of notice, it was largely because of Bey's last instruction that his following of a few hundred received a disproportionate amount of attention in the 1950s.¹²³ Several members of Bey's Moorish Constitution Cultural National Club (also called, simply, the Clock of Destiny) believed, because of their rejection of the legitimacy of the United States, 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.¹²⁴ 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 US "never allowed descendants of the defeated Moorish nation of this hemisphere to ever become citizens of this Union States Republic."¹²⁵ "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."¹²⁶ 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.¹²⁷

The most publicized of Bey's followers was Emmett 'Tonelli' Cobb, also known as Ahmad El, whose sensational trial in 1954 was followed closely by

123 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.

124 Dannin, *Black Pilgrimage*, 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.

125 Jerrold Ballinger, "Tax? No Moor'll Pay; It's Jail Cell for Bey," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, December 3, 1956, 1, 9.

126 Ibid.

127 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.

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, good looks, and race pride.¹²⁸ Cobb, however, had many sides. His deep love of black people and his 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.¹²⁹ It was likely primarily due to this background that Cobb, whose early life paralleled in many ways that of 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.'¹³⁰ 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 common knowledge that he had several white girlfriends and even a white wife, whom he married in 1949.¹³¹

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

128 See, e.g., "Quinzette Social Swingsters," *Cleveland Call and Post*, September 29, 1938, 4; Gypsey, "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.

129 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.

130 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.

131 Richardson, "Parade of Girls."

was acting in self-defense, was found innocent of any wrongdoing.¹³² In the following year, Cleveland police accused Cobb of threatening young women to work as prostitutes for him, a charge that Cobb vehemently denied and for which he was able to avoid prosecution.¹³³ However, in 1954 the police were finally able to bring a court action that Cobb could not evade: charging him 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—work for him as prostitutes and petty criminals.¹³⁴ 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.¹³⁵ Cobb, who denied all charges, refused a court-appointed lawyer and neither cross-examined any of the state's witnesses nor called to the stand any of the forty-one witnesses he had subpoenaed for his defense.¹³⁶ Instead, throughout the trial Cobb yelled at the judge for being biased and for not having the authority to try him, as, Cobb claimed, he was not subject to the US Constitution. C.M. Bey, for his part, sent a telegram to the Attorney General to make him aware of what he believed was the 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."¹³⁷ 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. Just weeks after the verdict was handed down, however, when 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, they publicly recanted their statements, saying that the police had promised them lighter sentences in exchange

132 "‘Tonelli’ Freed of Fracturing Officer’s Skull in Night Brawl," *Cleveland Call and Post*, August 12, 1950, 8A.

133 "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.

134 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".

135 Woody L. Taylor, "Sets Sanity Test for Tonelli," *Cleveland Call and Post*, May 8, 1954, 1A.

136 Woody L. Taylor, "Tonelli Gets 14 to 68 Years," *Cleveland Call and Post*, May 15, 1954, 1A, 2A.

137 "Sidelights from Tonelli Trial," *Cleveland Call and Post*, May 15, 1954, 7D.

for them saying that Cobb was leading a prostitution and crime ring.¹³⁸ These interviews, however, went ignored and Cobb would not see his case reopened until 1971. Yet despite these difficulties, the Clock of Destiny movement would not die, and Cobb and Bey would leave a lasting influence on Cleveland's black community, as we will see in Chapter 14.

The Jazz Current

Another movement that was serving to increase African American interest in Islam during this period was the connection of the religion with African American music. The MSTA under Drew Ali, following the practice of the UNIA, held musical concerts and chanted songs in its meetings, a tradition that was continued in most of the post-1929 factions.¹³⁹ Early NOI members also chanted and sang, and the group would sometimes encourage Muslims to play instruments and form bands; in fact, after Louis Farrakhan, a professional singer and violinist, joined the Nation in the mid-1950s, he recorded the song "A White Man's Heaven Is a Black Man's Hell," which became extremely popular among the Muslims.¹⁴⁰ But in the 1940s, the connection between African American musicians and Islam developed in a way never previously seen when several black jazz artists converted to the religion. Some musicians, it seems, were drawn to Islam because these were individuals who tended to prefer alternative views of the world and Islam was regarded by them as a fresh perspective; some were attracted to Islamic prayer, which they felt was an experience similar to, but greater than the actual playing of music;¹⁴¹ some believed

138 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.

139 *Moorish Guide*, February 1, 1929, 1; Alfred Jackson, "From a 'New' Moslem," *Moslem World & the USA* (May–June 1957): 35; Fauset, *Black Gods*, 49.

140 "Hold 'Sacrifice' Slayer for Sanity Examination," *St. Louis Argus*, December 2, 1932, 1. As mentioned in Chapter 6, Elijah Muhammad even composed a song that was sung by Muslims from the 1930s through the 1950s (see Mannan, *A History*, 44). The NOI promotion of music in the 1960s will be discussed in Chapter 9.

141 These notions were suggested by Abdul-Tawwab (in "Doing for Self!" 35, 40, 48–49) and by two mid-century former musicians who converted to Sunni Islam in New York, Shaykh Mustafa Abdullah and Rajabah Abdul Wahaab, in their interview with Zaid Ansari; see the two interview series beginning with "My Interview with Sh Mustafa Abdullah, Part 1" and "Darul Islam Pioneers, Part 6," accessed November 25, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCJxS2GjZiuSCOHzwfcPY7gw/videos>.

Islam gave them the inner peace and strength needed to resist the debasing temptations of the music industry; and others discovered, similar to what Booker T. Washington had observed years earlier, 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.¹⁴²

The ethnographer Robert Dannin has written that 303 125th Street in Harlem was “where bebop jazz musicians first encountered Islam.”¹⁴³ At that address was both the Somali-led, Moorish-populated International Moslem Society and an Apollo Café that was sometimes frequented by Duke Ellington and his entourage, which over the years included Muslim converts.¹⁴⁴ Another report indicates, however, that jazz musicians had been joining Islam since as early as 1940, prior to the establishment of the IMS.¹⁴⁵ Whatever the true beginnings were, by the early 1950s, African American Muslim jazz communities had formed in multiple cities in the eastern half of the country.

It appears that one of the key figures in this movement was the jazz trumpeter Talib Ahmad Dawud. An Antiguan immigrant born Alfonso Nelson Rainey, Dawud was part of the earliest wave of jazz converts, having turned to the Qadiani form of Ahmadiyya Islam in the early 1940s under Sheik Nasir Ahmad in Philadelphia.¹⁴⁶ Within a few years, enabled by his job as a traveling performer, Dawud began converting musicians throughout the country, including, in 1946, several members of Dizzy Gillespie’s band.¹⁴⁷ By the next year, the convert musicians had started organizing. In Brooklyn, some were gathering under the leadership of the saxophonist Sahib Shihab, who converted to the Qadiani movement sometime before 1945.¹⁴⁸ In Manhattan, meanwhile, Dawud helped the drummer Art Blakely (Abdullah Ibn Buhaina) organize at his home two distinct groups: a religious organization called the Muslim Mission

142 Turner, *Islam in the African American*, 138–44; Dizzy Gillespie with Al Frazer, *To Be, or Not ... to Bop: Memoirs* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1979), 291–93.

143 Dannin, *Black Pilgrimage*, 34.

144 Bowen, “The Search for ‘Islam,’” 269.

145 “Moslems Take Firm Stand against Racism,” *Ebony* (April 1953): 107.

146 Dannin, *Black Pilgrimage*, 58; Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism*, 313. For detailed information about Dawud’s background, see his FBI file.

147 Yusef Lateef and Herb Boyd, *The Gentle Giant: The Autobiography of Yusef Lateef* (Irvington, NJ: Morton Books, 2006), 56; Robin D.G. Kelley, *Africa Speaks, America Answers: Modern Jazz in Revolutionary Times* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), 95–96.

148 “Billy Rowe’s Note Book,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, August 9, 1947, 16; Lateef and Boyd, *Gentle Giant*, 58.

and a seventeen-piece band composed entirely of Qadiani converts, known as the Messengers (later, the Jazz Messengers).¹⁴⁹ Within five years, Blakely's community had grown to over one hundred members (only twelve of which were musicians) and had moved to a different building on 30th Street.¹⁵⁰ It is likely that it was through Dawud or one of the other New York-based musicians that Khalil Mahmoud, a jazz pianist, was exposed to Islam during the mid-1940s; soon after this, Mahmoud moved to Boston where he became the central figure in the development of that city's relatively large Ahmadi musician community.¹⁵¹

By all accounts Dawud remained an eager promoter of his religion for several years. In 1949, he and Nasir Ahmad brought together a small number of AAUAA members to create an organization called the International Muslim Brotherhood (IMB) to teach Islam in Philadelphia, and, perhaps, Harlem.¹⁵² By the next year, Dawud had apparently also become a leader in the old Harlem-based MBUSA, which soon had affiliate Muslim groups in Philadelphia and Youngstown.¹⁵³ Throughout the rest of the 1950s and into the 1960s, Dawud continued to proselytize with great vigor, printing numerous religious pamphlets, writing newspaper editorials, carrying his message into prisons, and even converting two famous jazz artists: his wife, the singer Dakota Staton, and the jazz pianist Ahmad Jamal (prior to his conversion to Sunni Islam under Dr. Shawarbi).¹⁵⁴ In 1957, he also started, with the help of Mahmoud Alwan, an Egyptian émigré and member of Hassan al-Banna's Muslim Brotherhood, a new organization in Philadelphia called the Islamic and African Institute.¹⁵⁵

149 Lateef and Boyd, *Gentle Giant*, 57–58; Yawu Miller, "Art Blakely Biography," accessed July 11, 2012, <http://www.artblakey.com>; Kelley, *Africa Speaks*, 95–96, 199–200n.

150 "Ancient Religion Attracts Moderns," *Ebony* (April 1953): 108.

151 Abdul-Tawwab, "'Doing for Self!'" 40–43.

152 "History," *Quba Institute*, <http://www.qubainstitute.com/about/history/>, accessed August 31, 2012; Dannin, *Black Pilgrimage*, 61; Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism*, 313. The IMB would later be called Quba, Inc.; see "Say Muhammad is Subversive; Teachings False," *Philadelphia Tribune*, August 27, 1960, 3; "History," *Quba Institute*.

153 Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism*, 313; Dannin, *Black Pilgrimage*, 61–62; Paul Tobenkin, "Moslems Here Meet at Hall to Mark Holy Day," *New York Herald Tribune*, October 3, 1949, 7; John Reynolds, "Foto Facts," *Cedar Rapids Gazette*, June 23, 1950, 9.

154 See Dawud's FBI File, especially Memorandum, SA Edward M. Cole to SAC (105-4448), 2/2/1960 and 4/11/1961. For some of Dawud's pamphlets from the early 1960s, see the Walter Cooper Papers, University of Rochester, Box 4, Folder 2. Dawud-penned editorials appeared in the *Pittsburgh Courier* on February 26, 1955 and August 24 and 31, 1957, and in the *New York Amsterdam News* on May 14, 1960.

155 Dannin, *Black Pilgrimage*, 61; GhaneaBassiri, *A History*, 248–49.

Two years later, despite reports of him having been expelled from the Qadianis by that time, Dawud organized a new branch of the MBUSA in Detroit, which, within a year-and-a-half, had 125 members, and by the early 1960s another branch had been set up in California.¹⁵⁶

By the early 1950s, conversion to Islam had become extremely popular among jazz musicians across the country, with an estimated 200 Muslims counted among them.¹⁵⁷ The movement was so influential that leading jazz figures like John Coltrane and Dizzy Gillespie studied Islam and contemplated conversion,¹⁵⁸ and, according to one Muslim, popular saxophonist and composer Charlie Parker went as far as secretly embracing the religion and taking the name Saluda Hakim.¹⁵⁹ Out of those who publicly converted, however, the musician who received the most press for his conversion that decade was Lynn Hope. Hope had been first exposed to Islam by Talib Dawud in 1947 while performing in Pittsburgh.¹⁶⁰ Quickly taking to his new faith, he learned Arabic and then made his hajj in 1952, becoming one of the first African Americans to do so.¹⁶¹ He then began leading in Philadelphia a branch of the Sunni-oriented AAUAA, of which Nasir Ahmad—whom Hope had probably known through Talib Dawud—was a founding member.¹⁶²

156 Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism*, 313n30; Memorandum, SAC, Chicago to Director, FBI, 12/31/64, 3, Afro-Descendant Upliftment Society FBI file; Marjorie Weston, "Calls Muslim Attack on Singer Absurd," *Michigan Chronicle*, September 29, 1962, sect. 2 p. 10; Harold Schachern, "Moslem Negroes in Detroit Deplore Race's Rioting in UN," *Detroit News*, February 17, 1961. I would like to thank Sally Howell for sharing the latter article. The California branch will be mentioned again in Chapter 13.

157 "Moslem Musicians," *Ebony* (April 1953): 104.

158 Cuthbert Ormond Simpkins, *Coltrane: A Biography* (New York: Herndon House Publishers, 1975), 175–85; "Bop King Gillespie, Forsaken by Christianity, Now Ready for Islam," *Chicago Defender* (Ntl. ed.), May 21, 1949, 1; Gillespie with Al Frazer, *To Be*, 292–93.

159 Talib W. Abdur-Rashid, "Has Anybody Seen 'Bird'?" *Western Sunrise* 3, no. 1 (1974): 6, 9, 14, MMIRM, Box 3, WRHS.

160 "Polygamy Question Puzzles Moslems," *Ebony* (April 1953): 111.

161 "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, *A History*, 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). As we have seen, Ishmael Sammsan may have taken his hajj in the late 1940s.

162 "Ancient Religion Attracts," 109.

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), a few hundred non-musician African Americans reportedly began converting to Islam throughout the country. Those who followed the musicians were often becoming Qadianis, but, because some of the musicians had Lahori and Sunni influences, there was also a slight rise in Lahori and Sunni converts at the time, particularly at Sheikh Daoud's IMA in New York.¹⁶³ In Cleveland, Lynn Hope was particularly influential, and in 1954 the black Muslim community there apparently claimed that it had grown to one thousand Muslims largely due to his influence; although this is almost certainly a highly exaggerated figure, it nevertheless reflects the impact of the popular jazz musician.¹⁶⁴

The mid-1950s, however, would be the peak of the Muslim jazz musician movement. It was at that 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 US, and of these, only 200 were regularly active; the rest were "more or less lax in their practices."¹⁶⁵

A Community in Decline

Despite the emergence of the various small non-NOI Muslim organizations and movements in the 1950s, it is clear that truly significant growth for African American Muslims that decade was almost entirely limited to the NOI. In fact, when the MSTA was mentioned in newspapers in the 1950s, 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 the inevitable deaths of those who had had moved to these communi-

163 See Ansari's "My Interview with Sh Mustafa Abdullah, Part 1" and "Darul Islam Pioneers, Part 6" video series.

164 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 members, and many of them were not black. See "The Moslems in Cleveland," *Cleveland Plain Dealer Pictorial Magazine*, November 11, 1951, 19.

165 Charles S. Braden, "Islam in America," *International Review of Missions* 48 (1959): 21. In 1962, the US head of the movement claimed that it had 3,000 followers in the country, but, considering the evidence we have about the sizes of local Qadiani branches, this was almost certainly a great exaggeration; see Ahmadiyya Movement FBI file, Memorandum, SAC, Cincinnati, to Director, FBI, 1/9/1975, 2.

ties in the 1940s. As a result, both the largest and, at the time, most prominent MSTA 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 MSTA lost Ira Johnson Bey in December 1950, and then his son and successor, George, a few months later.¹⁶⁶ 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 local immigrant-majority community, thus depriving the East Coast and Midwest of an important leader.¹⁶⁷ Then, in 1952, William Gravitt-El, a staple in New Jersey's MSTA community since 1929 (and father of prominent FOI captain Joseph Gravitt), passed away.¹⁶⁸ This was followed, in 1954—the same year Malcolm X was made Harlem's NOI leader—with the deaths of Paul Nathaniel Johnson, the first influential African American Ahmadi sheik and later the prophet of the Fahamme Temples,¹⁶⁹ and Abdul Wadood Bey, the MNIC leader and IMS founder.¹⁷⁰ Three years later, one of the most important figures in early African American Sunni history, Muhammad Ezaldeen, also passed.¹⁷¹ Finally, 1959 saw the death of Kirkman Bey, the most influential post-Drew Ali MSTA head.¹⁷² Although Kirkman Bey, Ezaldeen, and (probably) Johnson Bey left successors, it is notable that few of these early leaders had children. In fact, over the years

166 “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.

167 Hazel Carland, “Things to Talk about,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, May 12, 1951, 13.

168 William Gravitt-El—who may have also used the names Joseph and Arthur—had been a leader at the MSTA Temple No. 10 in Newark since 1929, one of the largest and most influential temples in the country; see “Capsule News.” Unfortunately, I have not been able to locate evidence to support Evanzz’s claim that William belonged to the Detroit NOI temple in the early 1930s. This may possibly be in Elijah Muhammad’s full FBI file from the 1940s (100-HQ-6582), which I failed to obtain while researching this book. More research is needed on William’s life in order to clear up the numerous questions about it remaining in the literature. That this MSTA leader was indeed the father of the famous FOI captain was confirmed by Joseph (then Yusuf Shah) himself in Mannan, *A History*, 33–34.

169 Onwuachi, *Fahamme Temple*, 9.

170 “In Memoriam,” *New York Times*, October 28, 1954, 35.

171 Dannin (in *Black Pilgrimage*, 286n4) gives the date of Ezaldeen’s death as 1954, but Nash (in *Islam among*, 80) reports 1957, and since Nash did more extensive research on Ezaldeen’s community, I consider his date slightly more reliable.

172 Mubashshir, “A Fruitful Labor,” 88; Obituary for Charles Kirkman Bay [sic], *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 28, 1959, 18.

many of the leading non-NOI heads—including Suleiman, Drew Ali, Sheikh Daoud Faisal, Abdul Mohammed, and Frederick Turner-El—either had no children or no children who were being groomed to be accepted in their respective communities as successors. This, then, is another feature that distinguishes the NOI; Elijah Muhammad had several children, and the expectation that one of them—it was widely known that this was to be Wallace, Muhammad's seventh son—could serve as a legitimate successor may have contributed to the NOI's comparatively stronger cohesion in the 1950s.¹⁷³ But, in any event, non-NOI African American Islam was in no position to successfully compete with the NOI for followers in this new era of religious deregulation. It did not have the highly motivated leadership class, the promotional resources, the key social network ties, or the broadly appealing, folk-based black nationalist rhetoric, which were all key elements in the NOI's rise.

¹⁷³ *Bilalian News*, July 8, 1977, 20; NOI FBI file, Airtel, SAC, Chicago to Director, FBI, 8/12/1964, enclosure; NOI FBI file, Memorandum, SAC, Philadelphia to Director, FBI, 4/4/1958, 6–7.

New Transformations

Partly because of the failure of other black Muslim groups to convert large numbers of people, by early 1959 the NOI was, without question, the leading African American Islamic organization. However, at that point the African American Muslim religious market was still relatively small; despite its growth and popularity, the Nation had not yet expanded its core market—that of actual black Muslims, not just sympathizers—in a serious way, nor had it significantly transformed the broader African American community. But that was all about to change.

From mid-1959 to late 1963, the Nation of Islam achieved a level of prominence that had previously been almost unimaginable for any African American Islamic organization. The group and its head spokesmen were now being featured on national television, on radio stations across the country, and in major newspapers and magazines. Malcolm and Muhammad, furthermore, were making appearances at numerous street rallies, African American interfaith activities, and white-majority colleges, and thousands were flocking to the organization's weekly meetings. The NOI had become a true sensation, and this was starting to leave a real—an institutional—impact on the larger African American community.

But amidst all this attention, the Nation was changing. There was an emerging sense among many in the movement that, if they were truly going to be free, African Americans needed to take more assertive action, and potentially even use armed violence if it came to it. Ultimately, then, as the Nation began to foster an institutional change in African American culture through its growing popularity, the ways in which that culture was being influenced by Islam were now themselves transforming. By late 1963 it would be clear that the new, more assertive Islamic current—whose leader, it was increasingly apparent, was Malcolm X—was a very real force, one that was going to profoundly shape the black community.

Muslims Speak, a World Listens

The change began in the summer of 1959, when the Nation's ability to promote itself improved more dramatically than it ever had during the previous decade. That July, *The Hate that Hate Produced*, a five-part television documentary on

the NOI made by reporters Mike Wallace and Louis Lomax, aired on New York television. Most people who watched the film had never heard of the Nation before, and its existence shocked many whites. In the assessment of scholars and even of Malcolm X himself, the appearance of this documentary and the cultural impact it made was yet another major turning point for the movement.¹ After July it seemed as if every US American either knew or was soon going to know about the 'Black Muslims.' In August stories about the group appeared in the popular mainstream magazines *US News and World Report* and *Time*—with the latter using the intentionally shocking headline "The Black Supremacists"—further solidifying the Nation's notoriety.² By December, as scholars and journalists began scrambling to write essays and books about the Muslims and multiple government agencies began increasing their surveillance of the group,³ the number of publicly listed NOI temples had risen to over fifty (thirty numbered, at least twenty unnumbered).⁴ Just a year later, with converts springing up in virtually every American city of any significant size,⁵

1 X and Haley, *Autobiography*, 240–41; Lincoln, *Black Muslims*, 103.

2 *US News*: August 3, 1959, 51; *Time*: August 10, 1959, 24–25. The importance of the *Time* article is reflected in the fact that a number of newspapers around the country ran stories discussing the article; see, e.g., "Time Mag Calls Negro Sect 'The Black Supremacists,'" *Michigan Chronicle*, August 15, 1959, 7.

3 In early 1962, Hans Stefan Santesson, a mystery writer who was a longtime friend and defender of many New York Muslims, announced—in a press release that was quoted in the Nation's newspaper—that he had written a book about the NOI. Unfortunately, no copies have been located, and it is uncertain as to whether or not the book was actually printed. On the book, see "White Author Writes Book on Muhammad," *Muhammad Speaks*, February 1962, 4, 5. On Santesson, see Bowen, *HCTIUS*, 1:264.

4 For a brief overview of government surveillance of and attempts to suppress the NOI, see Claude A. Clegg, III, "Nation under Siege: Elijah Muhammad, the FBI, and Police-State Culture in Chicago," in *Police Brutality: An Anthology*, ed. Jill Nelson (New York: W.W. Norton, 2000), 102–31. For publicly listed NOI temples, see Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism*, 70, 343–45—it should be pointed out, though, that this number does not take into account all the small NOI communities known to have existed at the time.

5 Early issues of *Muhammad Speaks*, in fact, contain numerous letters to the editor that attest to the widespread interest in Islam, even in cities with no NOI temples. For the few people who wanted to convert but lived in such cities, Muhammad allowed them to "become registered by mail" (see Muhammad, *Dear Holy Apostle*, 58). Occasionally people converted while visiting cities with temples and sometimes FOI members were sent out to cities without temples to sell *Muhammad Speaks* and 'fish.' It seems that one of the latter two phenomena resulted in the conversion of Barry Allah X McCray, who was associated with the San Francisco temple, but after converting in 1958 was Seattle's only NOI Muslim until around 1961 when he successfully converted a few more African Americans (see Stanton H. Patty, "Black Muslims

active membership had shot up to probably somewhere between seven and ten thousand; people who were ‘registered’ but not active Muslims—in other words, individuals who had technically joined a temple but did not attend most of the group’s various weekly programs—most likely totaled around 50,000; unregistered believers, many of whom attended multiple NOI meetings but did not officially join, came to 25,000 or more; and there were certainly over 75,000 sympathizers.⁶ 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—less than ten per cent of what the NOI had achieved by the beginning of the 1960s. The NOI had thus become the first true African American Muslim mass movement.

Part of what had helped propel the Nation into the spotlight was the negative public backlash the group received after the release of the documentary. When asked by reporters to give their views on the Muslims, prominent members of the NAACP, including the famous civil rights attorney Thurgood Marshall and the organization’s executive director Roy Wilkins, denounced the NOI as a “hate” group full of “thugs.”⁷ The Anti-Defamation League’s civil rights division’s head, Arnold Forster, insisted that the documentary exaggerated the size of the movement, falsely giving the impression that it accurately

Push Tentacles Toward Seattle,” *Seattle Times*, May 16, 1961, 15; “Black Muslim Member Gives Forth with Torrent of Hate,” *Seattle Times*, May 16, 1961, 15).

- 6 In my opinion, Essien-Udom (in *Black Nationalism*, 71) provides the most reliable numbers for the NOI circa 1960 because he appears to have gone further than any other scholar at the time in trying to obtain highly accurate data on this issue. His numbers, unlike Lincoln’s, are not based solely on what the NOI publicly claimed, but rather on what anonymous leading members of the NOI told him, and after “checking and rechecking as carefully as possible.” As far as I am aware, the only publicly-available detailed temple membership data that spans the 1950s and 1960s is that of Temple No. 7 (see Mannan, *A History*, appendix and Marable, *Malcolm*, 196, 523n196), and this data seems to be consistent with the numbers of active members found by Essien-Udom and the number of total registered Muslims reported by Lincoln (in *Black Muslims*, 103). For other local and national temple size estimates from around this time, see Muhammad, *History of Masjid Muhammad*, 18; Patty, “Black Muslims Push”; Anderson, “Muslim Cites Goal”; Bruce Galphin, “If Muslims Fail in Atlanta, They Will Fail in All Dixie,” *Atlanta Constitution*, April 5, 1961, 1, 8; Peter Goldman, “Black Muslims Fail to Flourish Here,” *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, January 2, 1962, 1, 4; Ashmore, *Other Side of Jordan*, 50; Barnette and Linn, “Black Muslims”; Rheable M. Edwards, Laura B. Morris, and Robert M. Coard, *The Negro in Boston* ([Boston]: Action for Boston Community Development, [1961]), 86. For the difference between active and registered Muslims, see Marable, *Malcolm*, 124.
- 7 “‘Black Supremacy’ Cult in U.S.—How Much of a Threat?” *US News and World Report*, November 9, 1959, 112–14.

represented the true feelings among the black masses.⁸ Even average middle-class African Americans were speaking up to disassociate their communities from the Muslims. In Indianapolis, for example, letters reportedly sent from black residents to the city's police inspector emboldened him to try to dissuade Muslims from holding public mass meetings in August, arguing that the group would be violating the state's laws against inciting race hatred.⁹ In response to this wave of African American criticism, Malcolm X, in speeches to both Muslim audiences and to the press, boldly denied the various charges and dismissed black middle-class and civil rights leaders as 'Uncle Toms.'¹⁰

What were more difficult for the Nation to endure, however, were the criticisms from Muslims who were not in the NOI. Although the majority of the critics were immigrants, including several Ahmadi leaders,¹¹ sometimes the attacks came from African American Muslims. Sheikh Daoud, for instance, was critiquing Muhammad's anti-white views in the *New York Amsterdam News* as early as January 1958; Muhammad swiftly retorted by reprimanding the sheikh for "having friendship with the enemies of God."¹² For this exchange, Muhammad also presented a surprisingly honest argument, one that effectively confirms the NOI's presetting of African American folk knowledge as Islam. Muhammad admitted that the NOI did not teach orthodox Islam, arguing that African Americans needed "a thorough knowledge of 'Self' and their enemies before they can or will accept strict Islam." "Can a savage first be taught the science of good society before he is taught to wear clothes?" he asked, implying that the NOI taught ideas that were not foreign to African Americans, but rather were familiar enough that they were easy to understand.¹³ Had this argument been employed more often, Muhammad might have kept his critics at bay, although using it consistently would risk alienating the NOI members who were devoted to the notion that they were indeed following pure Islam. Muhammad, therefore, would rarely explicitly articulate this position, and as a result the attacks were not stopping. The jazz musician convert Talib

8 Marable, *Malcolm*, 161.

9 "Indianapolis Church Locks out Cultists," *Chicago Sun-Times* (final ed.), August 10, 1959, 11.

10 Marable, *Malcolm*, 162; Mannan, *A History*, 51–53.

11 See, e.g., "Thoughts on 'Muhammad,' Pro and Con," *Pittsburgh Courier*, August 18, 1956, A6; "Letters to the Editor," *Pittsburgh Courier*, November 30, 1957; Rahman Karim, "Local Muslim Group Decries Hastings Riot," *Michigan Chronicle*, July 20, 1957, 4; "Ahmadiyya Head Raps Muhammad," *Pittsburgh Courier*, September 22, 1962, 1, 4.

12 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.

13 Ibid.

Dawud and his wife Dakota Staton repeatedly blasted the NOI in interviews and essays,¹⁴ and in Philadelphia, Muslims from various organizations, including Sheik Nasir Ahmad's IMB, a local MSTA, and the Ahmadis, came together to publicly reject the Islam preached in the Nation's temples.¹⁵

International Muslim organizations that had American representatives, such as the Muslim World League and the Jami'at al-Islam Humanitarian Foundation, joined in the fray as well, making sure to let the world know that they did not agree with Muhammad's views.¹⁶ Occasionally, even those immigrant Muslims who had been close to the movement decided they could no longer defend the NOI's stance. New York's prominent immigrant and former ally of the NOI Dr. Shawarbi denounced Muhammad in the *Amsterdam News*,¹⁷ and the Palestinian Jamil Diab, a former Arabic teacher for the University of Islam, abandoned his position with the group and soon was convincing some NOI members to leave the Nation and join his new mosque in Chicago.¹⁸ It seems that Diab or another former NOI insider may have even been the person behind one of more well-known sets of Muslim critiques of the NOI when, in August 1959, the *New Crusader*, a black newspaper in Chicago, ran two front-page exposés on the group. The first, which appeared on August 1, was written by Talib Dawud and, although negative, it did not present new additional damning assertions. The second article, however, which appeared on August 15 and was written by an unknown individual using an Arabic name, ran with the sensational headline "White Man is God for Cult of Islam" and included not only a photograph of W.D. Fard that had never previously appeared in the press, but also claims about Fard being connected with the Nazis and clues that suggest the FBI or someone closely tied to the NOI had leaked its research on the man.¹⁹ Embarrassed and worried about the implications if these claims were to be accepted by the public, Muhammad sent out the Muslims in Chicago to purchase and then burn all available copies of the issue.²⁰

Over the next few years, Dawud and other Muslims would continue their public assaults on the legitimacy of the Nation, even sometimes attempting to

14 Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism*, 313–17; Dawud FBI file; Bill Lane, "Dakota Speaks out on Her Religious Beliefs," *Michigan Chronicle*, August 22, 1959, sect. 2, p. 5.

15 "Say Muhammad is Subversive; Teachings False," *Philadelphia Tribune*, August 27, 1960, 3.

16 "Islamic Experts Plan to Microscope Muslims," *Chicago Daily Defender*, July 15, 1963, 8, 11.

17 "Moslems Denounce US 'Muslims,'" *New York Amsterdam News*, October 22, 1960, 1.

18 Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism*, 318–19.

19 Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism*, 315; Evanzz, *Messenger*, 204–06; Memorandum, SAC, Chicago to Director, FBI, 8/19/1959, 1, Talib Dawud FBI file.

20 Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism*, 315–16.

connect with other critics of the group, such as James Baldwin and the UANM's James Lawson, who had broken ties with the NOI by 1959.²¹ For his efforts, however, Dawud received repeated lashings in the press from Malcolm, who accused Dawud and Dakota Staton of being motivated purely by the desire to boost their own career ambitions. Occasionally, black Sunni critics, like the Detroit MBUSA imam Dawud Ahmad, were even threatened with physical violence.²²

Within the Nation's temples, meanwhile, Muhammad and his ministers, in a fashion echoing Christian slaves' rejection of white Christians, began dismissing their non-NOI Muslim critics—particularly Arabs—as either white devils or friends of the enemy, and therefore as people who did not follow true Islam. Malcolm also took immigrant Muslims to task for focusing their proselytization efforts on whites while “knowing all the time that the same slave master was the very one who had kidnapped, robbed, enslaved, and lynched (murdered) their long-lost brothers.”²³ In addition, circulating were unique interpretations of orthodox Muslim beliefs that helped the Nation identify itself as a distinct and superior form of Islam. Members of the NOI were told, for instance, that one day, when black Muslims were finally restored to their proper position as the only real Muslims, they would enter the city of Mecca and tear off the cloth covering the Kaaba to reveal the black stone underneath.²⁴ Connected to this claim were several other unique assertions. One was that the cover was put on there by those white Muslim enemies who

21 On Dawud's attempt to connect with Hughes, see the March 1959 letter exchange between the two men in the Langston Hughes Papers, Yale University, JWJ MSS 26, Box 208, Folder 3532. Lawson, meanwhile, attended a few public events with Dawud in 1959 and 1960, apparently partly because Lawson's public relations firm, L&P Associates, worked for Dawud's group; see “Who Booed NAACP? Here Are both Sides,” *New York Amsterdam News*, November 14, 1959, 1, 35; James Booker, “Lawson Hits Press; Defends His Role,” *New York Amsterdam News*, November 21, 1959, 1, 31; Michael Clark, “Rise in Racial Extremism Worries Harlem Leaders,” *New York Times*, January 25, 1960, 1, 18.

22 “Negro Hate Cult Sued over Name,” *Detroit News*, June 9, 1962, 6B. Ahmad told the *Detroit News* that when he reported the threats to the local police department, the department indicated that it had no idea there were different types of African American Muslims—a response that reinforced for Ahmad the harm to the large Muslim community that was being done by the NOI.

23 Louis E. Lomax, *When the Word is Given ... A Report on Elijah Muhammad, Malcolm X, and the Black Muslim World* (Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1963), 164. In reality, immigrant Muslims were not very active in proselytizing to anyone, and a number actually focused their energies on winning over the NOI. For Muslim proselytization of whites during this period, see Bowen, *HCTIUS*, 1:290–350.

24 Nuri el Bedawi, “Black Muslims,” *Muslimnews International* (August 1964): 42.

desired to hide the knowledge of both the divine blackness of true Islam and of ‘the real Muhammad,’ who, unsurprisingly, the NOI identified at that time as Elijah Muhammad.²⁵ Related to this was the Nation’s teaching that Arabs secretly knew the truth of the black Muhammad and his black kingdom, and that the hajj pilgrimage served to symbolically represent the rising of both Muhammad and the black ‘foundation stone’ of that kingdom—in other words, the black Muslim community—so, the argument went, when the NOI was restored to its rightful place, the pilgrimage would no longer be necessary.²⁶

Despite these claims of superiority, however, the NOI heads privately desired the approval of orthodox Muslims, as they knew, just as Frederick Turner-El had known, it would enhance their group’s legitimacy as a religion. Nation leaders began making the acquaintances of prominent Muslim immigrants, often inviting them to public NOI events and staying in touch with them privately. Malcolm was especially fond of this practice, explaining in a late 1959 letter to Muhammad that he “strictly believe[d] it pays to *make friends* in all walks of life.”²⁷ The most notable of Malcolm’s orthodox Muslim acquaintances were an Iraqi Shi’i immigrant named Dr. Mohammad T. Mehdi, who served as the head of the California-based Arab Information Center, and an American-born daughter of Muslim immigrants, Aliya Hassen, who was a representative of the FIA.²⁸ International Muslim diplomats and heads of state were also courted, being invited to NOI gatherings and sent laudatory missives.²⁹

25 This teaching would not have been taught by Fard, for whom there is no record of him identifying Elijah Muhammad as the ‘real Muhammad.’ Fard, however, did have at least one non-orthodox teaching regarding the black stone: he claimed that the biblical Sampson “muscle[d] up the stone [...] It weighed 3,000lb”; see “Voodoo University”; “University of Islam.”

26 Muhammad, *Theology of Time*, 3; Elijah Muhammad, *The True History of Elijah Muhammad Messenger of Allah*, ed. Nasir Makr Hakim (Atlanta: M.E.M.P.S, 1997), 223–30. The ‘foundation stone’ reference was clearly a Masonry-influenced interpretation.

27 Emphasis in the original; letter, Malcolm X to Elijah Muhammad, November 3, 1959, Malcolm X folder, Aliya Hassen Papers, BHL.

28 John Andrew Morrow, “Malcolm X and Mohammad Mehdi: The Shi’a Connection?” *Journal of Shi’a Studies* 5, no. 1 (2012): 5–24; Rondell P. Collins with A. Peter Bailey, *Seventh Child: A Family Memoir of Malcolm X* (Secaucus, NJ: Birch Lane Press, 1998), 154; Malcolm X folder, Aliya Hassen Papers, BHL; “Mr. Muhammad Calls.” Hassen had been connected with the NOI as early as 1958, when she attended the group’s New York Unity Feast, but it was in 1959 that she won Malcolm’s friendship after she went to the press to denounce Talib Dawud, who had recently come out to attack the NOI, as a person who was not a legitimate Muslim authority.

29 See, e.g., “Mr. Muhammad Calls.”

The greatest payoff from these efforts came in early 1959 when, a year after the group had congratulated Egypt's president Gamal Abdel Nasser for hosting the Afro-Asian Solidarity Conference, Elijah Muhammad was invited by Nasser to visit Egypt and Mecca to perform the hajj.³⁰ Muhammad decided that before he would go on this important trip, his leading representative, Malcolm X, should be sent as an emissary in order to prepare the political field. Malcolm's three-week sojourn that July brought him into contact with both common folk and a number of African political and religious leaders in Egypt, the Sudan, Nigeria, Ghana, and Saudi Arabia. Interestingly, after the final leg of his journey—a tour of Saudi Arabia in which he encountered many welcoming pale-skinned Muslims—the Harlem minister announced to the *Pittsburgh Courier* his observation that “there is no color prejudice among Moslems,”³¹ harbingering his later famous spiritual transformation. In December, Muhammad, along with two of his sons, Herbert and Akbar, finally took the journey himself when the family made *umrah*, the Meccan pilgrimage done outside of the official hajj season.³²

More than anything else, the visits to Islam's holiest locations provided the Nation with the legitimacy it had been seeking. At 1960's Saviour's Day, Muhammad decreed that NOI temples would now be called ‘mosques,’ a move clearly designed to show off the Nation's supposed acceptance by the orthodox Muslim community.³³ Malcolm, for his part, put the NOI's view of the event into plain language: since, he argued, “those who are not orthodox do not go to Mecca,” the question of the NOI's orthodoxy was “a closed issue.”³⁴ In the following year, when a rank-and-file NOI couple visited Mecca, the Nation's newspaper announced confidently that the notion that the NOI was not accepted by orthodox Muslims was “a bare face, slave-making lie” invented by whites, adding that white people were not even allowed to enter the holy city—a claim Malcolm and Muhammad knew to be false, but were willing to let the masses believe since it suggested that the NOI's teachings were in line with Muslim orthodoxy.³⁵

30 Clegg, *Original Man*, 134–40.

31 Marable, *Malcolm*, 166.

32 Elijah Muhammad, “Elijah Muhammad's Trip to Mecca,” *Salaam* (July 1960): 30–33, MFSRC, reel 47. Although there has apparently been some question as to whether Muhammad was actually allowed in the holy city, Evanzz cites a report from army intelligence officers stationed in Jeddah who wrote that on December 24 Muhammad visited Mecca and Medina; see Evanzz, *Messenger*, 213.

33 Marable, *Malcolm*, 169.

34 Lincoln, *Black Muslims*, 223.

35 “Muhammad's Followers Go to Mecca and Cairo,” *Muhammad Speaks*, October–November

The timing of all this could not have been better, for just as the Nation began obtaining its emboldening religious and political bona fides, its leading minister began receiving numerous invitations to defend the NOI worldview in highly public forums. By this time, Muhammad regarded Malcolm as the Nation's national spokesman and permitted him to take part in these many events, several of which were in front of primarily white audiences, in order to bring the group more publicity. In 1960, Malcolm appeared in multiple radio debates; at a Harlem Freedom Rally; at Yale; and at an event for students from Harvard, Boston University, and MIT.³⁶ During the first half of 1961 he spoke in front of more elite college students—at Atlanta University, UC Berkeley, and at Harvard and Yale again—while also finding time to appear at multiple interfaith African American-focused events and, along with James Baldwin, was a guest on the NBC television program *Open Mind*.³⁷ In every public appearance, Malcolm was powerful and persuasive; his command of history and current events and his profound confidence in the truth of the Muslim nationalist perspective enabled him to mercilessly expose the pervasive legacy and presence of white supremacy. A tall man with an athletic build, the minister left an impression wherever he went, and interest in the Nation swelled exponentially. In June 1961, Muhammad returned to the Uline Arena, the site of his memorable rally in the spring of 1959. This year, however, attendance was almost doubled; 18,000 people were in the audience, 12,000 of which were said to be registered Muslims.³⁸ By that time, the Nation had even acquired one of its first celebrity converts: Etta James, whose song “At Last,” had recently cracked the top fifty on Billboard’s Hot 100.³⁹ Muhammad, now more confident than ever before, was repeatedly insisting that the US government should give African Americans their own land. In August he boldly stated to a large New York audience that Harlem itself should become a separate black state.⁴⁰

While all of this was going on, the NOI was working on other plans to increase its influence. One was to help promote and sell the first major book about the Nation, C. Eric Lincoln’s *The Black Muslims*, which was released in 1961

1961, 11. According to Malcolm X, Muhammad explicitly told him this claim; see Woody Klein, “Writings Give New Insight into Malcolm,” *New York World-Telegram and Sun*, February 24, 1965, 3.

36 Marable, *Malcolm*, 169–77.

37 Marable, *Malcolm*, 184–90.

38 Wilfred Little FBI file, Report, 5/18/1962, Detroit file 100–22472, 9.

39 Etta James and David Ritz, *Rage to Survive: The Etta James Story* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 1995), 110–12.

40 Wilfred Little FBI file, Report, 5/18/1962, Detroit file 100–22472, 10.

after Muhammad worked out an agreement with Lincoln's publisher to obtain copies of the book at a thirty-five percent discount with the agreement that he would have the NOI sell at least five thousand copies—a deal that helped give Lincoln's study a great deal of publicity in middle-class circles.⁴¹ More important for reaching lower-class people, however, were the NOI's own efforts in publishing. In the late 1950s, after picking up a few newspaper publishing skills from Los Angeles's *Herald Dispatch*, Malcolm had made a number of attempts to start an NOI newspaper.⁴² His final effort, *Mr. Muhammad Speaks*, which was released intermittently beginning in 1960, contained, in addition to numerous photographs of Muslims, several Muslim-authored essays promoting NOI teachings along with a few short news stories about NOI-related events and the oppression of Africans abroad.

Probably having seen the great potential in such a newspaper, and knowing the impact that his and Muhammad's syndicated columns had had for the *Nation*, in the fall of 1961 a group of Chicago Muslims led by Muhammad's son Herbert established a new periodical, called, simply, *Muhammad Speaks*, which built on Malcolm's previous efforts but was much more devoted to news articles about the conditions faced by African Americans, Native Americans, and Latinos, and regularly printed new essays by Muhammad.⁴³ In addition, despite their being excluded from the main leadership positions in the movement, female Muslims were encouraged to write articles for the paper as well, and a handful of women became regular contributors.⁴⁴ Initially, the newspaper was produced monthly and prospects for sales may not have been very high; but when the NOI soon began requiring all adult male members to sell a regular quota of the paper, sales shot through the roof. By July 1962, *Muhammad Speaks* had become a bi-monthly project and, according to an Associated Negro Press article that ran in the paper, it claimed to be selling more copies per issue—the NOI boasted that the previous issue had sold 400,000 copies—than any

41 NOI FBI file, [Memorandum?], SAC, Chicago to SAC, Atlanta, 5/9/1961.

42 Clegg, *Original Man*, 116; DeCaro, *On the Side*, 108; x and Haley, *Autobiography*, 239–40. Malcolm was not the only person attempting to start an NOI periodical at this time; see Lincoln, *Black Muslims*, 127–28. Interestingly, the jazz musician Sun Ra believed that the NOI's newspaper-making program was largely inspired by his printing and distributing black-consciousness leaflets in Chicago, which the Muslims had read; see Szwed, *Space is the Place*, 106.

43 John Woodford, "Falsehoods and Hypocrisy!" *Muhammad Speaks*, May 28, 1971, 16–17; Mannan, *A History*, 68; *Bilalian News*, June 30, 1978, 11 and July 17, 1981, 21.

44 For an overall assessment of women's contributions to *Muhammad Speaks*, see Jeffries, "Raising Her Voice."

other black newspaper in the country.⁴⁵ Although one former editor would later assert that at its peak the group was actually only selling 70,000 copies per issue, without doubt *Muhammad Speaks* was being read throughout the country, and whatever the true circulation numbers were, they were still very impressive for a religious movement that barely had 500 members a decade earlier.⁴⁶ With *Muhammad Speaks* sales continuing to grow over the next several years, particularly after becoming a weekly publication in early 1965 and Muhammad broadcasting a Sunday morning radio program on dozens of AM and FM stations throughout the country, the Nation's teachings were spreading widely and rapidly.⁴⁷

Another one of the NOI's successful outreach activities was its connecting with urban black youth. Muhammad's recommendation to Malcolm that he focus on bringing in young people was apparently widely adhered-to advice in the NOI of the early 1960s. Particularly in poor urban environments where children had available few extracurricular programs through which they could develop confidence, skills, and identity, Muslims were eager and able to fill this void.⁴⁸ Temples were regularly welcoming, especially on weekday afternoons, junior and senior high-aged youth who had either been invited there or who were visiting the Muslims out of their own curiosity.⁴⁹ Oftentimes these children had seen or heard about the Nation, or at least Malcolm X, and were attracted to the Muslims' fearlessness, articulateness, and sleek appearance. For ghetto boys, such traits were precisely the types of characteristics they desired, having often been indoctrinated in the 'streetcorner' culture, where outlaws like Stackolee and well-dressed pimps were heroes, and where verbal skill and having a symbolic 'name' were increasingly seen as measures of one's manliness. Although many had undoubtedly been influenced by Southern traditions through their families, friends, and churches, the Northern-born

45 "Newspapers Circulation Up Muhammad Speaks Leads," *Muhammad Speaks*, July 15, 1962, 10.

46 Edward E. Curtis, IV, *Black Muslim Religion in the Nation of Islam, 1960-1975* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 191n29.

47 Muhammad's radio broadcast stations were listed in most issues of *Muhammad Speaks*.

48 For an invaluable study of black youth who were influenced by the NOI in the early 1960s, see Hazel Wanner Howell, "Black Muslim Affiliation as Reflected in Attitudes and Behavior of Negro Adolescents with Its Effect on Policies and Administrative Procedures in Schools of Two Easter Cities, 1961-64" (PhD diss., Teachers College, Columbia University, 1966).

49 In Detroit, where the temple was located directly across from Central High School, the NOI converted the son of a prominent local NAACP member; see Albert J. Dunmore, "My Son Became a Muslim," *Michigan Chronicle*, June 23, 1962, 1, 2.

youth, much more than their migrant parents, were drawn to the ‘badman’—particularly as embodied by the race pride-having Shine—element of the NOI.⁵⁰

The incarcerated, of course, continued to be attracted to similar aspects of the NOI, and in fact the early 1960s proved to be the peak of the Nation’s influence in prisons.⁵¹ There are several factors that help account for this besides the convicts identifying with the NOI’s killing devil/badman identity. One was the growth of the NOI outside prison walls; as more and more people converted, there was simply a greater chance that some of the new Muslims would end up in prison, where they would then recruit others. This trend was exacerbated due to the incarceration rate of African Americans increasing in the 1960s, a product of the white response to black urbanization. Somewhat ironically, another contributing phenomenon was the trend of prison desegregation that had started occurring at that time. The hope in desegregation was that it would improve race relations and equality of treatment, but the reality was that it led to greater race tensions and outright fighting, all of which cultivated an increased desire for black solidarity.

However, one of the most important factors contributing to the Nation’s increased popularity behind bars was that the Muslim prisoners were bond-

50 See Elliot Liebow, *Tally’s Corner: A Study of Negro Streetcorner Men*, new ed. (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003); Roger D. Abrahams in *Deep Down in the Jungle ...* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing, 1970); *idem.*, “The Changing Concept of the Negro Hero,” in *The Golden Log*, ed. Mody C. Boatright (Denton, TX: University of North Texas Press, [1962] 2000), 119–34; Herbert Kohl, “Names, Graffiti, and Culture,” in *Rappin’ and Sytlin’ out: Communication in Urban Black America*, ed. Thomas Kochman (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1972), 109–33.

51 Much secondary literature dealing with Muslim prisoners has been produced. The following works, which serve as the foundation for the present discussion, are some of the more recent studies: Zoe Colley, “‘All America Is a Prison’: The Nation of Islam and the Politicization of African American Prisoners, 1955–1965,” *Journal of American Studies* 48, no. 3 (2014): 393–415; Adam Daniel Morrison, “Religious Legitimacy and the Nation of Islam: *In Re Ferguson* and Muslim Inmates’ Religious Rights in the 1950s and 1960s” (MA thesis, University of California Santa Barbara, 2013); Toussaint Losier, “Prison House of Nations: Police Violence and Mass Incarceration in the Long Course of Black Insurgency in Illinois, 1953–1987” (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2014); Susan Van Baalen, “From ‘Black Muslim’ to Global Islam: A Study of the Evolution of the Practice of Islam by Incarcerated Black Americans, 1957–2007” (DLS diss., Georgetown University, 2011); Hamid Reza Kusha, *Islam in American Prisons: Black Muslims’ Challenge to American Penology* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2009); Eric Cummins, *The Rise and Fall of California’s Radical Prison Movement* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994).

ing together to collectively demand more services and rights. As far back as the 1940s, Muslim prisoners had been working in concert, often using hunger strikes, to ensure that they would obtain various services, such as the offering of non-pork food products and the right to have Muslim chaplains, which they felt were owed to them because of the Constitutional protection of religious freedom. In the late 1950s, however, Muslims also began taking formal legal action. Muslim-written writs began flooding the administration offices of prisons across the country; at one point in mid-1963, there were almost 200 legal petitions and forty-two appeals filed by Muslims in just Washington, DC and Virginia's federal courts. In the vast majority of cases, no attorney had helped the Muslims with these court actions and very rarely did the NOI headquarters provide any legal support since Muhammad believed that the white legal system would never provide true justice. The Muslim prisoners were thus typically learning how to file their writs by going to their prisons' law libraries and researching the process themselves. Despite the fact that only a small percentage of these petitions avoided being thrown out, a few successfully led to the changing of laws at the state and even federal levels. The most notable of these was *Cooper v. Pate*, a Federal District Court case that served as the basis of the protection of the right to religious worship for Muslims across the country. Muslim prisoners were thus, like the NOI generally, becoming an increasingly influential element in black America.

The Rise of Assertive Muslim Militancy

As suggested by the prisoners' ignoring of Muhammad's disapproval of using white courts, as the movement grew new views on the purpose and activities of the NOI were gaining in popularity—and in general, these new perspectives were endorsing a more assertive role of the Nation vis-à-vis the white world. For many Muslims, the fact that they themselves, along with members of the civil rights movement, had successfully forced white Americans to change in certain ways had raised their expectations of what they could accomplish. These were people who were no longer going to be content waiting patiently for Fard's return in 1970, willing to fight only in clear situations of self-defense and without the use of guns—they wanted to take more significant action against the white system in the here and now. A similar view had already begun to make itself known outside of the Nation; in the 1950s several black self-defense groups had started arming themselves, and one NAACP leader, Robert F. Williams, became widely known for his encouraging the forming of black rifle clubs. Malcolm X, ever attuned to the black masses, seems to

have sensed and appreciated this rising current, and in the early 1960s he slowly became its main spokesman.

At the core of this new current, at least within the NOI, was a perspective of the world that increasingly saw violence as an inevitable reality—a phenomenon that had partly emerged as a side effect of the transformation of the Muslims' demographics. One of the realities of recruiting prisoners, ex-convicts, and street people was that these Muslims were much more likely than other converts to be comfortable with committing acts of violence. Sometimes ex-criminals even rose through ranks of the FOI and became the individuals most willing to use violence to enforce NOI rules. Captain Joseph Gravitt, a former street person and military veteran who was trained in martial arts, was perhaps the most notorious of these individuals, and it was under him that the New York FOI earned a reputation for being especially vicious. Gravitt developed an elite 'squad' of highly loyal FOI members who received special martial arts training and used that to physically punish NOI members who violated the Muslims' behavioral codes.⁵² In addition, sometimes Muslims—or at least nominal Muslims, as many of these individuals had stopped regularly attending to their temples—were also involved in more typical types of crimes. In 1954, for example, the Cincinnati FOI's first lieutenant, after moving to Alabama where he was attempting to convert people, ended up murdering a child before being shot to death by police.⁵³ Four years later, another Cincinnati Muslim was killed by police when he robbed a jewelry store and murdered a Newport policeman in a shootout that followed.⁵⁴ Between 1960 and January 1963, Muslims from Elizabeth and Newark, New Jersey were involved in several violent crimes as well, including multiple murders, and out in St. Louis a Muslim was accused of robbing a bank.⁵⁵ That these individual incidents reflected a general trend among NOI Muslims with criminal backgrounds is suggested by a 1964 study of fifty Muslim felons in California. The study found that Muslim convicts typically showed more antisocial tendencies than non-Muslim black felons, and after release from prison were more likely than their non-Muslim coun-

52 Mannan, *A History*, 60.

53 "Cops Kill Ala. Mohammedan Who Slew Boy, 4," *Jet*, December 2, 1954, 12; Frank Ernest Roper FBI file.

54 "Policeman, Bandit Are Killed in Duel on Newport Street," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, October 17, 1958, 1; "Patrolman, Bandit Killed in Gun Duel," *Post Times Star*, October 16, 1958, 1; "Policeman, Robber Die in Newport Gun Battle," *Louisville Courier-Journal*, October 17, 1958.

55 "The Black Muslims," *Daily Journal* (Elizabeth), April 21, 1964, 1; Howell, "Black Muslim Affiliation," 204–08; "Black Muslim Arrested in Bank Robbery," *Michigan Chronicle*, December 28, 1963, B8.

terparts to return to violent crime and become incarcerated again.⁵⁶ It seems, then, that Muslims who had been criminals, similar to the early NOI members in Detroit, lived less stable lives and had a much more negative and violent view of the world than the typical African American from the same social class.⁵⁷

However, far more important in the development of the Nation's vision of violence in the world was its own militant stance vis-à-vis the violent racist reality in which African Americans lived. From its inception, the NOI had cultivated among its members a militant attitude and a willingness to engage in unarmed physical fighting when they felt their rights were being violated, especially when it was the police doing the violating. During the 1940s, because so many members were incarcerated at the time, there were few incidents when this characteristic was made manifest. But in the following decades on several occasions conflicts between NOI members and authorities produced violent outcomes. In June 1950, for instance, a group of Detroit Muslims, one of whom was Malcolm x's brother Philbert, fought with police after the Muslims refused to move their double-parked car and the policemen ordered them out of the vehicle; two Muslims were shot in the incident.⁵⁸ Three months later, San Diego Muslims scuffled with police who entered their home while attempting to serve a warrant to another man reportedly living there.⁵⁹ The next year, six New York

56 Paul F.C. Mueller and Dorothy R. Coon, *Expected versus Observed Parole Outcomes of Fifty Black Muslims* (Sacramento: California Department of Corrections, 1964).

57 This finding strongly suggests that *in general* those who were predisposed to joining the NOI were typically those with abnormally negative and violent views of the world—a conclusion that not only supports Malcolm x's assessment of convict Muslims as “bottom-of-the-pile Negroes,” but also may help us understand better how movements like the NOI develop. Unfortunately, because both findings come from fairly small sample sizes and isolated communities, and because some members of the NOI, as we have seen, were less drawn by its doctrines than its appearance of discipline, I cannot in good conscience assert that this is indeed a trend throughout all regions and among all members in NOI history. Furthermore, it is still not at all clear how much these individuals' attitudes were correlated with their relative socio-economic status and family life in the homes in which they were raised, or if those attitudes simply reflected individual psychological/personality tendencies; I suspect that both factors played a role. Hopefully, additional little-known studies on pre-1975 NOI members were conducted and future researchers will discover them.

58 “Cultists Maul 2 Policemen; 2 Are Shot,” *Detroit Times*, June 16, 1950, [C13?]; “2 Policemen Hurt Battling 5 Hoodlums,” *Detroit Free Press*, June 16, 1950, 1; “Cultists Shot, Police Hurt in Street Battle,” *Detroit News*, June 16, 1950, 1, 2; “Cultists, Cops in Riot,” *Michigan Chronicle*, June 24, 1950, 1, 4.

59 “Suspects in Shooting Held for Nov. 2 Trial,” *San Diego Union*, September 28, 1950, B1; “Two Convicted after Resisting Police Officers,” *San Diego Union*, November 3, 1950, A28.

Muslims were arrested when they fought with police on a train, an incident that unfolded after the Muslims had assaulted the train conductor whom a female Muslim accused of having touched her bust.⁶⁰ In 1956, when a white Baltimore policeman attempted to arrest a Muslim for disorderly conduct after the Muslim called him a “vile name,” the Muslim resisted, but was ultimately still arrested.⁶¹ The following year saw several incidents. In February—two months before the Johnson Hinton police assault—two male Muslims were arrested when they confronted and fought with a policeman who demanded that two female Muslims move off a ‘whites only’ bench in an Alabama railroad station.⁶² Then in July, a melee broke out between thirty-six policemen and 200 black Detroiters who had gathered to listen to a Muslim soapbox orator; eight Muslims were charged with resisting arrest.⁶³ The early 1960s saw at least two battles with police when the latter entered temples without the permission of the Muslims; one in Monroe, Louisiana in March 1961 and another in Rochester, New York in January 1963.⁶⁴ With each of these incidents, the worldview of many Muslims understandably became increasingly militant.

Muslim youths, of course, were not immune to this development either. In September 1961 a group of teenage Muslims appeared at a junior high school in Newark in order to retaliate for an assault a black student had received at the hands of a Puerto Rican classmate. A large brawl ensued, ending only after the police arrived and a seventeen-year-old Muslim took an officer’s gun and pointed at him before being restrained.⁶⁵ Muslim students were also becoming more and more assertive of their Muslim identities in the classroom. Some, like Muslim prisoners, would insist that various practices of theirs were rights granted by the First Amendment, such as wearing fezzes indoors, not saluting the American flag, and having their teacher refer to them by their Muslim names.⁶⁶ Some were even modeling themselves after Malcolm and constantly

60 “Moslems Plan Appeals from Prison Terms,” *New York Amsterdam News*, April 21, 1951, 1, 32.

61 “Islamist ‘Struck Me’ Says Cop,” *Afro-American*, April 21, 1956, 12.

62 “Moslems Fight R.R. Station Bias, Jailed,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, March 9, 1957, 36.

63 “7 Jailed in Melee with Police,” *Detroit Free Press*, July 8, 1957, 1, 3; William C. Matney and Isaac Jones, “Major Riot Averted as Police, Religious Sect Stage Battle,” *Michigan Chronicle*, July 13, 1957, 1, 4; “Delay Exam of Eight Muslims,” *Michigan Chronicle*, July 20, 1957, 1.

64 “Police Chief Admits Raid on Muslims,” *Michigan Chronicle*, April 1, 1961, 1; Bill Claiborne, “Muslims Clash with Police; Pair Arrested,” *Democrat and Chronicle*, January 17, 1963, 13; “Bail for 7 Muslims to Be Considered,” *Democrat and Chronicle*, February 12, 1963; Cliff Smith, “5 Muslims Deny Assault,” *Rochester Times-Union*, May 16, 1963, 18.

65 Howell, “Black Muslim Affiliation,” 108–20; “Civic Groups Move to Bar New Clashes,” *Newark Evening News*, September 28, 1961, 1, 8.

66 Howell, “Black Muslim Affiliation,” 67–70, 94, 213; Kohl, “Names, Graffiti,” 119–20.

challenging white intellectual authority. There are reports, for instance, of one Newark Muslim student who would take classmates into their school's library and, after collecting books that referenced Islam, would strongly denounce the writing as biased and untrue; his followers subsequently defaced the material. For class assignments, he and other Muslims would either simply use these as legitimate opportunities to present knowledge learned from the NOI, or, when the assignment was calling for something unrelated, reinterpret the instructions in a way as to justify writing or speaking about NOI teachings. Some would even quiz teachers to test their knowledge of the historical, geographic, and astronomical facts that they had acquired in the temple.⁶⁷ For these types of actions, young Muslims gained a great deal of respect from their peers; at one junior high, in fact, Muslims were even elected as the class presidents for the seventh and eighth grades.⁶⁸ Somewhat surprisingly, though, for all their classroom disruptions, the Muslims also helped changed the perspectives of teachers, many of whom, at least in New Jersey, became supportive of legislation that required the teaching of more black history.⁶⁹

It was within this context—a context of years of formerly violent and currently violent men joining the NOI; Nation members constantly defending themselves both physically and intellectually from what they saw as an unjust white society; and a growing sense that justice could only be had by assertion, not just self-defense—that Malcolm X's rhetoric began to change. The transformation was subtle at first, since Muhammad himself was laying—or was thought to have laid—some of the foundation. In the 1950s, rumors had circulated in the temples that Muhammad was building an army of “ten thousand fighting men to lead the members of the NOI out of a state of bondage”; at least one minister was insisting that for every African American killed in contemporary America, the Muslims would kill one white; and Elijah's own son, Wallace, was telling Muslims that the time had come to start killing all whites and their African American sympathizers.⁷⁰ Furthermore, on at least one occasion in late 1960, Muhammad himself warned that the recent practice of forcing integration “will end in revolution and war,” although he believed that this could be avoided if African Americans were given a separate state.⁷¹

67 Howell, “Black Muslim Affiliation,” 61–65, 88–94, 169–84.

68 Howell, “Black Muslim Affiliation,” 216.

69 Howell, “Black Muslim Affiliation,” 283–91.

70 Pauline Williams FBI file, Report, 7/17/1958, Cincinnati file, 7; Anderson, “Sociological Analysis,” 55, 84–85; Wallace Muhammad FBI file, Report, 5/9/1957, Chicago file 100–32090, 4.

71 Elijah Muhammad, *The Genesis Years: Unpublished & Rare Writings of Elijah Muhammad*

But Malcolm's ideas reflected a thinking that was somewhat different. In his public speeches during the second half of 1961 and early 1962 he began showing a decreased commitment to religious exclusivity while at the same time a slightly favorable leaning towards political and even revolutionary perspectives. In a March 1962 debate with James Farmer, the head of the civil rights group Congress of Racial Equality, Malcolm brought up the independence recently attained by several African and Asian countries, pointing out that some could obtain this only through "exercis[ing] violence."⁷² He then linked this directly with the American situation; evoking imagery from the Book of Daniel, Malcolm asserted that

The same hand that has been writing on the wall in Africa and Asia is also writing on the wall right here in America. The same rebellion, the same impatience, the same anger that exists in the hearts of the dark people in Africa and Asia is existing in the hearts and minds of 20 million black people in this country who have been just as thoroughly colonized as the people in Africa and Asia.⁷³

Although he had not come out and directly advocated for revolution—in fact, ostensibly the main point of his speech was the promotion Muhammad's notion of a separate state—the implication was clear.

Malcolm's seemingly new perspective had not developed overnight. Back in the late 1950s, he occasionally mentioned political issues and appeared with non-Muslim black leaders at Harlem rallies. He had also met with Fidel Castro when the Cuban revolutionary was visiting New York in September 1960.⁷⁴ Castro's giving an audience to Malcolm, just a year after his being received by heads of state in the Middle East, no doubt had a great effect on the minister's self-image. So, when, in the fall of the next year, Malcolm was technically towing the NOI line with the assertion that the American race problem was "destined to create one of history's most tragic situations," it seemed that he had something in mind other than the coming of Fard's Mother Plane in

Messenger of Allah (1959–1962) (Maryland Heights, MO: Secretarius MEMPS Publications, 2005), 149.

72 Malcolm X and James Farmer, "Separation or Integration: A Debate," *Dialogue Magazine* 2, no. 3 (1962), reprinted in *Black Protest thought in the Twentieth Century*, 2nd ed., ed. August Meier, Elliott Rudwick, and Francis I. Broderick (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1971), 390.

73 *Ibid.*, 391.

74 See Rosemary Mealy, *Fidel & Malcolm X: Memories of a Meeting* (Melbourne: Ocean Press, 1993).

1970.⁷⁵ In another speech around that time, Malcolm asserted, again walking a fine line between orthodox Nation doctrine and revolutionary rhetoric, that “Just because a man doesn’t throw a punch doesn’t mean he can’t do so whenever he gets ready, so don’t play the Muslims and the [black] nationalists cheap.”⁷⁶ With such utterances, Malcolm had found a discourse that appealed to African Americans from a wide swath of political views, but especially young blacks. After his Howard University debate with civil rights activist Bayard Rustin—the one in which he used his “tragic situations” line—a black professor remarked that “Howard will never be the same. I feel a reluctance to take my class tomorrow.”⁷⁷

If Malcolm’s hesitancy to overtly call for revolution reflected a reluctance to use of non-self-defense violence, his mind would shift more firmly after April 27, 1962. That night, a violent battle broke out between Los Angeles police and local Muslims; the temple was raided and one officer and seven Muslims were hit by bullets. Of those shot, one of the Muslims was permanently paralyzed and another, Ronald Stokes, died after being shot from behind while he was surrendering by putting his hands over his head.⁷⁸ Malcolm, who was in New York at the time, became enraged when he learned of the news, and reportedly attempted to form an assassination squad of FOI members to go kill Los Angeles police officers.⁷⁹ However, Muhammad stepped in and ordered Malcolm not to take such measures. Frustrated, the minister began directing his energies into more vigorously pursuing this-worldly change. In May, after presiding over Stokes’ funeral, which had drawn two thousand people, against Muhammad’s wishes he participated with non-Muslim black leaders in two anti-police brutality rallies.⁸⁰ In June, he publicly glowed when he learned of the deaths of over a hundred whites in an airplane crash in Paris, and in July, Temple No. 7 organized numerous Harlem rallies, further solidifying Malcolm’s position as a black—and not necessarily a Muslim—leader.

The results of Malcolm and the Nation’s various new efforts were significant. Despite the group’s high turnover rate, active membership probably rose to around 10,000–15,000 by late 1962, which would be the movement’s peak

75 “Malcolm x, Rustin Debate Race Issue at Howard,” *Carolina Times*, November 11, 1961, 6B.

76 Marable, *Malcolm*, 204.

77 “Malcolm x, Rustin.”

78 Marable, *Malcolm*, 207.

79 Marable, *Malcolm*, 207–08.

80 “Negro Rally Demands End to Police ‘Brutality,’” *Los Angeles Times*, May 21, 1962; “Muslim Protest March Urged,” *Los Angeles Herald*, May 21, 1962.

that decade.⁸¹ Official numbered temples, meanwhile, were being organized at roughly the same relatively high pace that they had been in the mid-to-late 1950s, with at least fourteen new ones springing up between 1960 and early 1963,⁸² and the rate of growth for small, unnumbered 'baby temples' rapidly

81 See both the national and local temple estimates in the following sources: Clegg, *Original Man*, 114–15; Barboza, *American Jihad*, 103–04; Report, 12/22/1964, 9, Afro-Descendant Upliftment Society FBI file; Mannan, *A History*, appendix; Abilla, "A Study," 14; "Black Muslims Get Jersey Mosque Site," *New York Times*, June 1, 1963, 8; Edwin E. Calverley, "Negro Muslims in Hartford," *Muslim World* 55 (October 1965): 342; Bashir, *Top of the Clock*, 39; Patty, "Black Muslims Push"; Galphin, "If Muslims Fail"; Goldman, "Black Muslims Fail"; Barnette and Linn, "Black Muslims"; Anderson, "Sociological Analysis," 52; Joint Legislative Committee, *Activities of*, 38, 108. The peaking of the NOI in late 1962 is further suggested by the Detroit University of Islam yearly enrollment data, which shows that its high point was reached in 1962; see Shalaby and Chilcott, *Education*, 8.

82 Although we still lack a significant amount of data on the establishment dates of temples, as well as information on when precisely many already-established temples received their 'number,' we fortunately have a few pieces of information that can help us determine the pace of temple development with adequate precision. First of all, an August 1956 newspaper article based on multiple interviews with NOI leaders indicates that Temple No. 15 was officially established on January 1 that year (Harmon G. Perry, "Moslems Close Convention Today," *Atlanta Daily World*, August 26, 1956, 1, 2). We also have an official temple list put out by the NOI in December 1959, which was reprinted by Essien-Udom (in *Black Nationalism*, 343–45) and identifies thirty numbered temples. This reveals that sixteen numbered temples were established in the four-year time span between the two dates, or about four temples per year. For the post-1959 rate, a December 1961 *Muhammad Speaks* article tells us that Temple No. 35 was officially opened August 6, 1961 ("Wilmington Mosque Opens," *Muhammad Speaks*, December 1961, 10)—a piece of information that only tells us about when the temple received its numbers, since we know that the two temples that followed it, No. 36 and No. 37, had been active but probably unnumbered prior to that date (see *Muhammad Speaks*, November 18, 1966, 25 and Anderson, "Sociological Analysis," 10–11, 76–96)—and a May 1963 *New York Times* article indicates that Trenton's temple, although its temple number is not indicated, has 200 members and enough financial resources to purchase a building—all of which suggests that the group had already received its temple number, which was 44 ("Black Muslims Get Jersey Mosque Site," *New York Times*, June 1, 1963, 8; see also Muhammad, "History of Atlantic City"). Therefore, we know that at least fourteen temples were established in the roughly three-year span between 1960 and early 1963, which tells us that numbered temples had developed at only a slightly faster pace during this period, about four-point-three temples per year. It is possible that, considering the rapid growth of unnumbered temples (see the following note), that the requirements for starting a temple were much stricter during this period. In any case, as we will see, this impressive rate of growth would decrease dramatically after 1963.

increasing.⁸³ Many of these temples were set up or led by veteran ministers and proselytizers. In the late 1950s, for example, Jeremiah x Pugh Shabazz, who had trained under Malcolm, was put in charge of the NOI in the Deep South and organized numerous temples throughout the region before being sent to lead Philadelphia's Temple No. 12 in 1964.⁸⁴ Focusing on the western part of the Southern region was Lester x, a former minister of Temple No. 3 who had been imprisoned for draft evasion, while Isaiah Karriem, the Baltimore minister who had also been incarcerated in the 1940s, successfully organized and led numerous temples in the Carolinas, Georgia, New Jersey, and the Delaware-Maryland-Virginia area.⁸⁵ In the western part of the country, Ali Rasheed, a former popular college athlete, played a key role in the establishment of communities in nearly every medium to large size California city and seventeen total western states.⁸⁶ A few organizers were able to plant NOI seeds in completely disparate regions—most notable in this, besides Malcolm x, was Atlantic City's Minister Woodrow x, who helped set up temples in Florida, Boston, Trenton, and Washington, DC.⁸⁷ Others, meanwhile, focused on smaller areas; Philbert x—Malcolm's brother—set up and led a number of groups throughout Michigan; Yusuf Shakoor organized and recruited in several New Jersey cities; Frank O.X. Puryear helped lead groups throughout the eastern half of Virginia; and David Ali established Muslim communities in small cities in Illinois, Indiana, and southwestern Michigan.⁸⁸ There were, in addition, several

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- 83 Compare the December 1959 list of meeting places in Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism*, 343–45 with the fall 1961 list (which identifies seventy-nine public meeting places) in “Meeting Places for the Religion of Islam,” *Muhammad Speaks*, October–November 1961, 13. Note that the latter list is incomplete, as it leaves off some temples known to have existed at that time, such as the one in Gary.
- 84 See Pugh's FBI file as well as Bashir, *Top of the Clock*, 24, 114–15, 85; Galphin, “If Muslims Fail in Atlanta,” 1.
- 85 *Bilalian News*, December 28, 1979, 8; Uqdah, *History and Narrative*, 26; Isaiah Karriem, “Minister Isaiah: With Muhammad's Teachings I Win over My Foes,” *Muhammad Speaks*, November 18, 1966, 25; *Muhammad Speaks*, December 1961, 10.
- 86 *Bilalian News*, December 31, 1976, 13, 14.
- 87 Amir N. Muhammad and Abdur-Rahim (Alfred) Hasan, “History of Atlantic City Muslims Temple No. 10—Part 1,” *Muslim Journal*, October 8, 2010, 7 (thanks are due to Dr. Richlyn F. Goddard for providing me with a copy of this article).
- 88 “A Brief History of Muhammad's Mosque in Grand Rapids, Michigan,” Grand Rapids Public Library, Archives and Special Collections, Coll. 262, Box 5, Folder 13; and see mentions of Philbert's ministerial position at various temples in the following sources: *Muhammad Speaks*, June 4, 1965, 8; Evanzz, *Messenger*, 453–62; *Muhammad Speaks*, January 15, 1965, 15; *Muhammad Speaks*, July 12, 1974, 3; *Muhammad Speaks*, January 15, 1965, 15; Muslim,

other moderately prolific ministers who, after having gained a loyal following in one city were able to either set up or lead an additional temple or two in nearby cities, such as Lemuel x, minister of Temple No. 1, who on occasion led various Ohio groups; St. Louis's Minister Clyde x Rahaman who also was an early minister for the Kansas City and Dallas temples; Minister Abdul Karriem who led Connecticut's Temples 40 and 41; Minister Clayborn who headed the temples in both Dallas and Ft. Worth; Minister Theodore x Bost who led Ohio's Temples No. 18 and 37; and Minister Ishmael who ran several Florida temples.⁸⁹ Temples in major cities, meanwhile, such as those in Chicago, New York, and Philadelphia, had to open satellite branches, and several smaller groups across the country moved out of storefronts and apartments, purchasing whole buildings to better host their swelling ranks. It seems, then, as word about the NOI spread and the movement appealed to increasingly diverse audiences who were attracted to Malcolm's changing rhetoric, it became easier and easier for experienced and energetic ministers to establish new Muslim communities.⁹⁰

Throughout this period of tremendous change, Malcolm of course had been the face of the Nation in the media, but lest it be confused who the true NOI head was, in a July 1962 speech Muhammad came out with two sets of ideological points that reaffirmed his dominance as the real head of the movement while simultaneously appropriating some of the new themes Malcolm and others had been promoting. The manifestoes "What the Muslims Want" and "What the Muslims Believe," known collectively as "The Muslim Program,"⁹¹ would be,

"Profile of Newark's"; *Muslim Journal*, April 19, 1991, 8; *Bilalian News*, December 28, 1979, 8. Lansing's temple, which Philbert would eventually lead, appears to have been originally started by his brothers, Wilfred and Malcolm; see Wilfred Little FBI file, Report, 10/27/1955, Detroit file 100-22472, 8.

89 Uqdah, *History and Narrative*, 59; Evanzz, *Messenger*, 453-62; *Muhammad Speaks*, March 27, 1964, 14-15; *Muhammad Speaks*, July 23, 1965, 7; *Muhammad Speaks*, January 13, 1967, 8; Anderson, "Sociological Analysis," 50.

90 Although we still lack detailed biographical information on all of the local NOI heads from the period, it appears that even during this era ex-convicts still sometimes played important roles in leading temples. For instance, in 1961 Louisville's unnumbered temple was led by Minister Robert, who converted in a Connecticut prison under James Najji in 1951; see Najji, *Nation of Islam's*, 90-91, 128. Wilmington's Temple No. 35, which opened in 1961, was led during the early 1960s by Minister Carl x Harden, an ex-convict who had trained under Isaiah Karriem, also an ex-convict; see the following *Muhammad Speaks* issues: December 1961, 10; March 27, 1964, 14-15; September 25, 1964, 12; March 26, 1965, 21.

91 It is possible that this was modeled on items that were published by Garvey's UNIA. On

starting in 1963, printed in every issue of *Muhammad Speaks*, thus serving as the new ideological core of the NOI. The points are as follows:

What the Muslims Want

1. We want freedom. We want a full and complete freedom.
2. We want justice. Equal justice under the law. We want justice applied equally to all, regardless of creed or class or color.
3. We want equality of opportunity. We want equal membership in society with the best in civilized society.
4. We want our people in America whose parents or grandparents were descendants from slaves, to be allowed to establish a separate state or territory of their own—either on this continent or elsewhere. We believe that our former slave masters are obligated to provide such land and that the area must be fertile and minerally rich. We believe that our former slave masters are obligated to maintain and supply our needs in this separate territory for the next 20 to 25 years—until we are able to produce and supply our own needs.

Since we cannot get along with them in peace and equality, after giving them 400 years of our sweat and blood and receiving in return some of the worst treatment human beings have ever experienced, we believe our contributions to this land and the suffering forced upon us by white America, justifies our demand for complete separation in a state or territory of our own.

5. We want freedom for all Believers of Islam now held in federal prisons. We want freedom for all black men and women now under death sentence in innumerable prisons in the North as well as the South. We want every black man and woman to have the freedom to accept or reject being separated from the slave master's children and establish a land of their own.

We know that the above plan for the solution of the black and white conflict is the best and only answer to the problem between two people.

6. We want an immediate end to the police brutality and mob attacks against the so-called Negro throughout the United States. We believe that the Federal government should intercede to see that black men and women tried in white courts receive justice in accordance with the laws

September 2, 1922, the *Negro World* published a summary of a Garvey speech using the subheading "What the Negro Wants," and in a few early 1924 issues the newspaper printed a large advertisement for the UNIA, which used the heading "What We Believe."

of the land—or allow us to build a new nation for ourselves, dedicated to justice, freedom and liberty.

7. As long as we are not allowed to establish a state or territory of our own, we demand not only equal justice under the laws of the United States, but equal employment opportunities—NOW!

We do not believe that after 400 years of free or nearly free labor, sweat and blood, which has helped America become rich and powerful, so many thousands of black people should have to subsist on relief or charity or live in poor houses.

8. We want the government of the United States to exempt our people from ALL taxation as long as we are deprived of equal justice under the laws of the land.⁹²

9. We want equal education—but separate schools up to 16 for boys and 18 for girls on the condition that the girls be sent to women's colleges and universities. We want all black children educated, taught and trained by their own teachers. Under such schooling system we believe we will make a better nation of people. The United States government should provide, free, all necessary text books and equipment, schools and college buildings. The Muslim teachers shall be left free to teach and train their people in the way of righteousness, decency and self respect.

10. We believe that intermarriage or race mixing should be prohibited. We want the religion of Islam taught without hindrance or suppression.

What the Muslims Believe

1. We believe in the One God whose proper Name is Allah.

2. We believe in the Holy Qur'an and in the Scriptures of all the Prophets of God.

3. We believe in the truth of the Bible, but we believe that it has been tampered with and must be reinterpreted so that mankind will not be snared by the falsehoods that have been added to it.

4. We believe in Allah's Prophets and the Scriptures they brought to the people.

5. We believe in the resurrection of the dead—not in physical resurrection—but in mental resurrection. We believe that the so-called Negroes are most in need of mental resurrection; therefore they will be resurrected first. Furthermore, we believe we are the people of God's choice, as it has

92 This particular want was emphasized in the following months at major speeches and in the group's newspaper; see, e.g., *Muhammad Speaks*, September 15, 1962, 1, 3.

been written, that God would choose the rejected and the despised. We can find no other persons fitting this description in these last days more than the so-called Negroes in America. We believe in the resurrection of the righteous.

6. We believe in the judgment; we believe this first judgment will take place as God revealed, in America ...

7. We believe this is the time in history for the separation of the so-called Negroes and the so-called white Americans. We believe the black man should be freed in name as well as in fact. By this we mean that he should be freed from the names imposed upon him by his former slave masters. Names which identified him as being the slave master's slave. We believe that if we are free indeed, we should go in our own people's names—the black people of the Earth.

8. We believe in justice for all, whether in God or not; we believe as others, that we are due equal justice as human beings. We believe in equality—as a nation—of equals. We do not believe that we are equal with our slave masters in the status of 'freed slaves.'

We recognize and respect American citizens as independent peoples and we respect their laws which govern this nation.

9. We believe that the offer of integration is hypocritical and is made by those who are trying to deceive the black peoples into believing that their 400-year-old open enemies of freedom, justice and equality are, all of a sudden, their 'friends.' Furthermore, we believe that such deception is intended to prevent black people from realizing that the time in history has arrived for the separation from the whites of this nation.

If the white people are truthful about their professed friendship toward the so-called Negro, they can prove it by dividing up America with their slaves. We do not believe that America will ever be able to furnish enough jobs for her own millions of unemployed, in addition to jobs for the 20,000,000 black people as well.

10. We believe that we who declare ourselves to be righteous Muslims, should not participate in wars which take the lives of humans. We do not believe this nation should force us to take part in such wars, for we have nothing to gain from it unless America agrees to give us the necessary territory wherein we may have something to fight for.

11. We believe our women should be respected and protected as the women of other nationalities are respected and protected.

12. We believe that Allah (God) appeared in the Person of Master W. Fard Muhammad, July, 1930; the long-awaited 'Messiah' of the Christians and the 'Mahdi' of the Muslims.

We believe further and lastly that Allah is God and besides HIM there is no god and He will bring about a universal government of peace wherein we all can live in peace together.

In expressing a desire for both the end of police brutality and for the federal government to intercede for African Americans in courts, Muhammad was effectively taking credit for some of the very assertive-type issues for which Malcolm and others had been leading the fight. And in adding the mention of Fard, Muhammad was also tacitly reaffirming his position as head of the movement, since in the NOI it was unanimously agreed that Muhammad, and only Muhammad, was Fard's 'Messenger'—a title that Malcolm himself had reportedly been responsible for popularizing, along with the more elaborate 'The Honorable Elijah Muhammad.'⁹³ To reinforce this display of power, Muhammad had Malcolm cancel his college visits and *Muhammad Speaks* began giving the national spokesman less coverage. In further deference, Malcolm also reduced the number of interviews that he would take.

Muhammad, however, could not stop Malcolm's transformation, part of which now included a greater identification with the orthodox Muslim world. By late 1962, Malcolm had begun to occasionally refer to himself as 'Malik El Shabazz.'⁹⁴ It is not clear how and why exactly he had obtained this Arabized version of his name. A small number of NOI ministers were, at that time, given the Shabazz surname, but few were also given an Arabic first name, and no other NOI Muslim from that period is known to have used the article 'El' preceding Shabazz, which suggests Malcolm had been influenced by an Arabic speaker, perhaps a Sunni immigrant.⁹⁵ Still, Malcolm was by no means accepting of all orthodox Muslims—in October 1962 he even attacked in writing a Sudanese Muslim student who had criticized him in the press by saying the latter possessed a "colonial mentality" and "Westernized" mind—but it is possible that this version of Malcolm's name was privately given to him by one of the orthodox Muslims with whom he had been in touch, perhaps at Malcolm's request.⁹⁶ By late 1962, Malcolm had personal relationships with at least three

93 Marable, *Malcolm*, 171. As was pointed out in Chapter 6, Muhammad had been using the title of 'Messenger' since the 1930s.

94 Benjamin Karim, introduction to *The End of White World Supremacy: Four Speeches by Malcolm X*, by Malcolm X (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1971), 13.

95 I have, however, seen the name of 'Sey El Islam Shabazz,' who signed a lease for the Atlanta NOI's temple building in 1958; see NOI FBI file, [Memorandum?], SAC, Atlanta to Director, FBI, 4/3/1958.

96 Emily Jane O'Dell, "X Marks the Spot: Mapping Malcolm X's Encounters with the Sudan," *Journal of Africana Religions* 3, no. 1 (2015): 98–99.

orthodox Muslims in America: Dr. Mehdi; Aliya Hassen; and Ahmed Osman, a Sunni Sudanese student attending Dartmouth with whom Malcolm corresponded after the two debated at Temple No. 7 in 1962.⁹⁷ In his letters, Osman attempted to teach Malcolm about “true Islam” and sent him publications put out by the Islamic Centre in Geneva. He also, like many other Muslim students with whom Malcolm had been in touch, encouraged Malcolm to contact Dr. Shawarbi, whom Malcolm had only briefly met at a meeting in 1960.⁹⁸ Nevertheless, Malcolm did not identify as a Sunni at this time. In 1963 he insisted that even if Muslim immigrants—whom, he inaccurately claimed, had failed to convert even one hundred Americans to Islam—opened their mosques to white converts, the NOI would never do so.⁹⁹ If whites do embrace Islam, Malcolm said, “Let them start their own [Muslim group]. Too many whites have joined us [African Americans].”¹⁰⁰ Such views were not in line with the orthodox Muslim perspective.

As time went on, Malcolm began subtly making his way back into public appearances; even returning to colleges. But although he was still identifying African Americans with Africans and Muslims who had obtained political independence from Europeans, and was occasionally suggesting that African Americans should “truly revolt and separate themselves completely,”¹⁰¹ for the most part—even despite the Rochester temple being raided by police in January—Malcolm did not stray much from praising Muhammad and promoting the latter’s plan of separation. In September 1963, Muhammad rewarded Malcolm for his relative reticence and loyalty by naming him ‘national minister,’ a position no one had had since the early 1940s.¹⁰²

Surprisingly, it would be Muhammad’s son Akbar, not Malcolm, who would be that year’s first NOI Muslim to make a statement that was blatantly counter

97 DeCaro, *On the Side*, 202–03.

98 DeCaro, *On the Side*, 203; O’Dell, “x Marks the,” 101; Pater Goldman, *The Death and Life of Malcolm x* (New York, Harper & Row, 1973), 163.

99 Malcolm x, *Malcolm x: The Last Speeches*, ed. Bruce Perry (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1989), 43–47. Muhammad, as we have seen, accepted that white Shriners could call themselves ‘Muslim sons,’ but as for non-Shriners, he maintained that the “white race will never accept Islam.” According to Muhammad, “The white race, by nature, can’t be righteous. Islam was taught to them from Moses to Muhammad, but they were never able to live the life of a Muslim believer and can’t do it today.” See Muhammad, *Supreme Wisdom*, 30.

100 x, *End of White*, 79. On white American Muslims during this period, see Bowen, *HCTIUS*, 1:290–360.

101 x, *Malcolm x: The Last Speeches*, 25–26, 55; x, *End of White*, 68.

102 Marable, *Malcolm*, 258.

to the Nation's orthodoxy. At a press-covered July banquet held by Temple No. 7 for Akbar's return after a two-year term studying at al-Azhar, the son began by urging for interfaith black unity and calling for an end to the Muslim practice of ridiculing non-Muslim black leaders.¹⁰³ Keen observers may have noted that Akbar made no mention of a separate state in his entire speech, but the most shocking element of his discourse was the following statement:

I don't hate any man because of the color of his skin. I look at a man's heart, I watch his actions, and I make my conclusions on the basis of what he does, rather than how he looks.¹⁰⁴

Although most NOI ministers frequently used similar arguments—that their criticisms of whites were primarily based on the latter's history of devilish actions and not just their skin color—NOI orthodoxy asserted that pale skin itself was a sign of whites' inferiority and wickedness, and therefore one could indeed judge a person by their skin color. Still, when he concluded his speech, ending on yet another call for black unity, Akbar was met with wide applause; the audience's NOI ministers, who typically bristled at such integrationist language, were not about to violate NOI propriety by challenging the son of their leader. Malcolm, however, went beyond mere politeness; returning to center stage he admitted, "I am guilty! I am guilty of calling other negro leaders names. [...] But today we have heard a new teaching, and we are all going to abide by it."¹⁰⁵ In August, Malcolm acted on his new commitment when he quietly attended the March on Washington—one of the most famous events in the integrationist civil rights movement.¹⁰⁶

Akbar was not the only external influence on Malcolm in 1963, however. It was in that year that major riots had started breaking out for the first time since the 1940s, and those in Birmingham—the site of a massive civil rights effort—were the largest and were being covered in the national media. Malcolm was also becoming aware of direct action activities developing in the North, and during the spring and summer he was persuaded by various black activists to publicly state his support of picketers fighting employment discrimination in Philadelphia and New York.¹⁰⁷ By the fall, Malcolm had begun incorporating

103 Lomax, *When the Word*, 97–101.

104 Lomax, *When the Word*, 100.

105 Lomax, *When the Word*, 101.

106 Marable, *Malcolm*, 257–58.

107 Muhammad Ahmad, *We Will Return in the Whirlwind: Black Radical Organizations 1960–1975* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr, 2007), 27; Constance Ferguson, *An Unlikely Warrior: Her-*

the riots and activism into his message, saying that they were a sign that the black masses—the portion of the African American population that he claimed Muhammad was reaching—were “fed up in this country with the white man’s brutality.”¹⁰⁸ He continued,

Our people have lost all fear of the white man. They have ceased to waste their love on the white man, and they have ceased turning their nonviolent cheek to the violent white man. And because of this new fearless, more militant attitude on the part of our people, we see the increase of violence and bloodshed between the white oppressor and the oppressed [...] ¹⁰⁹

African Americans, Malcolm insisted, had changed; this was the era of the “new Negro,” and now

when black people in this country learn how to recognize the enemy, the common enemy, then the black people can get together in unity and harmony and do whatever is necessary to solve our own problems.¹¹⁰

Malcolm’s dream, it seems, was to channel the festering assertive and revolutionist impulses into the unified black coalition that he and Akbar had endorsed.

This vision was put into clear terms on November 10, when Malcolm was invited to Detroit by the militant Group on Advanced Leadership (GOAL) for the Northern Negro Grass Roots Leadership Conference.¹¹¹ His speech, which was recorded and later sold as a popular record under the title “Message to the Grass Roots,” delved right into this new perspective. After comparing the African American struggle with recent Asian and African revolutions to gain independence, the national minister made it very plain:

Brothers and sisters, [...] you don’t have a peaceful revolution. You don’t have a turn-the-other-cheek revolution. There’s no such thing as a nonviolent revolution. [...] Revolution is bloody, revolution is hostile, revolution

man Ferguson, The Evolution of a Black Nationalist Revolutionary (North Carolina: Ferguson-Swan Publications; Black Classics Press, 2011), 117, 119–21.

108 x, *Malcolm X: The Last Speeches*, 71.

109 x, *Malcolm X: The Last Speeches*, 61.

110 x, *End of White*, 98–99.

111 Jim Cleaver, “Malcolm X Blasts ‘Big Six,’” *Michigan Chronicle*, November 16, 1963, 1, 4.

knows no compromise, revolution overturns and destroys everything that gets in its way. [...] You need a revolution.¹¹²

Malcolm was no longer preaching NOI orthodoxy. Now, for the national minister, the Armageddon was not a distant, mysterious event brought on by some outside advanced flying ship or army. And non-Muslim African American leaders were no longer all 'Uncle Toms' either. The end of white supremacy was going to come when the black masses and black leaders united and tore down the walls of their American prison themselves. As one of the leading black figures in the public eye, Malcolm's taking of this position meant that he was legitimizing this rebellious perspective as a truly viable good in the African American cultural, religious, and political markets. For those Muslims who believed in Malcolm's leadership, Islam's millennialism was no longer built around the expectation of the return of a messiah. In this Islam, the messiah had returned in the form of Malcolm X, and all that was left to take place was the revolutionary redemptive war that had for so long been an underground expectation in black culture. The NOI had not just grown more influential since 1959—it had expanded the very notion of what being a Muslim meant. And it was this new ideological dimension that would so profoundly change the direction of African American Islamic history.

112 Malcolm X, *Malcolm X Speaks: Selected Speeches and Statements*, ed. George Breitman (New York: Grove Press, 1966), 9.

A Nation Divided, a Nation Changed

As a movement grows there are increasing chances that dissension, schisms, and innovative competitors will emerge to challenge the movement's authority and cohesiveness. This is exactly what happened, as we have seen, in the MSTA, the early NOI, and even the Ahmadi and Sunni communities, and in all of these cases it led to both the diversification and expansion of Islam's market among African Americans. But those communities were tiny compared to the NOI of the early 1960s. If a split were to occur in the Nation—a group whose influence was so big that it had started achieving institutional change—it had the potential to be of enormous historical importance. When, therefore, Malcolm X's aligning with the assertive militant current developed into an outright schism, it had major implications not only for the NOI, but also for the broader American culture. This chapter examines what exactly took place during the crucial period of late 1963 to early 1965 and how, prior to Malcolm X's assassination in February of the latter year, African American Islam came to be more fully associated with assertive and even revolutionary action.

Divisions

For most of the 1950s and early 1960s, the Fruit of Islam had largely kept dissension in the NOI under control—often through violence or the threat of violence. Assaults were sometimes committed against male members who violated the NOI's strict moral code, disagreed with ministers, or became what were called 'rebels,' 'renegades,' or 'hypocrites'—individuals who either went against NOI orthodoxy or left the movement completely.¹ Although outright murder seems to have been rare, in a Muhammad-authored section of the group's "Training Manual" document from the early 1960s, it is stated that a "law" of the NOI is that "all traitors, who betray their [Muslim] sisters or broth-

¹ Bashir, *Top of the Clock*, 68–70; Marable, *Malcolm*, 242–44; Najiy, *Nation of Islam's*, 112; "5 Muslims Get Year in Beating," *Atlanta Constitution*, April 3, 1962, 3; Barnette and Linn, "Black Muslims"; *Bilalian News*, May 27, 1977, 22; Wilfred Little FBI file, Report, 5/15/1964, Detroit file 100–22472, 6. Further evidence of the NOI's folk roots, the use of the term 'hypocrite' to describe someone who is not a committed follower of a religion has precedent in slave-era Christianity; see Alho, *Religion*, 106–07.

ers [will] be murdered without mercy.”² This type of thinking was apparently applied to non-NOI black Muslims as well; the head of the Detroit branch of the MBUSA, Dawud Ahmad, was reportedly threatened with death several times after the national organization, led by Talib Dawud, filed a lawsuit against Muhammad.³ Moreover, as has been mentioned, in some of the larger temples there were secret groups of enforcers within the FOI who were given advanced physical combat training in order to carry out planned assaults on the ‘hypocrites.’ New York’s ‘Honor Squad’ (also known as the ‘Elite Squad’ and ‘pipe squad’)—which was trained by both its war veteran/martial artist captain, Joseph Gravitt, and a Korean karate master who was granted membership in the mosque, Sensei Tarkahata—was the most notorious of these secret groups.⁴

Still, despite the possibility of violence in several temples, most who stopped attending NOI meetings, particularly if they had not been very active in their temple to begin with, did so without harassment.⁵ In fact, certain practices and beliefs were maintained by many Muslims despite these going against NOI orthodoxy. Often these were minor trends that had little overall impact and were easily addressed or ignored by the movement’s heads. Individuals, for example, sometimes indulged in drugs, liquor, and secular media; engaged in sexual intercourse outside of marriage; ate food in excess of their prescribed single meal for the day; and, among the women, enjoyed cosmetics, hair straighteners, and even jobs and higher education (which they were typically discouraged from having).⁶ Other breaches of expected behavior were more religion-based, as some Muslims maintained an interest in Southern conjure and related African traditions. At Temple No. 7, for example, one of its early ministers sent sick Muslims to a black, Arkansas-born ‘Arab doctor’ and, later, various members were reportedly visiting groups that were reviving traditional non-Muslim African religions (see Chapter 14).⁷ There was also

² A facsimile of this section is contained in Joint Legislative Committee, *Activities of*, 29.

³ “Negro Hate Cult Sued over Name,” *Detroit News*, June 9, 1962, 6B.

⁴ Mannan, *A History*, 60.

⁵ There are several testimonies of Muslims who left the NOI temple and they make no mention of retaliatory violence. See, e.g., “Becoming a Black Muslim,” 229–30 and Wakeel Allah’s books on the Five Percenters.

⁶ Barboza, *American Jihad*, 112; Curtis, *Black Muslim Religion*, 141, 169; Taylor, “As-Salaam,” 187–88; Currin, “Portrait of a Woman,” *passim*. With regards to fornication, apparently this was the most common ‘crime’ that led to Muslims being suspended from temples, and there may have been some attempts on the part of individual ministers to permit temporary marriages so that this issue could be avoided; see Marvin x, *Somethin’ Proper: The Life and Times of a North American African Poet* (Castro Valley, CA: Black Bird Press, 1998), 150.

⁷ Najjy, *Nation of Islam’s*, 96–97; Hucks, *Yoruba Traditions*, 76, 110–11; Carl M. Hunt, *Oyotunji*

a tendency for Muslims to want to give themselves and their children their own Arabic-Muslim names, a practice Muhammad expressly forbade, but was so common that ministers apparently pretended they did not know about it.⁸

Occasionally, however, a few more serious divergences surfaced, just as they had in the movement during the early 1930s. The core doctrine that whites were devils, for instance, was, after World War II, not always accepted by those who joined the Nation, and the desire to reject it sometimes led to serious rifts, and even a full-fledged schism in one temple.⁹ Sometimes loyalty to a prominent member caused a split when that member was expelled from the movement. It was this type of schism that appears to have occurred when in the early 1950s Malcolm X's brother Reginald was cast out of the NOI and began claiming to be the 'Messenger of Allah,' Allah Himself, and even greater than Allah.¹⁰

Upon leaving the temple, individuals usually either still considered themselves believers in the NOI's teachings or completely rejected Islam, but there are a few known cases of disillusioned former NOI members moving to the Middle East or winding up in immigrant-majority Sunni groups, particularly in immigrant-heavy cities like Detroit, Chicago, Philadelphia, New York, and Boston.¹¹ On rare occasions, ex-NOI members formed their own unique organizations. Abyssinia Hayse, after a brief stint in the Philadelphia NOI temple during the mid-1950s, seems to have had come under the influence of the MSTA and UNIA prior to establishing his National Muslim Improvement Association of America in the early 1960s.¹² Renaming himself Shaykh Muhammad Hassan

Village: The Yoruba Movement in America (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1979), 31.

- 8 Wakeel Allah, *In the Name of Allah: A History of Clarence 13X (Allah) and the Five Percenters*, 2 vols. (Atlanta: A Team Publishing, 2009), 1:12, 17; Muhammad, *Dear Holy Apostle*, 55; Hazziez, *Book of Muslim Names*, vi–viii; Whyte, "Christian Elements," 57–59; Sally Smith, "Black Muslim Movement Gives Emphasis to Pride, Black Identity among Members," *Waco Tribune-Herald*, December 14, 1974, 7A.
- 9 Currin, "Portrait of a Woman," 46–48; Report, 11/28/1951, Chicago file 25–20607, 2, Elijah Muhammad FBI file; Edward Curtis, "Islam in Black St. Louis: Strategies for Liberation in Two Local Religious Communities," *Gateway Heritage* (Spring 1997): 37.
- 10 Najji, *Nation of Islam's*, 61–65; X and Haley, *Autobiography*, 190.
- 11 X, *Diary of Malcolm X*, 73–74; Howell, *Old Islam*, 222–26; Report, 6/8/1962, Philadelphia, 3, Talib Dawud FBI file; Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism*, 318–19; Kamal H. Ali, "Muslim School Planning in the United States: An Analysis of Issues, Problems and Possible Approaches" (EdD diss., University of Massachusetts, 1981), 50; Abdul-Tawwab, "Doing for Self!" 58; Collins and Bailey, *Seventh Child*, 153–54.
- 12 Dennis Romero, "Malcolm X: The Film, the Memories," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, November 18,

and claiming to be a prophet, the fez-wearing Muslim leader won notoriety in September 1964 when he was accused of starting a riot in Philadelphia.¹³ In New York, meanwhile, Ernest x McGhee, who had been active in the Nation there and in Chicago for most of the 1950s, in 1958 would leave the NOI and within a decade he established his own Sunni group called the Hanafi Madh-Hab Center.¹⁴ Another New York Sunni community to emerge from the NOI, according to the prominent black activist Muhammad Ahmad (Max Stanford), was an organization known as the National Liberation Front.¹⁵ After leaving Temple No. 7 in 1963, the group's revolutionary black nationalist membership asked Malcolm to be their leader; later, these Sunnis reportedly served as the core of Malcolm's own Islamic group that would be formed in March 1964.

It appears that sometimes, as a result of the Nation's influence, a similar phenomenon also occurred in black Sunni communities. In 1962, three African American members of the IMA—Rajab Mahmud, Ishaq Abdush Shaheed, and Yahya Abdul-Kareem—had become disappointed with Sheikh Daoud's failure to do more African American-focused activism. Having also been inspired by Muhammad's insistence on black self-sufficiency and community strengthening, the group decided that it would meet separately for most of the required daily prayers and attempt to spread Islam to lower-class African Americans.¹⁶ Although the members continued to attend the IMA for the most important Sunni prayer, Friday's midday congregational *Jum'ah*, there was a growing sense of a unique identity in the break-off community. By mid-1963, dozens of members of the IMA, which by then included former NOI Muslims, ex-convicts, and former gang members,¹⁷ had taken a pledge of loyalty to the group, committing themselves to adhere to Islamic law (*shariah*) and to devoutly follow the group's leaders (*imams*).

Although it was primarily Sunni in doctrine, the break-off community seems to have mixed in certain NOI practices and attitudes. Like many NOI Muslims,

1992; Thomas Ferrick, Jr. and Doreen Carvajal, "The 25-Year-Old Scars of a Riot," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 27, 1989.

13 For press coverage of Hassan's role in the riot and the subsequent trial, see the *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin* for the following dates in 1964 through early 1965: September 15 and 16; November 9, 10, 11, and 13; January 9, 11, 12, 13, and 15.

14 Paul Delaney, "Rival Leader Tells of Efforts to Convert Black Muslims," *New York Times*, January 31, 1973, 10; Mannan, *A History*, 33, appendix.

15 Ahmad, *We Will Return*, 27.

16 The present discussion relies primarily on Curtis, "Urban Muslims"; see Chapter 15's discussion of the DAR, which cites additional sources.

17 Ali, "Muslim School Planning," 50; Curtis, "Urban Muslims," 58.

for example, these Sunnis shaved their heads (which earned them the nickname ‘Baldies’) and they readily fought with non-Sunni Muslims who tried to come into the Brownsville area of Brooklyn.¹⁸ Some members would also emphasize African Americans’ enslavement by the ‘devil’; although they would insist this devil was not necessarily white people, they made it clear that much of the white-dominated mainstream American society was doing the devil’s work.¹⁹ At the same time, like the Muslims of the National Liberation Front—with whom they may have been connected—they claimed ties to Malcolm X, later telling people that they were his bodyguards and that they had also helped start Malcolm’s new group.²⁰ There were, however, disagreements about moral behavior in the community, particularly when it came to smoking marijuana, which is not explicitly forbidden in the Qur’an, but to which many people interpret other Qur’anic injunctions against intoxicants as applying. Because of these and other differences of opinions, in 1965 the group fell apart and members returned to the IMA, although certain individuals involved in it would soon become more determined to develop a strong, African American-focused movement and, within a few years, would reestablish the group as a national Sunni community called the Dar-ul-Islam (see Chapter 15).

The single most important division to develop during this period, however, was that between Malcolm X and the NOI. The ostensible initial cause of the split was a comment made by Malcolm to the press in late 1963. After President Kennedy was murdered on November 22, Muhammad had instructed the Muslims not to mention the incident publicly. The Nation had recently been receiving a significant amount of negative press in popular periodicals like *Time*, *US News and World Report*, and the *Saturday Evening Post*—a phenomenon that was later revealed to have been partly influenced by the FBI, which was attempting to stir up public resentment towards and internal tensions within the movement.²¹ Muhammad’s instructions about the response to Kennedy’s death were given in order to avoid additional negative media attention and the government repression that such attention might invite. But on

18 Dannin, *Black Pilgrimage*, 152–54. On NOI head shaving, see Najiy, *Nation of Islam’s*, 50; Bashir, *Top of the Clock*, 116; Ashmore, *Other Side of Jordan*, 46.

19 See *Al-Jihadul Akbar* (August 1974), from Amistad Research Center, Tulane University.

20 Dannin, *Black Pilgrimage*, 155.

21 Tracy Janine Washington, “Magazine Coverage of the Black Muslim Movement 1959–1978” (MS thesis, Ohio University, 1988), 38–62; Michael K. Woolson, “The Media and Malcolm: An Examination of Coverage of Malcolm X and the Nation of Islam by the *New York Times*, *Newsweek*, *Time Magazine* and *US News and World Report*” (MS thesis, Ohio University, 1992), *passim*; COINTELPRO file, Airtel, SAC, Chicago to Director, FBI, 4/22/1968, 2.

the first day of December, after a speech in which he predicted that America would soon see a “*real* black revolution [like the one] that already swept white supremacy out of Africa, Asia, and is sweeping it out of Latin America,”²² when a reporter asked him about his thoughts on the assassination, Malcolm famously replied that it was an example of “the chickens coming home to roost.” “Being an old farm boy myself,” he added sardonically, “chickens coming home to roost never did make me sad; they’ve always made me glad.”²³ The next day, the quote ran in the *New York Times* and Malcolm was flown out to Chicago where Muhammad personally suspended the national minister for ninety days; Malcolm was not to go into any NOI establishment or meeting nor talk to the press.

Although the “chickens coming home to roost” comment was the publicly-known trigger, other factors were contributing to the growing chasm between Malcolm and Muhammad, and these help explain the ensuing events. Malcolm, first of all, had recently obtained reliable information concerning the fact that Muhammad had had several extramarital affairs with his personal secretaries, and in a number of cases these affairs had produced children that Muhammad did not claim and often failed to provide for. Malcolm had heard rumors about the affairs since the 1950s, but it was only in early 1963 that these were confirmed for him, leaving Malcolm disappointed and disillusioned with the man in whom he had entrusted his life. Despite his feelings, however, Malcolm was not about to abandon the Nation over this issue—nevertheless, his actions in response to the revelation would put him in a difficult situation. In October, when Malcolm heard from Wallace that the affairs were getting worse, he attempted to talk to other ministers about how to counter potential attacks against the Messenger. This effort would backfire, as it was apparently used by some Muslims to, in private conversations, paint Malcolm as wanting to take down Muhammad and to install himself as head of the Nation.²⁴ Leading members in the movement, but particularly the national secretary John Ali and Muhammad’s son-in-law, FOI Supreme Captain Raymond Sharrieff, reportedly had long been jealous of the fame Malcolm had achieved, so it is not surprising that, almost immediately once his suspension began, rumors were spread in the Nation about Malcolm’s disloyalty. Malcolm’s own inability to stay completely away from NOI meeting places and the press only worsened his image among suspicious Muslims. As a result, his position and prospects in the Nation

22 x, *End of White*, 138–39, emphasis in the original.

23 “Malcolm x Scores US and Kennedy,” *New York Times*, December 2, 1963, 21.

24 Marable, *Malcolm*, 265–66.

rapidly declined. In mid-December Muhammad decided that Malcolm could no longer be Temple No. 7's minister and in early January he stripped Malcolm of the national minister title as well.²⁵

Dejected and seeking an escape, Malcolm flew to Miami to spend time with Cassius Clay, the rising black star of the boxing world who had shown great interest in the NOI.²⁶ But over the next several weeks, despite Malcolm writing letters to Muhammad asking for an end to the suspension, his chances of being reinstated were not looking any better. After Clay won a major upset against Sonny Liston on February 25, and then shocked the world by announcing his membership in the Nation in the post-fight interview, Malcolm hoped to accompany Clay on a victory march to the following day's Saviour's Day meeting. But the NOI headquarters did not allow Malcolm to attend, and it was instead the rest of the NOI leadership that was able to showcase Clay as their special Muslim at the convention.²⁷ In early March, Muhammad promised the fighter that if he remained loyal to him (implying that this was to be as opposed to following Malcolm), he would receive an 'original' name—Clay agreed, perhaps worried of violent retaliation if he did not, and he would be known from then on as Muhammad Ali. Malcolm's position, meanwhile, grew only worse; on March 5, Muhammad sent a letter to Malcolm indicating that the former national minister was now suspended indefinitely.

Faced with the growing likelihood that he had no future with the Nation, on March 8, Malcolm met with *New York Times* reporter M.S. Handler to officially announce his resignation from the NOI. Malcolm's public explanation for the departure, which appeared on the front page of the next day's *Times*, was founded on two main points.²⁸ One was that the relationship between Malcolm and Muhammad had been severely damaged by Muhammad's envious family members who possessed great influence over the Messenger. The other was that the NOI had "gone as far as it can" in terms of winning freedom, justice, and equality for African Americans. The subtle rise in the previous few years in the African American desire for more assertive action had profoundly impacted Malcolm. He felt that African Americans were dissatisfied with the progress of the existing civil rights activities and that the masses were showing an inclination towards a true revolutionary black nationalist movement.

25 Najiy, *Nation of Islam's*, 181–84; Marable, *Malcolm*, 278–79.

26 On Malcolm's relationship with Cassius Clay/Muhammad Ali, see Randy Roberts and John Matthew Smith, *Blood Brothers: The Fatal Friendship between Muhammad Ali and Malcolm X* (New York: Basic Books, 2016).

27 Marable, *Malcolm*, 287.

28 M.S. Handler, "Malcolm X Splits with Muhammad," *New York Times*, March 9, 1964, 1, 42.

The time was ripe, then, to start a new “black nationalist party” that focused on political efforts, active self-defense, and “real revolution”—one that would involve “bloodshed.” Malcolm further revealed that Muhammad had previously prevented the former minister from joining the civil rights current despite his many opportunities to do so. Now not only was he going to “cooperate in local civil rights actions,” he would lead a campaign to use the “power of the ballot in the North” and obtain “good education, housing, and jobs.” As for religion, Malcolm wanted to clarify that this would not be his domain:

I remain a Muslim, but the main emphasis of the new movement will be black nationalism as a political concept and form of social action against the oppressors. [...] I want it clearly understood that my advice to all Muslims is that they stay in the Nation of Islam. [...] It is not my desire to encourage any of them to follow me.

In fact, Malcolm pledged his allegiance to Muhammad: “I have reached the conclusion that I can best spread Mr. Muhammad’s message by staying out of the Nation of Islam.”

The statement was more political than sincere. Malcolm knew better than most that the FOI was very capable of doling out retributive violence, and to invite that violence by coming out as a total ‘hypocrite’ would have been foolish. The day after making his announcement, in fact, Malcolm met with several Muslims who had followed him out of the Nation, forming at that meeting a new religious organization called the Muslim Mosque, Inc. (MMI). On March 12, Malcolm announced at a press conference the creation of the group and that it would have a mosque at his temporary headquarters at the Theresa Hotel in Harlem.²⁹ Somewhat surprisingly, however, this generated only moderate interest; on March 26, when Malcolm led an ‘open’ MMI meeting, a mere seventy-five or so people attended.³⁰

The MMI’s failure to be more popular may have stemmed partly from the fact that its religious identity was ill-defined. Malcolm was privately Sunni-leaning, but since his Muslim followers had left the NOI not out of a rejection of its worldview but out of loyalty to Malcolm and disgust with other leaders, the popular MMI ideology was still fundamentally that of the Nation. It seems, though, that Malcolm had a plan for the group’s religious direction. Within

29 M.S. Handler, “Malcolm X Sees Rise in Violence,” *New York Times*, March 13, 1964, 20.

30 Marable, *Malcolm*, 321. The open meeting was followed by a closed meeting for registered Muslims only, which came to about forty-five.

days of his break from Muhammad, Malcolm traveled to Manhattan to visit Dr. Shawarbi, the influential Muslim he had been advised to contact, and told the professor point blank, “I want to learn about the real Islam.”³¹ For the next several weeks, Shawarbi tutored Malcolm on the Qur’an, emphasizing its stress on education, democracy, and colorblindness. Seeing that Malcolm was emotionally moved by the book, Shawarbi also encouraged him to go on that year’s hajj, which was to take place in late April. Malcolm’s sister Ella, who had already embraced Sunni Islam in Boston, had been planning to go herself that year, but she suggested that Malcolm travel in her place, and provided him the funds to do so.

Before departing, Malcolm trudged through an eventful month filled with numerous speeches and brief encounters with a variety of famous civil rights figures, including both Martin Luther King, Jr. and Willie Mae Mallory, an associate of the exiled self-defense-promoting activist Robert F. Williams. Malcolm’s rhetoric during this month embraced a similarly wide range of philosophies. In April, he publicly demanded that African Americans be granted their “human rights,” not civil rights³²—an argument, Shawarbi may have informed Malcolm, that the Moorish Grand Sheik Frederick Turner-El had been making since the 1940s, as had other black civil rights leaders.³³ Back at his March 12 press conference, Malcolm had also made a small but important shift in terminology to reinforce his desire to ally with civil rights leaders when he referred to African Americans as “American Negroes,” not “so-called Negroes” as was the NOI convention.³⁴ But Malcolm was also not about to give up his willingness to endorse “real revolution.” In his March 12 speech, he had had visions of violence—“There will be more violence than ever this year. [...] The Negroes at the mass level are ready to act”—and, although he had urged African Americans to be peaceful and law-abiding, Malcolm advised that they obtain weapons and establish rifle clubs to defend, in times of emergency, their lives and property; even the MMI members were armed by that point.³⁵ At the same

31 Goldman, *Death and Life*, 164.

32 Marable, *Malcolm*, 305. On Malcolm x’s use of human rights discourse, see Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 128–57.

33 The most obvious supporters of the ‘human rights’ argument among the civil rights groups was perhaps the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights.

34 Handler, “Malcolm x Sees.”

35 Handler, “Malcolm x Sees”; Najji, *Nation of Islam’s*, 188; Mannan, *A History*, 78. Mannan also reports that Malcolm had persuaded the Korean karate master Sensei Tarkahata to join his group.

time, Malcolm further separated himself from the NOI by backing off somewhat from his commitment to the Nation's doctrine of acquiring a separate state.³⁶

On April 3, Malcolm returned to Detroit to speak at a GOAL rally, and would deliver what would become another one of his well-known speeches, "The Ballot or the Bullet."³⁷ Here, after criticizing both Republicans and the Democrats, Malcolm solidified his commitment to start using political means, though he qualified this by declaring that if African Americans were still being stymied after organizing politically, they were to turn to revolution. Malcolm's use of the famous phrase of this speech, "the ballot or the bullet," suggests that his views about combining political action with militancy had been influenced by an article that had appeared in *Muhammad Speaks* back in September 1962. The two-page spread was given the headline "Fayette Fought for Freedom with Bullets and Ballots," and underneath this was a large sketch depicting an African American man holding a smoking rifle while peering out of the side of an open window. The story, which had been written by the newspaper's editor and Malcolm loyalist Sylvester Leaks, describes events in Fayette County, Tennessee, where African Americans used guns to defend themselves from white assault while at the same time organizing to register to vote in order to bring justice to the racist political landscape on which they were living. Due to their activism, many local blacks had been evicted from their homes, but ministers, local black leaders, and national civil rights groups had come to their aid and were still supporting their cause. The article concludes by stating that the community's goal was to soon register to vote a significant proportion of the county's African Americans, who outnumbered local whites nearly three to one. The story seems to have encapsulated much of what Malcolm had envisioned for the transformation of African American political activity, and Malcolm himself would later be famously photographed in a pose very similar to the drawing that accompanied the article.

After Malcolm finished his speech, he fielded questions from reporters, one of whom asked him if he would denounce Elijah Muhammad's "spiritual pre-eminence." Malcolm was evasive, saying only, "A man's religion is between himself and his God."³⁸ He was, it seems, not yet ready to reveal that he was increasingly identifying with Sunni Islam and planning on taking the hajj. But this information would soon become news. On April 13, Malcolm boarded a

36 x, *Malcolm x Speaks*, 18–22.

37 A transcription is in x, *Malcolm x Speaks*, 23–44.

38 Ray Davis, "A Question Malcolm x Failed to Answer," *Michigan Chronicle*, April 25, 1964, B11.

plane to Egypt, from where he would set off on the pilgrimage that officially commenced April 20, and Malcolm made sure that the press would be well-informed of this journey.³⁹

Significantly, Malcolm spent much of the trip in the accompaniment of ‘white’ Arabs who served as his guides and hosts, and it was ostensibly through this interaction that he arrived at his next dramatic public transformation. In an April 25 letter to the *Times* journalist M.S. Handler, which was quoted from in a front page article on May 8, Malcolm explained that during the pilgrimage he had received great hospitality from whites, yet “I didn’t see them as ‘white’ men.”⁴⁰ Belief in the Oneness of Allah, he said, “had automatically removed the ‘white’ from their minds, which automatically changed their attitude and behavior toward people of other colors.” To this he added, turning once again to the Book of Daniel,

If white Americans would accept the religion of Islam, if they would accept the Oneness of God (Allah), then they could also sincerely accept the Oneness of Man, and they would cease to measure others always in terms of their ‘differences in color.’ [...] I do believe that whites of the younger generation, in the colleges and universities, through their own young, less hampered intellect, will see the ‘handwriting on the wall’ and turn for spiritual salvation to the religion of Islam and force the older generation of American whites to turn with them.

In these words, Malcolm was indeed denouncing Muhammad’s ‘spiritual pre-eminence.’ He was now publicly identifying himself as a person who had embraced ‘colorblind’ orthodox Islam. From then on, Sunni Muslims began showing their respect for Malcolm by using for him the title reserved for orthodox Muslims who have performed the hajj, ‘El-Hajj.’ Malcolm x had become El-Hajj Malik el-Shabazz.

After making stops in Egypt, Nigeria, Ghana, and Lebanon—and meeting with members of the famous Muslim Brotherhood in the latter country—Malcolm returned to the US on May 21 and began putting his movement on solid footing. One aspect of his new project was shaping the direction of the MMI. The Muslim group had started meeting regularly for prayers and other

39 There are two valuable books concerning Malcolm’s trips to the Middle East and Africa in 1964; Malcolm’s published diary—*Diary of Malcolm x*—and Marika Sherwood’s *Malcolm x Visits Abroad (April 1964—February 1965)* (Hollywood: Tsehai, 2011).

40 M.S. Handler, “Malcolm x Please by Whites’ Attitude on Trip to Mecca,” *New York Times*, May 8, 1964, 1, 38.

activities, and by June it had grown to around one hundred members, most of which had formerly been in the Nation, some having quit years before.⁴¹ The lingering NOI influence on the MMI was clear; most of the male members still wore suits with red bow ties; the men and women's sections of the group were officially referred to as the FOI and MGT, respectively; and, despite Malcolm's recent statement, the question of whether whites should be allowed to join was still an extremely controversial issue.⁴² If Malcolm was going to transform this into a Sunni movement, he had to be diplomatic but firm. At a May 28 meeting, which was attended by about 200 people, when someone asked Malcolm if he had seen Fard while he was in Mecca, Malcolm replied that the MMI should no longer deal with "old notions"; henceforth they were only going to be dealing with "reality."⁴³ In early June, he traveled to Philadelphia to start a local MMI branch, and by the end of the month another branch had developed in Boston.⁴⁴

Malcolm was now moving further away from Muhammad's program than he had ever been before. Because in his opinion what African Americans truly desired was respect as humans,⁴⁵ Malcolm had developed a plan—similar, again, to Turner-El's—to more powerfully link this human rights perspective with the political field: he would take, in his words, "the Negro question before the United Nations to internationalize the whole question and bring it before the whole world."⁴⁶ This plan, furthermore, was to be incorporated into the program of a new group he had created as the non-religious arm of his movement, the Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU). Although it had only officially begun meeting to organize in the spring after Malcolm's return from his hajj, it appears that the OAAU had started forming as early as January of that year, after Malcolm had encouraged a young black activist, Lynne Carol Shifflett, to begin organizing other secular activists into a black nationalist movement dedicated to his leadership.⁴⁷ Soon, over a dozen individuals had been recruited, partly by Shifflett and partly by Malcolm himself. By the spring, in addition to young activist members, the organization had brought in Malcolm's

41 Marable, *Malcolm*, 333; DeCaro, *On the Side*, 231.

42 Box 13, Folder 10, Mosque Attendance, *The Malcolm X Collection: Papers*, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library; Marable, *Malcolm*, 328.

43 DeCaro, *On the Side*, 231.

44 Marable, *Malcolm*, 338; DeCaro, *On the Side*, 231.

45 Marable, *Malcolm*, 332.

46 Marable, *Malcolm*, 343.

47 Marable, *Malcolm*, 321–22.

sister Ella, the *Muhammad Speaks* editor and author of the “Fayette Fought for Freedom with Bullets and Ballots” article Sylvester Leaks, novelist John Killens, and the historian John Henrik Clarke. Clarke was responsible for coming up with the group’s name, which he based on the Organization for African Unity, a coalition of African states that had been established in 1963.⁴⁸

On Sunday, June 28, the OAAU held its founding rally, and Malcolm’s speech at the event would go down as one of his greatest, as its themes and even some of its phrases would be echoed by black leaders for decades.⁴⁹ Within the first few minutes, Malcolm revealed the OAAU’s ‘motto,’ a section of which would soon become the single phrase most associated with Malcolm X. The OAAU had been formed, he explained, to

bring about the freedom of these people by any means necessary. That’s our motto. We want freedom by any means necessary. We want justice by any means necessary. We want equality by any means necessary.⁵⁰

The OAAU, in other words, was strongly in support of revolution if white America was not going to peacefully grant African Americans true equality. However, this did not mean, Malcolm clarified, that he desired total destruction of white society or even of the United States. Indeed, when quoting the OAAU’s “Basic Aims and Objectives,” Malcolm sounded less like Elijah Muhammad prophesying Armageddon and more like a Moor in the vein of Noble Drew Ali and Turner-El, as he praised the US Constitution and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as “the principles in which we believe [...]”⁵¹

As one can see in the juxtaposition of such concepts, the OAAU was to a great extent a merger of civil rights and black nationalist ideologies, and similar types of juxtapositions were in fact repeated throughout the speech. For example, Malcolm explained that strikes and voter registration programs would be employed—African Americans were urged to register as independents—and whites could support the group monetarily, but whites could not join the move-

48 Marable, *Malcolm*, 341.

49 For a transcript, see x, *By any Means*, 33–67.

50 x, *By any Means*, 37. The famous phrase was actually a modification of a phrase Malcolm had occasionally used since at least 1960—“whatever is necessary”—when asked by reporters what he it was that would have his loyal following do. The latter phrase, however, was usually followed by a qualification, such as “but peaceably, of course. We do not start trouble. But we do not turn the other cheek.” See Harry S. Ashmore, “Anti-White Sect Rises in US,” *Detroit News*, May 11, 1960, 1, 4B.

51 x, *By any Means*, 40.

ment; if they wanted to support his movement through activism, they would have to do so within their own communities. It was up to African Americans, furthermore, to help clean up the pervasive drug addiction problem among its people and to lead “an all-out war on organized crime in our community”—but, Malcolm clarified, the “criminal” in this case was the wealthy and elite whites who enable drugs to come into the US: “Negroes can’t bring drugs into this country. You don’t have any boats. You don’t have any airplanes. You don’t have any diplomatic immunity.”⁵² Police brutality must be ended too, Malcolm argued, especially with the recent passing of New York’s ‘no-knock’ and ‘stop-and-frisk’ law, which he explained was really “an anti-Negro law.”⁵³

Although the OAAU was secular and Malcolm was speaking from a secular perspective, he felt that the cultural nationalism he had gained from the NOI was still very important if the movement were to succeed, for it contained the means of the inner transformation that would be necessary for the community to change itself. African Americans, he therefore asserted, “must recapture our heritage and our identity [...] We must launch a cultural revolution to unbrainwash an entire people.”⁵⁴ Malcolm’s definition of culture here was much broader than Fard’s, who had identified Islamic culture primarily with astronomy and higher mathematics. For Malcolm, a cultural revolution would include the widespread study of history, supporting black artists, and opening cultural centers. Not only, Malcolm argued, would such a revolution offer a model and roadmap for African American activism and community-building, it would provide a connection with other people of African heritage, and even Africans themselves, which would further strengthen invaluable Pan-African ties. All of this was necessary because true justice would not come until African Americans were unified, armed, politically conscious, and culturally independent. With such a perspective, although it clearly embraced certain tactics and philosophies more closely associated with the civil rights movement, the OAAU represented, as Malcolm hinted at in the speech, the beginnings of the first true major non-denominational black nationalist movement since Marcus Garvey’s UNIA.⁵⁵

52 X, *By any Means*, 51–52. By that time, this argument had existed in the NOI for several years, and had even been incorporated into Louis Farrakhan’s NOI play *Orenga*, which was popular in the early 1960s.

53 X, *By any Means*, 51.

54 X, *By any Means*, 54.

55 X, *By any Means*, 59.

Violence

Despite his confidence and determination, Malcolm was aware of the numerous challenges he was facing, not the least of which was dealing with the NOI, which was actively trying to scuttle his movement. When Malcolm had first left the Nation, the group did not seem to have felt particularly threatened. Far from experiencing an immediate collapse, early on the NOI and Muhammad retained their prominence in black America. A late May speech by Muhammad in Detroit drew 8,000 people, nearly three times as many people as what had attended Malcolm's "Message to the Grass Roots" speech the previous November, and almost eight times more than the number that had come to see Malcolm's "Ballot or the Bullet" speech just one month before.⁵⁶ A month later, when Muhammad gave a speech in Harlem on the same day that Malcolm spoke to a capacity crowd of 600 at the Audobon Ballroom for the first OAAU rally, Muhammad reportedly drew over 6,000 to a much larger armory venue.⁵⁷ However the Nation had growing concerns. One was that Malcolm's departure had caused many to leave the group: around two hundred Muslims had stopped attending Temple No. 7; membership at another popular temple, Philadelphia's No. 12, dropped from between three and four hundred to around one hundred; the Hartford and Buffalo ministers reportedly abandoned their posts to follow Malcolm, presumably taking some of their followers with them; and the Chicago temple, although its membership did not decline significantly, could hardly grow due to a high turnover rate, and several of its ex-members had come out to publicly condemn the NOI leadership.⁵⁸ Public support was also decreasing. A late 1964 study of black racial and political attitudes discovered that even in the cities with the highest Muslim populations, Chicago and New York, despite agreeing with many of the Muslims' ideas, over

56 "Muhammad Speech Lacks Drive," *Michigan Chronicle*, May 30, 1964, sect. A, 6; Jim Cleaver, "Malcolm x Blasts 'Big Six,'" *Michigan Chronicle*, November 16, 1963, 1; "1,200 Hear Malcolm Berate Integration," *Michigan Chronicle*, April 18, 1964, sect. B, 11. It should be pointed out, however, that the NOI frequently bussed in thousands of Muslims from outside the state where their rallies were being held; see Barnette and Linn, "Black Muslims."

57 Jon A. Roosenraad, "Coverage in Six New York Daily Newspapers of Malcolm x and His Black Nationalist Movement: A Study" (MA thesis, Michigan State University, 1968), 45–47.

58 Marable, *Malcolm*, 294; Bashir, *Top of the Clock*, 39; Najji, *Nation of Islam's*, 171; Afro-Descendant Upliftment Society FBI enclosure, 12/22/1964, 9; Philip T. Cohran, "Agrees with Rap against Muslims," *Chicago Defender* (Ntl. ed.), August 8, 1964, 9.

nine out of ten local African Americans showed little to no sympathy for the Nation as an organization.⁵⁹

But that was not all. In early June, Malcolm had begun discussing Muhammad's affairs in radio and television interviews, and he had set into motion a plan to bring Muhammad to court with paternity suits, knowing full well that the Nation would kill to keep that information suppressed. After admitting to reporter Mike Wallace that "I'm probably a dead man already,"⁶⁰ on June 8 he received his first death threat, and less than a week later members of the MMI were attacked by NOI Muslims in Boston.⁶¹ In response, Malcolm publicly announced that NOI leaders had attempted to kill his followers—an act that further infuriated the Nation's heads, but also made them more cautious. So, when six armed Malcolm partisans appeared outside a Muslim restaurant in New York, instead of becoming drawn into a potentially deadly battle, the Nation had the MMI members promptly arrested.⁶² But NOI clashes with Malcolm loyalists would continue, and there was growing talk that Malcolm should be killed.⁶³

Malcolm's separation from the Nation was making other major impacts. It had, for example, created a religious ripple effect whose reverberations would last for decades. As early as the spring of 1964 it was becoming clear that American Islam would never be the same, when, within weeks of Malcolm's announcing his breaking from the Nation and the forming of the MMI, another new New York-based Islamic movement had come to the attention of the press. This group, which was labeled in the newspapers as the 'Blood Brothers,' was unique in that it was made up almost entirely of teenagers.⁶⁴ The enormous popular-

59 Gary T. Marx, *Protest and Prejudice: A Study of Belief in the Black Community* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), 108.

60 Marable, *Malcolm*, 340, 348.

61 Marable, *Malcolm*, 341, 343.

62 Marable, *Malcolm*, 344; Roosenraad, "Coverage in Six," 42–44.

63 Najiy, *Nation of Islam's*, 186–89, 197; Marable, *Malcolm*, 347–49, 358.

64 The present discussion of the Blood Brothers and Five Percenters is based on the following sources: Allah, *In the Name*; Michael Muhammad Knight, *The Five Percenters* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2007); Yusuf Nuruddin, "The Five Percenters: A Teenage Nation of Gods and Earths," in *Muslim Communities in North America*, eds. Yvonne Y. Haddad and Jane I. Smith (Albany: State University of New York, 1994), 109–32; Five Percenters FBI file; Prince A. Cuba, ed., *Our Mecca Is Harlem: Clarence 13X (Allah) and the Five Percent* (Hampton, VA: U.B. & U.S. Communications Systems, Inc., 1995); and articles from Five Percenter/Nation of Gods and Earths magazines *The Word* and *Sun of Man*, which are contained in MPSRC, reels 22 and 27.

ity of Islam among ghetto youth had led to many of those inclined towards the religion to find each other and attempt to unite both for protection and to cultivate a strong black community. Starting sometime in 1963, six or seven Harlem teens who had been inspired by Malcolm began traveling together to Temple No. 7 meetings and listening to various speeches by Malcolm and Muhammad. Through their conversations with FOI members, the teens had picked up numerous Muslim teachings and practices, such as giving themselves ‘righteous’ Muslim names, using the NOI Arabic greeting of ‘As-salaam alaikum,’ learning karate, and shaving their heads.⁶⁵ Soon there were dozens in the group, and like other youths inspired by the NOI during this period, they became increasingly aggressive. Some members started shouting at whites in the street, especially white police officers, and, reasoning that, since they were living in a completely unjust society, they had a right to break laws—the traditional ‘badman’/righteous hero perspective—they began stealing groceries to donate to people in the community. In April 1964, after an incident in which some of the teens fought with police, they were charged with numerous crimes, including the murder of a white woman shopkeeper. By early May, news stories labeling the group the ‘Blood Brothers’ were circulating widely, and included the claim that they had broken away from the NOI to join up with Malcolm. When asked about them, however, Malcolm denied any direct connection, but added that he “considered all Negroes to be my blood brothers [and] the white man’s efforts to make my name poison actually succeeded only in making millions of black people regard me like [the famed black boxer] Joe Louis.”⁶⁶

While this was happening, a similar movement was developing, and it would soon connect with the Blood Brothers and create yet another new organization. The leader of this second group was Clarence 13X, a former member of Temple No. 7 who had left the temple in around mid-1963 after—the conflicting rumors report—either having been suspended or having freely chosen to leave. A decorated Korean War veteran with a penchant for gambling, Clarence had joined the NOI in 1960 and quickly became fascinated with the Muslims’ numerous teachings, which were at that time referred to as the ‘120 Lessons.’⁶⁷ He soon befriended other Lessons-interested Muslims—whom a few of the temple members had labeled as ‘High Scientists’—and after leav-

65 Allah, *In the Name*, 1:96.

66 x and Haley, *Autobiography*, 355. Also see x, *Malcolm x Speaks*, 64–71.

67 Depending on how one counts each of the items taught in the *Supreme Wisdom Lessons*, one could find over 150 ‘lessons.’

ing No. 7 began to gather with some of the ‘Scientists’ who had also left or been kicked out of the group. Inspired by the FOI directive to ‘fish,’ but believing that the Muslims’ teachings should be available to all African Americans, not just NOI members, by the spring of 1964 Clarence and his Scientist friends were teaching Harlem youths and had formed a small but loyal following. In addition to instructing the children on the ‘120’ and karate, the elders of this community invented—using previous NOI teachings as a basis—a symbolic number system and an alphabet that connected each letter to a certain NOI teaching, known as the Supreme Mathematics and the Supreme Alphabet, respectively.⁶⁸

68 Supreme Mathematics: 1-Knowledge, 2-Wisdom, 3-Understanding, 4-Culture or Freedom, 5-Power or Refinement, 6-Equality, 7-God, 8-Build or Destroy, 9-Born, 0-Cipher. Supreme Alphabet: A-Allah, B-Be or Born, C-See, D-Divine, E-Equality, F-Father, G-God, H-He or Her, I-I or Islam, J-Justice, K-King, L-Love, Hell or Right, M-Master, N-Now, Nation or End, O-Cipher, P-Power, Q-Queen, R-Rule or Righteous, S-Self or Savior, T-Truth or Square, U-You or Universe, V-Victory, W-Wisdom or Woman, X-Unknown, Y-Why, Z-Zig Zag Zig. Although accounts of the development of these two systems stress the inventiveness of their creators, it should be pointed out that there were definitely precedents within the NOI, in which Muhammad taught that “all numbers in Islam have some value” and Fard’s *Teachings* (“Problem Book” discussed learning letters and the ten numbers of the “Mathematical Language” (Edwin x, “The Meaning of the Number ‘10,’” *Muhammad Speaks*, January 19, 1973, 15 and “Problem Book” question 13). For instance, in Supreme Mathematics the number nine is connected with the word ‘born,’ and this is explained as being representative of nine months in labor, a metaphor for the concept that one cannot master NOI doctrines overnight, and that new members are thus like fetuses who must develop before being truly born—fascinatingly, the emphasis on the number nine and these specific teachings were explicitly transmitted in the NOI as far back as the 1930s (see Muhammad, *Ministry Class*, [3]). And of course the number seven, which was given great prominence in the Five Percenter teachings, was incredibly significant in the NOI. It appears, however, that the Five Percenter system was slightly different from the NOI’s, as Muhammad taught that the number one represented Allah/God, whereas Supreme Mathematics has it represent Knowledge (see Edwin x, “The Meaning”; Muhammad, *Theology of Time*, 58–60). The most obvious different though is with the meaning given to the number six: in the NOI, six was almost exclusively thought of as representing whites, but in Supreme Mathematics it represents Equality. As for English letters being associated with certain words, prior to the development of the Supreme Alphabet, there were two examples of this in the NOI. The first appeared as far back as the late 1930s, when the NOI taught rules for member conduct using an alphabet-based list (see Dolinar, *Negro in Illinois*, 206). The second could be seen in the early 1960s, when the NOI published in *Muhammad Speaks* an alphabet list very similar to that of the Supreme Alphabet, as in it each letter was connected with an important concept in NOI teachings; this was called the “A.B.C. of Divine

Clarence insisted that his followers should strongly identify both as ‘gods’—a practice based on the NOI doctrines, but one that had gone out of favor following World War II—and as the five percent of the population that the Lessons taught were the ‘all-wise’ teachers. His young followers thus became known as the Five Percenters and Clarence himself took on the name Allah. After memorizing both the 120 and the Supreme teachings, the gods were instructed to teach these doctrines to at least ten others who were younger than themselves. Despite Allah also encouraging the children to follow most of the NOI’s moral and dietary codes, many in the movement did not, and this freedom of behavior, along with the gods’ youthful assertiveness, became infectious in New York City. Soon, dozens had joined the movement, including many of the Blood Brothers. By late 1964, after Allah survived an assassination attempt that resulted in rumors starting to circulate that he and his followers were invincible, hundreds of would-be gods from throughout the city’s boroughs began gaining interest in the movement.

Smaller groups were also emerging in the wake of Malcolm’s departure. In Chicago, Osman Sharrieff, who had broken from Muhammad back in the 1930s, decided the time was ripe to try to restart his own Muslim community, which he named the ‘Moslem Brotherhood in Chicago.’⁶⁹ Sharrieff insisted that Fard and he were “orthodox true Moslem[s]” and that he “does not in any way despise the white man”—in fact, he emphasized, his group was non-militant and pledged allegiance to the Constitution of the United States. Out in New York, meanwhile, Benjamin X Brown set up the Universal Peace Mosque, which

Knowledge” and it appeared in the January and May 1962 issues (and possibly others) and was most likely invented by Christine Johnson, the head of Chicago’s University of Islam (Johnson used the ‘ABCs’ theme in a number of her books). One wonders, too, whether the elders of the Five Percenters and the other High Scientists had been influenced by the diverse doctrines of the MSTA, Hebrew Israelites, and other black esoteric movements, as several former members of these groups were members of Temple No. 7 and were apparently mixing all of these groups’ doctrines with those of the NOI’s—that is, at least prior to Malcolm’s arrival in 1954; see Najiy, *Nation of Islam’s*, 62–65. Michael Muhammad Knight has proposed that the Five Percenters were influenced by C.M. Bey’s Clock of Destiny teachings, but I do not see enough direct similarities between Bey’s teachings and those of the Five Percenters to agree; the only real similarity, in my opinion, is the general interest in tying numerology to NOI teachings—and that could easily have been done by anyone with such inclinations, since the NOI’s teachings, as we have seen, did contain some numerological elements to begin with; see Knight, *Five Percenters*, 29–31, 243.

69 COINTELPRO file, Airtel, SAC, Chicago to Director, FBI, 9/8/1964, 4–6.

maintained a commitment to Muhammad, but apparently was taking a stand against the violent actions of the FOI.⁷⁰

After publicly breaking with his father in the spring of 1964, Muhammad's one-time heir-apparent, Wallace, was made the spiritual leader of yet another small group of ex-NOI members.⁷¹ Wallace, who had been introduced to orthodox Islam by the NOI's one-time Arabic instructor Jamil Diab, had developed some misgivings about Fard's divinity status as early as 1959.⁷² Over the next few years, encounters with other immigrant teachers pushed Muhammad's seventh son further down the path of disbelief, although it was not until his 1961–63 imprisonment for not registering for the draft that he came to the conclusion that he could not commit himself to all of the NOI's teachings, particularly its anti-white perspective and its anti-intellectualism.⁷³ Despite the fact that prior to his incarceration Wallace had become good friends with Malcolm with whom he often discussed Islamic orthodoxy, in 1964 Wallace felt reluctant to join up with Malcolm's new groups both because he did not agree with the use of violence and because he feared the NOI's potential retaliation.⁷⁴ Wallace's following was primarily in three cities: Boston, which hosted half-a-dozen loyalists; Chicago, where he had about thirty to fifty followers and the allegiance of his nephew and Muhammad's grandson, Hassan Sharrieff; and Philadelphia, where his dozen or so followers were also aligned with Talib Dawud's MBUSA and Nasir Ahmad's International Muslim Brotherhood—the latter being one of Wallace's main points of contact with immigrants.⁷⁵

By winter, with his group, now being called the Afro-Descendant Upliftment Society,⁷⁶ having failed to make any real progress and Malcolm having more fully embraced Sunni teachings, Wallace and Malcolm discussed the possibil-

70 Evanzz, *Messenger*, 314; Marable, *Malcolm X*, 425–26.

71 NOI FBI file, Airtel, SAC, Chicago to Director, FBI, 8/12/1964.

72 Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism*, 318–19; Ansari, "W.D. Muhammad," 255–56; NOI FBI file, Airtel, SAC, Chicago to Director, FBI, 8/12/1964.

73 NOI FBI file, Airtel, SAC, Chicago to Director, FBI, 8/12/1964, enclosure.

74 Marable, *Malcolm*, 381, 391–92; NOI FBI file, Airtel, SAC, Chicago to Director, FBI, 8/12/1964, enclosure.

75 NOI FBI file, Airtel, SAC, Chicago to Director, FBI, 8/12/1964; Afro-Descendant Upliftment Society FBI enclosure, 12/22/1964.

76 It is extremely likely that Wallace borrowed the use of the word 'descendant' from Audley Moore's reparations movement, which not only emphasized the word 'descendant' in many of its writings, but was based in Philadelphia, which was both Moore and Wallace's home at the time. For more on the reparations movement and its other connections to Muslims, see Chapter 14.

ity of uniting all of these organizations as part of Ahmad's IMB.⁷⁷ Although Ahmad's group was now reduced to only twenty people, it is likely that Wallace had great respect for Ahmad's experience in uniting and working with Moors, Qadianis, Lahoris, and Sunnis of a variety of ethnic backgrounds. More importantly, however, was the fact that one of the IMB's teachers, Muhammad Abdullah, a South Asian Lahori-Sunni missionary, was an acquaintance of Elijah Muhammad.⁷⁸ Abdullah had apparently learned of Muhammad during a seventeen-month stay in the US in the mid-1950s, and the two soon began exchanging letters.⁷⁹ At the end of the decade Abdullah moved permanently to the US, living part time in California, where he headed the MBUSA's missionary efforts as well as a number of mosques, and part time in Philadelphia, where, besides working with the local MBUSA and IMB, he gave Urdu and Qur'an lessons to Wallace, who was the city's NOI minister at the time.⁸⁰ In early 1961, after having become strongly attracted to orthodox Islam, Wallace arranged for the teacher to meet with his father again, probably in an attempt to plant the seeds of a religious transformation.⁸¹ Abdullah's ties with Muhammad were important from a symbolic standpoint; they gave Wallace—and thus Malcolm—more legitimacy to argue that they were on the right path, and that Muhammad had known full well that this was the path on which he should be. He might have also served—they undoubtedly thought—as a suitable religious authority for a community of Muslims who had been used to often looking at Arabs as 'white,' but were much more accepting of South Asians as 'black.' In mid-December, four members of the MMI traveled to the IMB's religious center where they were given a lesson in Arabic and performed Sunni prayers, although they did not discuss the potential merger.⁸² It seems, in fact, that detailed plans for the unification never materialized.

Malcolm, of course, had many other irons in the fire. The OAAU was his main organizational priority, but by the summer he had also developed ties with a wide variety of non-religious social justice organizations, including the NAACP,

77 MMI FBI file, Airtel, SAC, New York to Director, FBI, 12/24/1964 and 1/8/1965.

78 Turner, *Islam in the*, 194–95.

79 "Some Impressions about the United States," *Light*, May 24, 1957, 5–6; Turner, *Islam in the*, 194.

80 Wallace has said that he first met Abdullah in late 1958 or early 1959 at Muhammad's Chicago home; Abdullah was reportedly the first orthodox Muslim hosted by Muhammad; see Ayesha K. Mustafaa, "Professor Muhammad Abdullah: A Legend Returns to Allah," *Muslim Journal*, July 17, 1992, 1, 21.

81 Turner, *Islam in the*, 195.

82 MMI FBI file, Airtel, SAC, Philadelphia to Director, FBI, 12/16/1964.

the National Urban League, the Congress of Racial Equality, the Social Workers Party, and the Community Party—in May, he had even publicly suggested that socialism might hold the key to overcoming white supremacy.⁸³ Another group Malcolm now affiliated himself with was the Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM), led primarily by an energetic African American college student named Max Stanford. An inveterate activist, Stanford, who as a child had several pro-Muslim family members, in the fall of 1962 visited New York where he asked Malcolm if he should become a member of the NOI; Malcolm, as Stanford would later recall, told him no, that he could “do more for the honorable Elijah Muhammad by organizing outside of the Nation.”⁸⁴ Stanford then returned to his home in Philadelphia where by the end of the year he had formed RAM, a direct-action-oriented activist organization, and through his activities with this group remained in contact with Malcolm. Although RAM occasionally sent members to assist activists in other states, the group remained primarily a local one until the late spring or early summer of 1964 when it organized with several other small local groups to create a national organization whose aim was to start a revolutionary mass movement.⁸⁵ At the national group’s founding meeting, Malcolm, who was not present, was elected RAM’s international spokesman. When later approached to see if he would accept the position, Malcolm reportedly agreed to take on the role but felt that this affiliation should remain secret because of RAM’s connections with other radicals.⁸⁶ According to Stanford, RAM members were soon talking with Malcolm on a daily basis, significantly influencing his revolutionary views and planning with him a strategy for taking over the civil rights movement by having RAM members prepare his way in the South.⁸⁷

It was perhaps in part due to his contact with RAM, then, that Malcolm was now publicly suggesting that African Americans might soon be using guerrilla warfare tactics in their struggle for liberation. Malcolm had referred to the possible rise of the use of ‘guerrilla tactics’ as early as May 23;⁸⁸ but by late June he seemed more certain than ever that the employment of this combat style was forthcoming. That month, he publicly offered to deploy his own followers—presumably RAM members—to the South to organize “guerrilla squads” to help African Americans defend themselves from the Klan; and at a June 30

83 Marable, *Malcolm*, 336.

84 Ahmad, *We Will Return*, 99.

85 Ahmad, *We Will Return*, 122.

86 Ahmad, *We Will Return*, 123–24.

87 Ahmad, *We Will Return*, 124–29.

88 “Goals Changed by Malcolm x,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 24, 1964, D26.

speech in front of over 200 whites Malcolm remarked that “the outbreak of open guerrilla-type hostility and terrorist-type incidents all over this country is not only possible but probable. [...] The Negro [...] is fast becoming a roaring lion.”⁸⁹ Although it would turn out that guerrilla tactics were not used by Malcolm’s followers during his lifetime, there would later be several reports of such violence being used by black radicals, and in many cases the evidence suggests that the perpetrators were individuals who had been inspired, either directly or indirectly, by Malcolm.

By repeatedly predicting in public the outbreak of a ‘bloody’ revolution and guerrilla warfare, Malcolm was solidifying his place in African American history. Never before had a black person in the United States brought talk of such type of African American violence to the national stage for a sustained period. To be sure, Malcolm was by no means the first African American to predict black revolutionary militancy, just as Muhammad was not the first black person to identify as a Muslim or call whites devils—but both were able to take advantage of the significant media access they were given in order to publicize their controversial views at a level never previously reached. And, just like Muhammad had done in the black newspapers of the 1950s, Malcolm was demonstrating a level of fearlessness that was awe-inspiring to many of the downtrodden, even to those who did not entirely agree with the use of revolutionary or guerrilla warfare. This, then, would be one of Malcolm’s most significant legacies. For many people, as we will see in Chapter 14, henceforth Malcolm would primarily be regarded as the first loud voice in the modern era calling for African American revolution.

For many others, however, Malcolm’s political legacy was much more than the call to fight, and it was his second 1964 sojourn to the Middle East and Africa that helped solidify this additional dimension of his life’s work. On July 9 Malcolm departed on what would end up being a nineteen-week trip abroad through which he established himself as an internationalist. Malcolm had been incorporating international political themes into his ministerial message as early as 1955 when he revealed that he had been inspired by the recently-held Bandung Conference.⁹⁰ In April that year, twenty-nine African and Asian countries sent representatives to Indonesia to establish economic and political cooperation, oppose colonialism, and, using the United Nations’ Charter as their ideological foundation, promote world peace. Noting the similarities

89 “Malcolm Sending Armed Troops to Mississippi,” *Chicago Daily Defender*, July 2, 1964, 2; “Negro Must Prepare to Defend Himself or Continue at the Mercy of Racist Mob,” *Omaha Star*, July 3, 1964, 1.

90 Marable, *Malcolm*, 119–21.

between the conference's Afro-Asian unification and the NOI's claims of Afro-Asian origins for American blacks, Malcolm, almost immediately, called for blacks in America to host their own Bandung Conference. In the fall of 1963, as Malcolm began giving more politically-minded speeches, he revived his references to the famous conference,⁹¹ and by 1964 Bandung was clearly an important model for his post-NOI activities. He was now regularly name-dropping African and other Third World leaders; and at the OAAU founding rally he even declared that he would name his soon-to-be-born child after the Congo independence leader Patrice Lumumba, "the greatest black man who ever walked the African continent."⁹²

Set on developing connections with a wide variety of 'Afro-Asian' people, during this second trip, Malcolm met with government officials from throughout the Middle East and Africa; participants at the current OAU conference that was taking place in Cairo; multiple black American expatriates; students from throughout the world, including members of the American civil rights group the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee; and numerous reporters and religious leaders.⁹³ Although one of Malcolm's main efforts on this trip was to secure the backing of African countries to help African Americans bring their case before the UN, concerns over the political implications of Malcolm taking such a stand resulted in only one country giving a formal proclamation of support—Kenya passed in its parliament a resolution supporting, what Malcolm called, "our human rights struggle."⁹⁴

Malcolm was also using this trip to seek out alliances with Islamic religious organizations, as they could further establish his legitimacy as a representative of orthodox Islam. In addition to being made an honorary member of the YMMA, Malcolm—taking advantage of Dr. Shawarbi's connections—completed a course created by the Cairo-based Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs, for which he was given both a certificate from al-Azhar authorizing him to teach Islam and twenty scholarships to the university for his followers to use.⁹⁵ Malcolm also connected with an old NOI critic, the Saudi Arabia-based

91 See his speeches in *x*, *Malcolm x*, 51–52; *End of White*, 96; *Malcolm x Speaks*, 5–6, 130.

92 *x*, *By any Means*, 64–65. Malcolm did not fulfill this promise, however.

93 Again, for more information about this journey, see, besides the main authoritative books on Malcolm x and the NOI, the *Diary of Malcolm x* and Sherwood's *Malcolm x Visits Abroad*.

94 Marable, *Malcolm*, 373.

95 *x*, *Diary of Malcolm x*, 87, 108; Sherwood, *Malcolm x*, 91–92; Marable, *Malcolm*, 361, 364–65. Marable claims that the Supreme Council funded Malcolm's trip, but this is not supported by the sources cited.

Muslim World League, which, besides providing Malcolm with fifteen scholarships to the Islamic University in Medina, permitted the MMI to become an official MWL branch and offered to send to America an African Muslim scholar who could speak English and Arabic.⁹⁶

Back in the US, however, Malcolm's movement was struggling. After he had announced his departure from the Nation, there had been a significant decline in coverage of Malcolm in the white press, particularly in New York, the home of Malcolm's principal constituency—most New York papers, for instance, had not even reported Malcolm's new more accepting view of whites—and without the consistent media presence that had been so helpful for Garvey's movement in the 1920s and the NOI since the mid-1950s, interest in Malcolm dropped off significantly.⁹⁷ MMI meetings soon dwindled down to fifteen regular attendees,⁹⁸ and the OAAU received only about ninety applications at its first rally, far fewer than expected; membership in the group did not grow significantly afterwards either, even despite its Sunday rallies being well-attended.⁹⁹ Tensions were developing as well, both within and between the two organizations, as members had competing visions of what the true goal of Malcolm's movement should be.¹⁰⁰ Malcolm, for his part, appears to have been neglecting his communications with these and other American organizations. In September, the Freedom Now Party, a new political party in Michigan started by members and affiliates of GOAL, asked Malcolm to run for a US Senate seat; but it does not appear that he responded, and it is unclear if he even knew about the request, as Malcolm would not return to the US until November 24, three weeks after the election.¹⁰¹

Meanwhile, the NOI was becoming less and less content to sit back and patiently wait for the 'hypocrite' to fail. In November, two Nation spokespersons announced that Muhammad had designed a new economic plan to help the

96 x, *Diary of Malcolm X*, 127–29; "Malcolm X Reports He Now Represents World Muslim Unit," *New York Times*, October 11, 1964, 13.

97 The one popular publication that did continue to cover Malcolm regularly was the *New York Times*; see Roosenraad, "Coverage in Six," 39–48, 83–87; Woolson, "Media and Malcolm," 83–97.

98 DeCaro, *On the Side*, 231. However, the attendance report for June 25 lists around thirty members and two visitors; see Box 13, Folder 10, Mosque Attendance, *The Malcolm X Collection: Papers*, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library.

99 Marable, *Malcolm*, 357, 375.

100 Marable, *Malcolm*, 374–82.

101 "Malcolm X Slated to Face Hart," *Michigan Chronicle*, September 19, 1964, 1, 4.

African American community, which was presented as a much better alternative to Malcolm's political-revolutionary philosophy.¹⁰² Muhammad was now proposing a three-year program through which money would be saved to purchase farm land, food storage warehouses, and businesses, building on the NOI's existing 'chamber of commerce,' which already had around one hundred small business members; the goal was to promote further economic growth so that the black community could eventually become entirely self-sustaining. But Malcolm himself could not be ignored by the NOI either. In September, articles critical of the ex-minister had begun appearing in *Muhammad Speaks*. Then, in November, NOI spokesmen publicly threatened the ex-minister: if he did not stop criticizing Muhammad—Malcolm had recently called Muhammad a religious "faker"—they would "fight him as hard as he fights them."¹⁰³ NOI physical assaults on Malcolm supporters were in fact continuing; one Kenneth Morton had even died from an NOI beating in late October.¹⁰⁴ On December 12, the Nation made its position clearer than ever in an open letter that ran in Chicago's *New Crusader*. "Mr. Malcolm," the letter announced, "we hereby officially warn you that the NOI shall no longer tolerate your scandalizing the name of our leader [...]."

After traveling to Britain to lecture during the first week of December, Malcolm, feeling confident that his time on Earth was limited, returned to his rapid pace of activities, which now included devoting some time to religious study. The MWL had sent out the Sudanese scholar Sheikh Ahmed Hassoun to be Malcolm's spiritual advisor and the religious guide of the MMI.¹⁰⁵ Besides giving several lectures, Hassoun taught Malcolm Islamic basics and trained him in the Muslim prayer ritual. However, most of Malcolm's time was spent on coalition-building and speech-making, and he was not letting up on his calls for armed resistance. At a December 20 Harlem rally for the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, Malcolm insisted that if African Americans were going to achieve freedom they needed to speak the language of the oppressor—"If his language is a shotgun, get a shotgun"—adding that black Americans should have an equivalent to the Mau Mau, the Kenyan revolutionary army.¹⁰⁶ He would later criticize those in the press who said such language meant that he was promoting some sort of "Ku Klux Klan in reverse":

102 "Muslims Forecast Malcolm's Failure," *Michigan Chronicle*, November 21, 1964, 12.

103 "Muslims Forecast." The "faker" comment appeared in the October 11 *Times* article "Malcolm X Reports."

104 Marable, *Malcolm*, 398, 401.

105 O'Dell, "Mapping Malcolm X's," 104.

106 X, *Malcolm X Speaks*, 108, 106.

They make you think that if you try to stop the Klan from lynching you, you're practicing violence in reverse. [...] If a criminal comes to rob your house, brother, with his gun, just because he's got a gun and he's robbing your house, and he's a robber, it doesn't make you a robber because you grab your gun and run him out. No. See, the [white] man is using some tricky logic on you.¹⁰⁷

Malcolm was not about to back down when it came to calling for arming African Americans to achieve true protection and equality.

Nor would he back down from the NOI. In January he stated to the press that the group only possessed about five thousand real members.¹⁰⁸ Considering the fact that the Nation insisted that it had tens of thousands of Muslims, sometimes hundreds of thousands, many might have assumed that this was a fabrication designed to discredit the organization. However, another of Muhammad's sons who had quit the Nation, Akbar, confirmed that same month that the organization was much smaller than it presented itself as being when he threw out the number 7,000 for the group's membership—a number reiterated by another ex-member in February.¹⁰⁹ This, of course, only stoked the fires. Malcolm was now sometimes being followed and harassed; on January 22 NOI Muslims attempted to rush Malcolm in front of his house, and on the twenty-ninth, while he was leaving from a visit with Muhammad's ex-mistresses in Los Angeles, a car full of Muslims gave chase to Malcolm on the highway to the airport.¹¹⁰ Two weeks later, in the early hours of February 14, Malcolm's house was bombed. Although the family escaped unharmed, Malcolm—who, some newspapers reported, stated the NOI was responsible—was understandably shook up.¹¹¹ When he appeared that evening in front of a “sparse” crowd in Detroit, a local paper noted that he was wearing “inappropriate clothing” and “his speech was halting, [his] mannerisms jerky.”¹¹²

107 Malcolm X, *February 1965: The Final Speeches* (New York: Pathfinder, 1992), 88.

108 [S.S. Mufassir], *Malik Shabazz (Malcolm X): Some Questions Answered* (n.p.: n.p., [1965?]), [4], Aliya Hassen Papers, Box 1, Malcolm X (Articles and Correspondence), 1959–1965, BHL.

109 Hedrick Smith, “Elijah's Son Quits as Black Muslim,” *New York Times*, January 15, 1965, 19; Barnette and Linn, “Black Muslims.”

110 X, *February*, 112–13; Michael Friedly, *Malcolm X: The Assassination* (New York: Carroll & Graf/R. Gallen, 1992), 154–57.

111 Roosenraad, “Coverage in Six,” 52–55.

112 Betty DeRamus, “Sparse Audience Hears Malcolm Ask for Action,” *Michigan Chronicle*, February 20, 1964, 3.

The situation finally came to a head on Sunday, February 21. That afternoon Malcolm traveled to Manhattan's Audubon Ballroom to run his weekly OAAU rally. At around 2:30, shortly after he took the podium in front of the 400-odd person audience, an unidentified person shouted, and there appeared to be a disruption somewhere in the crowd. Thinking quickly, Malcolm attempted to calm everyone, but within seconds an African American man bearing a sawed-off shotgun ran up in front of the stage and blasted Malcolm in the chest. Then, two other men appeared with handguns and fired towards the stage several more times before trying to flee. One of the gunmen, Talmadge Hayer, a Nation member, was caught and beaten by the crowd until police arrived, but the other two shooters escaped. It was later determined by law enforcement that all three men had been in the NOI and had committed their act under orders of unknown NOI officials, although it is still widely suspected that there was some indirect government involvement as well.¹¹³ Malcolm, meanwhile, was fatally wounded. At 3:30, after being rushed to Columbian Presbyterian Hospital, one of the most influential figures of the civil rights period was pronounced dead. His body, which Sheikh Hassoun ritually washed and prepared, was later taken to Harlem's Faith Temple Church of God in Christ, where it was viewed by nearly 30,000 mourners over the next week.¹¹⁴ At the February 27 funeral, which was attended by perhaps 3,000 people, Imam Hessaam Jaaber, a leader in the AAUAA, conducted the Islamic prayer service when Hassoun fell ill.¹¹⁵ In attendance was Sheikh Daoud Faisal as well as the entertainer Ossie Davis, who gave what would become a famous eulogy.¹¹⁶ Malcolm, Davis reflected, was "a prince, our own black, shining prince, [...] our living black manhood."¹¹⁷

113 For one of the most thorough analyses of the murder, see Zak A. Kondo, *Conspiracys: Unravelling the Assassination of Malcolm X* (Washington, DC: Nubia Press, 1993). For a firsthand account from an OAAU member who was at the rally, see Ferguson, *An Unlikely Warrior*, 136–44. For some of the various conspiracy theories that appeared shortly after the murder, see Roy Wilkins, "The Repercussions of Malcolm X Death," *Detroit News*, March 7, 1968, 2E and Roosenraad, "Coverage in Six," 67–69, 71–73, 76. Malcolm's attorney, Percy Sutton, told reporters that Malcolm had planned to announce at that very rally the names of those who were trying to kill him; see Roosenraad, "Coverage in Six," 57–59, 73.

114 Dick Shaap, "Malcolm Was Black, Shiny Prince, Our Manhood," *Boston Globe*, February 28, 1965, 20.

115 Shaap, "Malcolm Was Black"; Hessaam Jaaber, *The Final Chapter ... I Buried Malcolm (Haj Malik El-Shabazz)* (Jersey City: New Mind Productions, 1993); Paul L. Montgomery, "Malcolm Buried as True Moslem Despite the Unorthodox Ritual," *New York Times*, February 28, 1965, 72.

116 Montgomery, "Malcolm Buried."

117 Martin Arnold, "Harlem is Quiet as Crowds Watch Malcolm X Rites," *New York Times*,

Malcolm's actions and impact in the final years of his life represented the enormous transformation through which African American Islam had gone since World War II. No longer was Islam regarded as a small, conservative cult on the fringes of African American culture; it now held a powerful position, one that was laying the foundation for a major social change. While it is true that Muslims were once again divided—deterritorialized—into multiple groups, their religious market was greatly expanded and now possessed a tremendous influence within African American culture. In the ensuing years, the significance of that influence would become increasingly clear.

February 28, 1965, 1, 72. Although it was sometimes reported as 'shiny,' Davis did indeed use the word 'shining.'

A Cultural Revolution

In 1965, the African American community entered a ten-year period of profound unrest and transformation. Deadly riots erupted throughout the country. Armed black organizations—several of which were soon involved in violent confrontations with the police—sprang up in nearly every large and medium-sized city. At colleges and universities, black students protested in unprecedented numbers, sometimes temporarily shutting down their institutions and forcing dramatic changes in curriculum. Meanwhile, new waves of black-centered cultural and religious movements were rearranging African American thought, aesthetics, and spirituality. African American identity, it seems, was undergoing a profound metamorphosis—and Islam was playing a significant role in all of this.

The towering Muslim figure of this era was still Malcolm X. Just days after the assassination, commentators across the country, from white news reporters to the NAACP's secretary Roy Wilkins, predicted that in death Malcolm was going to be more influential than he had been in life.¹ Such views were seemingly confirmed as early as February 23, when a fire was set at the door of the San Francisco NOI temple and a bomb exploded at Temple No. 7, destroying a large section of the building.² Guerrilla warfare—the very style of warfare Malcolm had foreseen being used—was now actually being employed by his devotees, and it would increasingly be a tool of other black revolutionaries. Malcolm's visage, meanwhile, could be regularly found in news media, in art, and on clothing; his name was invoked by nearly every African American who was concerned with the state of the black community; and his life, sacralized by his massively popular *Autobiography*, which was released the same year as the murder, served as a model of personal rebirth for radicals and moderates alike, and for several years was celebrated across the country on his birthday (May 19)—what many called 'Malcolm X Day.' As numerous contemporary observers noted, Malcolm was increasingly regarded as both a saint and a father for this new generation of African Americans.

1 Roosenraad, "Coverage in Six," 68–69; Roy Wilkins, "The Repercussions of Malcolm X Death," *Detroit News*, March 7, 1965, 2E.

2 Peter Kihss, "Mosque Fires Stir Fear of Vendetta in Malcolm Case," *New York Times*, February 24, 1965, 1, 31.

Yet, despite Malcolm's prominence, the Islamic presence and influence in African American life during this period was both highly diverse and widespread, as manifold Islamic elements had seeped into the broader black culture. It would be no exaggeration to estimate that tens of thousands of African Americans were adhering to portions of the teachings of Elijah Muhammad, Malcolm x, and other Muslim leaders without claiming to be actual Muslims. In addition, the adoption of Islamic words, phrases, and ideas into common black folk speech and knowledge was gaining momentum and was being endorsed by a prominent new wave of African American poets, playwrights, musicians, and other cultural leaders. More than ever before, Islamic themes were penetrating the popular landscape. African American culture had truly undergone a second pro-Islam institutional change, one that had ushered in a period of Islamic influence and Islamophilia that was far more complex and had a much greater Islamic impact than the institutional change of the Garvey era. Indeed, it seemed that the reterritorializing cultural revolution called for by Malcolm was actually becoming a reality, and Islam was serving as a key catalyst.

The Folk Culture of the Streets

With the Muslims' growing numbers and Malcolm's relentless public engagement, by the early 1960s it had become nearly impossible for African Americans in the urban North to completely avoid any contact with Islam or its representatives. But even after Malcolm's murder, Islam remained omnipresent. *Muhammad Speaks* salesmen were still lining ghetto thoroughfares and tenement hallways; streetcorner men still waxed sympathetic for the Nation;³ and Muslim business owners, particularly those who ran barbershops, still encouraged the free flow of Islamic discourse between Muslims and non-Muslims.⁴ Added to all this was a new wave of Islamic iconography, with posters and

3 Elliot Liebow, *Tally's Corner: A Study of Negro Streetcorner Men*, new ed. (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, [1967] 2003), 38–39; Ulf Hannerz, *Soulside: Inquiries into Ghetto Culture and Community* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), 167.

4 Hannerz reports that Muslim-owned barbershops had “a reputation as propaganda centrals”; see his *Soulside*, 69. Occasionally, converts mentioned first learning about Islam in Muslim-owned barbershops; see, e.g., Herbert x, “Since Accepting Islam, I Now Can Do Things I Once Thought Impossible,” *Muhammad Speaks*, July 8, 1966, 25; Bashir, *Top of the Clock*, 11–16, 105–10.

mural paintings of Malcolm and Muhammad Ali having become fixtures in the slums, even hanging in the Urban League-funded 'street academies' where ex-dropouts tried to guide disillusioned youth.⁵

The influence of the Muslims was so pervasive that numerous NOI words and phrases quickly gained purchase on city streets. One could find non-Muslims occasionally using the Muslims' expressions 'All praise due to Allah' and 'As salaam alaikum,' and even the MSTA/Five Percenter greeting 'Peace' was gaining in popularity.⁶ Having become terms of the urban folk, however, the folk tendency for deterritorializing, creative use, and interpretation began to reign, and much less stable forms and meanings of the Muslims' words appeared. The terms 'brother' and 'sister,' for instance—which, although they had long been used in the Christian church, were now primarily associated with the Nation—went from being labels for Muslims exclusively to secular terms used by all kinds of black people, a phenomenon that led to some police officers thinking Muslims were virtually everywhere.⁷ The NOI phrase 'original man' was also picked up in a way that was not entirely consistent with NOI orthodoxy: it was being used in the streets to identify any individual who had accepted some of the Muslim teachings; it was not typically employed to refer to all black people, which the phrase originally connoted, and was not even always applied to people who were officially members of the Nation—although a modified version of this term, 'all-originals,' did refer to Muslims specifically.⁸ The word 'pork chop,' on the other hand, which was a play on the NOI rejection of the hog as a dirty animal whose consumption was associated with oppressive Southern culture, was sometimes used as an adjective to identify non-Islamic phenomena, but particularly African Americans who had incorporated into

5 Graeme Abernethy, *The Iconography of Malcolm X* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2013), 145–49; Ponchitta Pierce, "Street Academies: New Way to Reach the Ghetto Dropout," *Ebony* (August 1967): 158–61.

6 See, e.g., Woodie King, Jr., "The Game," in *Rappin' and Sytlin' out: Communication in Urban Black America*, ed. Thomas Kochman (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1972), 392; James Maryland, "Shoe-Shine on 63rd," in *Rappin' and Sytlin' out: Communication in Urban Black America*, ed. Thomas Kochman (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1972), 214; Carolyn Rodgers, "Black Poetry—Where It's at," in *Rappin' and Sytlin' out: Communication in Urban Black America*, ed. Thomas Kochman (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1972), 341.

7 Gerald Horne, *Fire This Time: The Watts Uprising and the 1960s* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995), 125.

8 William Labov, Paul Cohen, Clarence Robins, and John Lewis, *A Study of the Non-Standard English of Negro and Puerto Rican Speakers in New York City*, 2 vols. (New York: Columbia University, 1968), 2:260; x and Haley, *Autobiography*, 315.

their lives few to none of the Islamic teachings; it was therefore similar to the old, more biblically-based terms for non-Muslim blacks: 'lost' and 'dead.'⁹

One group of NOI terms became especially popular: those used for identifying white people. For instance, the word 'Yacub,' which was sometimes transformed into 'yacoo,' was often employed in black slang to refer not to the mythical big-headed scientist but to modern whites, especially those who were clearly racist.¹⁰ The most popular Islam-inspired term for whites, though, was 'devil,' used either alone or with a modifier, such as 'white' or 'blue-eyed.'¹¹ As discussed in Chapters 1 and 7, the term 'devil' has had a long and wide presence in African American folk culture, but it was especially important in folk stories about powerful and smart black 'badmen' who often tricked or beat the devil. On urban streets, because the pressure and desire for hyper-masculinity intensified the identification with the badman hero,¹² the concept of 'devil' was a particularly important component in young men's understanding of their social role. The NOI's use of the term, then, naturally resonated with the youth, as did the movement's emphasis on African American power and resistance to oppression—both of which were generally associated with black masculinity.¹³ In fact, as one Muslim convert put it, Elijah Muhammad was seen as "synonymous with strength and defiance" and, for many others, Malcolm was "the baddest"—"the real dude."¹⁴ Malcolm in particular, it seems, had attained a true folk hero status, apparently becoming associated with the race-conscious badman Shine, as Ossie Davis's famous epithet for Malcolm alluded to. Indeed, from that point forward, fewer and fewer African Americans would know who Shine or Stackolee were, but they would all know Malcolm.

Of course, being the former seat of Malcolm's power, New York City was where the NOI vocabulary and ways of thinking had their greatest impact on

9 Labov et al., *A Study*, 2:260; Jamal, *From the Dead Level*, 167.

10 David Dalby, "The African Element in American English," in *Rappin' and Sytlin' out: Communication in Urban Black America*, ed. Thomas Kochman (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1972), 185; Labov et al., *A Study*, 150, 154.

11 Ken Johnson, "The Vocabulary of Race," in *Rappin' and Sytlin' out: Communication in Urban Black America*, ed. Thomas Kochman (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1972), 142; Maryland, "Shoe-Shine," 211–13; Hannerz, *Soulside*, 166, 206.

12 This observation was influentially made by Roger D. Abrahams in *Deep Down*, 62–75. See also Abrahams' "Changing Concept of the Negro Hero," 119–34.

13 Glen H. Elder, Jr., "Group Orientations and Strategies in Racial Change," *Social Forces* 48, no. 4 (June 1970): 459–60.

14 Griffin, *A Letter*, 224; Goldman, *Death and Life*, 379; Frank L. Keegan, *Blacktown, U.S.A.* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1971), 28–29.

black folk culture. By the mid-1960s, thanks to the NOI and the Five Percenters, children who belonged to neither group were becoming very familiar with Muslim doctrines and discourse. The following 1966 exchange between two Harlem non-Muslim eight-year-olds reveals the deep cultural absorption of the new Islam-influenced folk terminology and discursive habits:

An 'ey talk about Allah.
 Oh yeah? (eah.) What do they say about Allah?
 Allah—Allah is God.
 And what else?
 I don' know the res'.
 Allah is God, Allah is the only God, Alla—
 Allah's the son of God.
 But he can't—can he make magic?
 Nope.
 I know who can make magic.
 God ... the real one.
 Who can magic?
 The son of po'k—I'm sayin'—po'k chop God. Only the po'k chop God.¹⁵

As this example illustrates, NOI terms and ideas were quickly being thoroughly incorporated into the African American urban ritual of displaying verbal skill, a practice that was becoming especially popular in the growing youth gang culture.¹⁶ Those who had been influenced by the Five Percenters termed such verbal displays as being 'on the square'—a concept derived from the NOI and the MSTA before it—and one's skill in communicating this knowledge was judged not necessarily on the traditional standards of black urban folk verbal displays, such as how cleverly one could insult another person using rhymed 'rapping' or weave together a 'toast' about Stackolee, but rather on the speed, accuracy, and stylistic dexterity one could exhibit while repeating the canned Muslim doctrines.¹⁷ Islam was thus transforming the very form of folk discourse.

15 Labov et al., *A Study*, 137–39.

16 Labov et al.'s *A Study* is an invaluable resource for understanding the spread of NOI/Five Percent teachings and verbal skills to New York youth in the 1960s. On New York gangs in the postwar period, see Eric C. Schneider, *Vampires, Dragons, and Egyptian Kings: Vampires, Dragons, and Egyptian Kings: Youth Gangs in Postwar New York* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

17 Labov et al., *A Study*, 34.

Outside of New York, Islam was becoming so popular in black culture that many were following Muslim teachings, giving themselves or their children Muslim names, and identifying as Muslims without ever officially joining—or being allowed to join—any Muslim group, and sometimes without following anything close to the stringent diet and daily habits required by the NOI.¹⁸ While social scientists were discovering this firsthand through interviews,¹⁹ any regular reader of *Muhammad Speaks* from 1965 on would have noticed this increasing trend. Letters to the editor were frequently featuring non-Muslim African Americans, and sometimes Latinos, Asians, and Pacific Islanders, who said that they had incorporated Muhammad's teachings into their lives; some even said that they had been preaching Islam before having ever stepped foot inside a temple.²⁰ This trend was apparently most common among the young; professionally-conducted studies confirmed that it was school-aged youth who were most likely to find the black Muslims and their teachings appealing.²¹

It is worth noting that although interest in the NOI and Malcolm transcended regions and class boundaries, the specific practice of claiming a Muslim name without being a Muslim was most common among impoverished urban teenage males. Not only were these individuals likely to be carriers of the old black folk tradition concerning the changing of one's name, but also, being destitute of material possessions, in their struggle to assert their position in the world, ghetto youths of all races often put great emphasis on symbols of identity, particularly when it came to their names.²² Prior to the early 1960s, this had led to youths adopting monikers associated with the badman figure;²³

18 Marvin x gives several examples of such fringe-type Muslims in his *Somethin' Proper*, esp. 110–14, 141, 150–51, 208–09.

19 See, e.g., Hannerz, *Soulside*, 135; Labov et al., *A Study*, *passim*.

20 See the issues on the following dates and pages: November 12, 1965, 26; December 3, 1965, 25; December 31, 1965, 25; February 4, 1966, 25; June 10, 1966, 25; March 1962, 21; February 26, 1968, 25; June 7, 1968, 25; June 20, 1969, 25; October 24, 1969, 14.

21 Elder, "Group Orientations," 459–60; Daniel U. Levine, Norman S. Fiddmont, Robert S. Stephenson, and Charles B. Wilkinson, *The Attitudes of Students at Black High Schools in Five Cities, Spring 1970* ([Kansas City]: Greater Kansas City Mental Health Foundation; Center for the Study of Metropolitan Problems in Education, School of Education, University of Missouri-Kansas City, 1971), 21, 35; Keegan, *Blacktown*, U.S.A., 26–36.

22 See the insightful essay by Herbert Kohl, "Names, Graffiti, and Culture," in *Rappin' and Sytlin' out: Communication in Urban Black America*, ed. Thomas Kochman (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1972), 109–33.

23 Kohl, "Names, Graffiti." Interestingly, the term 'little man' had become disconnected from the black conversion experience but was retained as a nickname sometimes used in the streets as well; see Kohl, "Names, Graffiti," 128.

but when the Muslims popularized the notion that the baddest man was the Muslim, some non-Muslim youth began abandoning their 'slave names,' using instead 'black names,' which often meant adopting the 'x' or using Arabic (or Arabic-like) personal names, such as Rhaheem, Arkbar, and Rabu.²⁴ This type of identity transformation helped individuals relate even more strongly with the NOI and the Five Percenters, and in some cases it inspired them to partake in protest behavior. Individual student outbursts at schools, for example, were increasingly laced with Muslim concepts. More and more white teachers were being derisively called 'blue-eyed white devils' and black teachers 'slaves.'²⁵ In one case, three middle school boys in New York tore up a teacher's role book when he refused to acknowledge their 'original names'—despite them not being actual members of any Muslim group.²⁶

To a significant extent, the new 'Black Power' political and cultural current that emerged in the decade following Malcolm's death was also shaped by and connected to Islam on a deep cultural level. Malcolm once again seems to have played a major role here, as his own call for a cultural revolution appears to have been an inspiration for the movement, as was the enormous popularity achieved by his posthumously-published *Autobiography* (1965) and speeches (1966, 1970, and 1971). But there were other Muslim influences as well. For example, the movement's popular new 'afro' hairstyle—which Elijah Muhammad denounced as a germ-carrying, uncivilized fashion—may have had Islamic roots, as Moorish Americans were rumored to have been among the first to sport the hairdo.²⁷ Some followers of Black Power, meanwhile, believed that a savior would come from the 'East,' an old Christian notion that the NOI had kept alive.²⁸ However, the most well-known Black Power cultural transformation that the Muslims contributed to was the popularization of 'black' as a term for African Americans and the rejection of the word 'negro.' The

24 Kohl, "Names, Graffiti," 119–20; Goldman, *Death and Life*, 379; Allah, *In the Name*, 1:159; Labov et al., *A Study, passim*; Jamal Joseph, *Panther Baby: A Life of Rebellion and Reinvention* (Chapel Hill: Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 2012), 42–43; Keegan, *Blacktown, U.S.A.*, 117–35.

25 Allah, *In the Name*, 1:162.

26 Kohl, "Names, Graffiti," 119–20.

27 Lawrence L. Tyler, "The Black Muslim Identity as Viewed by Non-Muslim Blacks" (PhD diss., University of Missouri, 1970), 59. If this is true, it was likely Moors from the Givens-El line, since it was his faction that prohibited the cutting of hair; there are even early accounts of male Moors in the Givens-El faction wearing braids long before male braids were fashionable. For Muhammad's views, see *Muhammad Speaks* July 4, 1969, 5 and September 12, 1969, 24.

28 Maryland, "Shoe-Shine," 212.

NOI had long derided the latter word; in the Nation's perspective, the negro—or 'the so-called negro,' as Muslims usually termed it—was an African American who was still 'brainwashed' by whites and did not know his or her 'original' religion, history, name, or flag. Muslims, on the other hand, were 'black,' and were very proud of that fact. The Nation's constant ridiculing and denouncing of 'so-called negro' leaders had an enormous impact on African Americans' self image, and by 1966, a year of widespread social disruption and protest, 'black' had become the thing to be and 'Black Power' was the goal to reach. In the long tradition of African American voluntary name changes, this one was perhaps the most profound, as its popularity signaled for the first time that large portions of the African American community had come together to radically alter their community's identity. Islam was thus transforming African American culture on a mass scale.

Cultural Nationalism and the Black Arts Movement

The emergence of the 'black' identity, however, was not a purely folk phenomenon, nor was it exclusively and directly attributable to the NOI. To a great degree it was also cultivated by a generation of organizers, spiritual leaders, writers, and artists who emphasized new and often non-Christian cultural and religious identities for African Americans that helped them further dissociate from the old 'negro' self-image. Not since the 1920s had there been such an eruption of new cultural and religious currents in the black community. But the 1960s wave was unique, as in it Islam was not just one of many manifestations of the change—it was now a principal force whose constant presence was shaping this cultural transformation on numerous levels.

The desire for a return to traditional African religion and customs became a major component of the new cultural transformation, and two of the period's key leaders of organizations that helped popularize such concepts had multiple connections with Islam. The earlier of the two was Osejeman Adefunmi I, born Walter Eugene King in Detroit in 1928.²⁹ As a child, King developed an interest in African culture partly due to his reading books and *National Geographic* articles on the subject,³⁰ but also because his father had been in both the UNIA and MSTa and had even had a Moorish friend who traveled to the pyramids in

29 The following discussion is based largely on Hucks, *Yoruba Traditions*.

30 Note that this is similar to Charles X O'Neil, who in the late 1940s and early 1950s cut out pictures and articles from *National Geographic* to help teach African Americans about their 'original' history.

Egypt.³¹ Still, despite these influences deeply shaping King's future activities, by the time he reached his twenties, he had come to the conclusion that Garvey and most other black nationalist leaders had failed because they did not give their followers a deep enough African cultural background from which to draw—and Islam, he felt, was not a truly African religion. So King, taking the Adefunmi name, turned instead to the Yoruba-influenced traditions of Haitian Vodou and Cuban Santería. In 1956 he started his first group, the religiously eclectic Order of the Damballa Hwuedo, at 303 West 125th Street in Harlem. This community would develop relationships with various New York Muslims, including, purportedly, the NOI and the IMS (the latter of which was based in the same building as the Order), but Adefunmi would soon leave the group he created, starting a new organization more strictly based on a form of Santería in which most of the Catholic elements were removed—what was called at first the Shango Temple and later the Yoruba Temple.³²

Through Adefunmi's street preaching and his writing numerous books and pamphlets about African culture, as well as the group's public rallies, drum and dance ritual performances—which included the participation of the popular Moorish American drummer James Hawthorne 'Chief' Bey—and private ceremonies for hoodoo-leaning African Americans seeking mystical assistance, the Yoruba Temple became a surprisingly influential shaper of black cultural life. Largely thanks to Adefunmi's movement, black New Yorkers increasingly embraced what were seen as non-Islamic African names and clothing and learning about African history and languages.³³ Soon, other African-focused cultural organizations—such as Babatunde Olantunji's Drums of Passion drum and dance troupe and Simon Bly's Afro Arts Cultural Center—began springing up, sparking off a cultural wave of identifying with traditional non-Islamic African religiosity.³⁴ By the early 1960s the Yoruba Temple's cultural renewal had spread to multiple cities on the East Coast and in the Midwest, with new temples being set up in Chicago, Gary, and Philadelphia. By the end of the decade, Adefunmi and his movement were some of the most respected cultural nationalists in the African American community; even New York's NOI Muslims were reportedly visitors to and sometimes members of the Yoruba Temple, and

31 Ibid., 62.

32 Kihss, "Negro Extremist Groups"; Hucks, *Yoruba Traditions*, 76.

33 Hucks, *Yoruba Traditions*, 116–17; Kelley, *Africa Speaks*, 28–39. On August 12, 1961, the *New York Amsterdam News* labeled the Yoruba Temple the "Center of African Culture" for African Americans.

34 For a discussion of these various groups, see Smith and Sinclair, *Harlem Cultural/Political, passim*.

Adefunmi himself would lead a prayer at the first Malcolm X Day in 1966.³⁵ To a significant extent, then, this revival of what was considered traditional African religiosity—which included for Adefunmi an identification with ancient Egyptian religion—owed a real debt to the model and influence of African American Islam.

Out in Los Angeles another individual was developing his own African-focused cultural movement, but one that showed even greater reliance on African American Islam and would leave a more widely-known legacy than the Yoruba Temple. Ron Everett, the seventh son of a Maryland Baptist preacher and farmer, was put on his path of cultural revivalism while attending Los Angeles City College, where in the late 1950s he gained an interest in African politics and culture.³⁶ Everett soon began developing connections with African immigrants and black nationalists and, after he learned Swahili, started teaching the African language at an adult education institution. By early 1962, Everett, who had taken the surname Karenga, had also become a frequent visitor to the Los Angeles NOI temple, and in April that year even had a piece published in *Muhammad Speaks* in which he listed some of the more impressive nationalistic quotes he had heard in the Muslims' meetings.³⁷ In addition, having met with a visiting Malcolm X on several occasions, he was able to bring the minister out to speak at UCLA that fall, an event that both solidified his devotion to Malcolm and led to him joining another important Islam-influenced organization, the student-populated Afro-American Association (AAA).

The AAA was a Bay Area-based movement that aimed to cultivate black economic, cultural, and community development through establishing businesses, schools, and cultural centers. Its leader, Donald Warden, the son of an MSTA-influenced black nationalist, was highly critical of the mainstream civil rights movement for not building an economic base; he therefore had great regard for both Malcolm and the NOI's program, which to some extent served as a model for his group's activities.³⁸ In fact, AAA members—which included future famous black artists and the founders of the Black Panther Party—regularly visited the Nation's California temples and Warden himself would

35 "Malcolm X Honored in Graveside Rites," *New York Amsterdam News*, May 28, 1966, 6; Thomas A. Johnson, "Mourners Mark 'Malcolm X Day,'" *New York Times*, May 20, 1966, 34; Hucks, *Yoruba Traditions*, 110; Hunt, *Oyotunji Village*, 31.

36 This discussion relies primarily on Scot Brown, *Fighting for Us: Maulana Karenga, the US Organization, and Black Cultural Nationalism* (New York: New York University Press, 2003).

37 "Gems for Your Wisdom Book," *Muhammad Speaks*, April 1962, 34.

38 Khalid Abdullah Tariq al-Mansour, *Black Americans at the Crossroads—Where Do We Go from Here?* (n.p.: First African Arabian Press, 1981), 21, 69–139.

eventually convert to Islam, taking the Arabic-Muslim name Khalid Abdullah Tariq al-Mansour.³⁹ It was through this connection, then, that Karenga's worldview and plans became even more thoroughly shaped by the concepts and programs of the Nation.

By early 1965, however, Karenga had parted ways with the AAA. After Malcolm's death he began working with Hakim Jamal, a Malcolm devotee who had followed the minister from the NOI to the OAAU, to establish a group called US—'US' being a reference to the black community, as opposed to 'them,' the white community.⁴⁰ Although Jamal was officially recognized as US's founder, because most of the group's original members were Karenga's Swahili students, the teacher exerted a disproportionate influence over the organization. Due to this, when Jamal left US in the summer of 1966 to form a community-focused group called the Malcolm X Foundation, Karenga, who was much less politically- and revolutionary-oriented than Jamal, was able to lead the group in the direction he preferred. Karenga believed that the cultural revolution Malcolm had called for in the first OAAU address was needed before African Americans could truly overthrow white supremacy. He therefore started developing a Pan-African cultural system, based largely on Zulu and East African concepts, that US would begin practicing and spreading to other people. In formulating the group's ideas and practices, Karenga relied heavily on the teachings of the

39 Donna Jean Murch, *Living for the City: Migration, Education, and the Rise of the Black Panther Party in Oakland, California* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 81. It should be pointed out that Warden/al-Mansour has perhaps unintentionally implied that he was a Muslim as early as 1964, but it is unlikely that this was the case. In his book, *The Challenges of Spreading Islam in America and Other Essays* (n.p.: n.p., 1980), Warden/al-Mansour reprints two newspaper articles from 1964 that, in his reprints, refer to him as al-Mansour (see pp. 92–93). However, the original version of at least one of those articles—the one from the *Ghanaian Times*—refers to him as Warden. I have not been able to locate an original copy of the second article. It is notable, too, that the AAA newspaper from late 1964, the *Afro-American Dignity News*, also refers to him as Warden. It is likely that Warden/al-Mansour edited his name in the articles simply to avoid any confusion about references to him in his own book.

40 The group originally met at the Aquarian Bookstore in Los Angeles, which was run by Alfred Ligon, a black astrologer who had joined in the 1930s the Brotherhood of Light, which was a revival of the Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor. For more on the latter group and its connections to Islam in America, see Bowen, *HCTIUS*, 1:81–104, 139, 163–64, 216. On Ligon, see "All the Lights the Light: Alfred Ligon—Interviewed by Ranford B. Hopkins," accessed March 29, 2016, <http://oralhistory.library.ucla.edu/viewFile.do?itemId=29572&fileSeq=5&xsl=http://oralhistory.library.ucla.edu/xslt/local/tei/xml/tei/stylesheet/xhtml2/tei.xsl>.

NOI and Malcolm. Not only did he employ the NOI distinction between ‘negro’ and ‘black,’ he put great stress on the numbers six and seven, with the former being related to anything white and the latter related to anything African American. So, for example, he came up with “Six Character Types of White Liberals,” “Seven Aspects of US,” and “Seven Principles” of his religious program, with the program itself being called *Kawaida*—a seven-letter word. Karenga’s group also helped set up various public events for Kawaida rituals and black arts performances; it encouraged putting on commemorations for Malcolm’s birth and death; and it invented and promoted a week-long (seven-day) holiday in December called *Kwanzaa*, which eventually gained mass popularity in the black community. And despite the group’s focus on culture, Malcolm’s views on politics and self-defense were influential as well; US had its own armed paramilitary wing (whose members shaved their heads, as had been done in the NOI) and it encouraged forming cooperative umbrella organizations that were similar to what the OAAU had planned. Through these efforts, US would gain adherents on both American coasts and in the South.

Both the Yoruba Temple and US, along with other Islamic and Islam-connected movements, were also influential in the nation-wide shift in black artistic direction starting in the mid-1960s—what became known as the Black Arts Movement (BAM).⁴¹ The roots of this movement were diverse, but it is notable that some of the most influential artists in the BAM were in fact either Muslims themselves or were closely linked with Islam and groups that had strong Islamic influences. For instance, the leading BAM figure, Newark-based Imamu Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones), was connected to various local NOI and Sunni Muslims, the Yoruba Temple, and US, and in 1967 he converted to Sunni Islam through the AAUAA.⁴² Baraka’s friend, the well-known essayist,

41 There have been a few article- and chapter-length discussions of the Islamic influences on the Black Arts Movement; the most valuable are Melani McAlister, “One Black Allah: The Middle East in the Cultural Politics of African American Liberation, 1955–1970,” *American Quarterly* 51, no. 3 (1999): 622–56 and Abernethy, *Iconography*, 143–67 (the latter focuses on the influence of Malcolm X only). For broader discussions of the Black Arts Movement (which of course include multiple mentions of Islam and Malcolm), see James Edward Smethurst, *The Black Arts Movement: Literary Nationalism in the 1960s and 1970s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005); John H. Bracey, Jr., Sonia Sanchez, and James Smethurst, eds.—*Calling All Black People: A Black Arts Movement Reader* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2014). The present discussion draws from these and other sources.

42 Baraka, *Autobiography*, esp. 266–67. Baraka does not name the AAUAA, but he does report that his spiritual advisor was Imam Hesham Jaber, who was an AAUAA leader.

dramatist, and poet Larry Neal, although not a Muslim, had great respect for Malcolm and had even been a regular attendee of Philadelphia's Temple No. 12 during his college days.⁴³ Other prominent examples of the Muslim influence on BAM artists included the West Coast poet and playwright Marvin x (Marvin E. Jackmon), who, as his name signals, was deeply committed to the Nation's core doctrines, but had also been influenced by Sunnis, Qadianis, and Sufi teachings;⁴⁴ the essayist and poet Askia Muhammad Touré (Ronald Snellings), who, although he studied and shared with others the writings of the Sufi Inayat Khan, embraced Sunni Islam through one of the new Sunni movements springing up in New York during this period (see Chapter 15);⁴⁵ and the prominent female poet Sonia Sanchez, who joined the NOI in the early 1970s.⁴⁶ On top of these connections, all of the above men were also tied to Max Stanford's Malcolm-inspired RAM.⁴⁷

Islamic influences were especially widespread in the visual and dramatic arts side of the BAM. Two of the three founders of Harlem's popular Nyumba Ya Sanna art gallery were Muslim artists, Abdullah Aziz and Taiwo Shabazz, and their store displayed works by other Muslim painters, such as Abdul Rahman.⁴⁸ Islamic elements could also be found in work by non-Muslims, such as that of the popular St. Thomas-born artist Ademola Olugebefola, who combined Arabic script and a star and crescent with ankhs and pyramids in his cover artwork for Sonia Sanchez's short poem *Ima Talken Bout the Nation of Islam*.⁴⁹ Malcolm x, notably, was one of the most popular figures to be depicted in the African American visual art of the period; his face appeared in and on numerous murals, posters, buttons, sweatshirts, paintings, drawings, and sculptures.⁵⁰

43 Smethurst, *Black Arts Movement*, 163.

44 See x, *Somethin' Proper*, *passim*. For his non-NOI influences, see pages 110–12, 142–43, 161.

45 On his interest in Inayat Khan, see x, *Somethin' Proper*, 161.

46 References to Islam were interwoven in many of Sanchez's pieces, but see especially her *A Blues Book for Blue Black Magical Women* (Detroit: Broadside Press, 1974). Sanchez told *Muhammad Speaks*: "I found in the Nation of Islam a place where I could bring my twin sons and say, 'Yes I can put you here and you can grow. You can get a foundation for this so-called blackness that we have now, because you will not survive unless you have a foundation.'" See "A Conversation with Sis. Sonia 5x Sanchez," *Muhammad Speaks*, June 13, 1975, S-3.

47 Smethurst, *Black Arts Movement*, 165–71.

48 Abiola Sinclair, "Birth of the BAAD," in *The Harlem Cultural/Political Movements 1960–1970: From Malcolm x to "Black is Beautiful"*, ed. Abiola Sinclair (New York: Gumbs & Thomas, 1995), 95.

49 (Astoria: Truth Del. Corp., [1971?]).

50 Abernethy, *Iconography*, 145–49.

In the revived black theater, meanwhile, one could see not only Muslim actors like Yusef Iman, but also Muslim playwrights and blatantly-Islamic themes, such as in Baraka's famous 1966 play *Black Mass*, which dramatized the NOI myth of Yacub's creation of whites,⁵¹ and in Marvin X's 1969 'ritual' *The Resurrection of the Dead!*, which kept alive the old Dry Bones story that had been incorporated into the Nation's worldview.⁵² BAM theater was probably influenced to some extent by an NOI play written and performed by Louis Farrakhan, *Orgena* ('a negro' spelled backwards), which had become popular in the early 1960s, but the principal Islam-connected theme in BAM drama was, once again, Malcolm X. There were at least four plays and screenplays that focused primarily on the influential minister,⁵³ and, as scholar Graeme Abernethy has pointed out, the frequent imagery of physical violence in BAM drama was largely inspired by Malcolm's own life and rhetoric.⁵⁴

The image of Malcolm was also a central component in the most common and popular form of artistic expression in the BAM: poetry. Dozens of Malcolm-centered poems appeared in the many new black arts publications that were being produced at the time,⁵⁵ and an entire book, *For Malcolm*, published by Detroit's Broadside Press in 1969, was devoted to Malcolm encomiums.⁵⁶ BAM poetry, however, had diverse Muslim influences and manifestations. One was the NOI itself. Poetry had had a presence in the NOI since near its beginning; in fact, as early as 1934, a poetic praise of Fard by a female follower of Elijah Muhammad was published in the Temple People's newspaper, and in the early 1950s a poetically-inclined new convert, known later as Yusuf Hakim Ali, began privately writing his own Islam-themed poems, which would finally be published in 1975.⁵⁷ During the 1960s, although many NOI officials, including Muhammad, discouraged the writing of poetry, asserting that it was an inefficient form of communication, the art was being cultivated through both Chicago's University of Islam, which was run by the school administrator Christine Johnson—who was a poet herself—and *Muhammad Speaks*, which began

51 *Black Mass* is reprinted in Bracey et al., *soS*.

52 This was published in *Black Theatre* 1, no. 3 (1969): 26–27.

53 Robert Riche's *Message from the Grassroots*, Baraka's *Death of Malcolm X*, N.R. Davidson, Jr.'s *El Hajj Malik*, James Baldwin's *One Day, When I Was Lost*.

54 Abernethy, *Iconography*, 155.

55 Several have been reprinted in Bracey et al., *soS*, 309–24.

56 Dudley Randall and Margaret G. Burroughs, *For Malcolm: Poems on the Life and Death of Malcolm X* (Detroit: Broadside Press, 1969).

57 "Our Master Master W.D. Fard," *Final Call to Islam* 1, no. 4 (1934): 5–6; Yusuf Hakim Ali, *Spirit, Soul, Consciousness and Realization* ([Detroit]: [Agascha Productions], 1975).

frequently printing Muslim-authored poetry.⁵⁸ Because of—and in some cases, despite—these dynamics, several NOI and NOI-connected Muslims felt it was acceptable to write and publish their work outside of the group's newspaper. Pamphlets and small collections of poetry by Muslims, like the Pennsylvania-based Turhan Shabazz and Sterling 4x and the California-based Marvin x, Nathanael Ali, Zakariah H. Shabazz, and Wali Jalalu'Din Karim, began appearing in the new black bookstores that were opening up across the country—some of which, such as Yusuf Shakoor's Black History store in Atlantic City, were Muslim-owned—and many more Muslims were composing their written art either in private or for the numerous new Black Power newspapers, particularly *Black Newark*, which had multiple Muslim contributors for its poetry and prose pieces.⁵⁹ Some poets, meanwhile, may have, like many black youth, simply took on a Muslim name and subtle Muslim themes even though they were not Muslim themselves.⁶⁰ Islamic themes had become so prominent in the movement that the Muslim Ahmed Alhamisi was able to collect several essays and interviews with Baraka, Toure, and Marvin x—all of whom had also published numerous prose pieces over the years—on the topic of "Islam and Black Art" for his 1969 volume *Black Arts: An Anthology of Black Creations*.⁶¹

58 x, *Somethin' Proper*, 129; Shalaby and Chilcott, *Education of a Black Muslim*, 32. Johnson was a friend of Malcolm and left the NOI soon after he was killed. Her 1970 book of poetry contains two Malcolm-focused poems as well as a poem—written in the 1940s prior to her coming into contact with Islam—about the red flag; see Fatma Cristen [Christine Johnson], *Poems of Blackness* (Chicago: Free Black Press, 1970). That Johnson had taken the 'x' is noted by Lomax in *When the Word*, 83, but I have not seen it used in other discussions of the woman.

59 Marvin x's published works are numerous and relatively easy to find, so below I am listing the published works of other Muslim poets from that period: Turhan Shabazz, *Black Poetry for Every Occasion* (Pittsburgh: Oduduwa Productions, [1970?]); Sterling 4x, *The Honorable Elijah Muhammad: A Poem of Respect* (Philadelphia: New Pyramid Productions, Inc. [1970]); Sterling x, *We Righteous Builders of Black Nations* (Chester, PA: Pyramid Publications; New Pyramid Productions, Inc., 1971); Sterling D. Plumpp, *Muslim Men* (Detroit: Broadside Press, 1971); Nathanael Ali, *Excerpts from the Diary of a Young Black Slowly Going Mad ...* (San Francisco: Shabazz Publishing Company, 1970); Zakariah H. Shabazz, *Portrait of a Poet* (San Francisco: n.p., [1969] 1970); Wali [Wali Jalalu'Din Karim, aka Wendell D. Kinsey], *Songs of a Wandering Poet* (Compton: Solartist Productions, 1976); Bakeer, "I, Too," esp. 154–55; Muslim, "Profile of Newark's"; *Black Newark/Black News* (1968/1969).

60 This appears to be the case with 'Shabäzz,' who contributed poems for Chicago's white-edited *Stone Wind* magazine as well as perhaps the *Black Newark* contributor Yillie Bey; see, e.g., Al Simmons, ed., *St. Wind* (Chicago: Prophets, Inc., 1973); *Black Newark* (1968).

61 (Detroit: Black Arts Publications, 1969).

Islam was present, too, when poetry was mixed with various musical, dramatic, and verbal performances. Sonia Sanchez's *Malcolm/Man Don't Live Here No Mo* poetic play included a chorus sung to the tune of "Bluebird through My Window" with the words "Malcolm, Malcolm, where did u [*sic*] come from/we neeeeeEED to know."⁶² Carolyn M. Rodgers described her "Poems for Malcolm" as "raps"—a word that both connoted and suggested the merging of traditional poetry with the verbal displays popular among urban street youth.⁶³ California Muslim artists had numerous musician contacts—Marvin X, ever an experimenter, would sometimes even recite his poems with a drum accompaniment—and several Newark and New York poets were affiliated with the Jazz Arts Society, a musical community in which the Muslim influence became so strong that it led to internal dissension and its eventual collapse when non-Muslims opposed the heavy influence of the religion.⁶⁴ In some instances, music was used to turn Malcolm X himself, whose speaking style had a deep rhythmic quality to it, into a quasi-poet. In the early 1970s Bronx disc jockey Afrika Bambaataa began playing recordings of Malcolm X speeches over popular music at youth gang parties.⁶⁵ Bambaataa, who had been deeply influenced by Elijah Muhammad as well, was at the time attempting to unite various gangs and form a peaceful community that would, like the Yoruba Temple and US, be focused on African cultural identity.⁶⁶ By 1975 the group, which now included a Muslim-populated dance crew, had taken the name Zulu Nation and would soon be incorporating rapping—laying the groundwork for what would later become the influential cultural movement known as Hip Hop. Another Hip Hop pioneer, the Jamaica-born DJ Kool Herc, famous for his use of turntables as well as his promoting the Jamaican practice of reciting rhymes over music, was also coming into contact with Islamic elements in this early period when Five Percenters began attending the parties for which he was deejaying.⁶⁷

However, in the pre-1975 era, the fullest and most influential fusion of the black folk oratorical and musical traditions, Islam-influenced cultural nationalism, and African American high art came to life on May 19, 1968 at a Malcolm X birthday celebration held at Harlem's Marcus Garvey Park. Established

62 *Black Theatre* 1, no. 6 (1972): 24–27.

63 Carolyn M. Rodgers, *2 Love Raps* (Chicago: Third World Press, 1969).

64 X, *Somethin' Proper*, 129; Baraka, *Autobiography*, 237–38.

65 Jeff Chang, *Can't Stop Won't Stop: A History of the Hip-Hop Generation* (New York: Picador, 2005), 97.

66 Chang, *Can't Stop*, 90–101.

67 Knight, *Five Percenters*, 177.

on that date was the Last Poets, a collective of seven poets and drummers who, having been influenced by the Yoruba Temple and various Islamic teachings, merged street mentalities and styles with the new forms of black culture, poetry, and music.⁶⁸ References to Islamic concepts and themes abounded in the group's performances, which frequently stressed revolution and critiques of the white and black mainstreams. Through their art, the Last Poets seemed to have tapped into the heart of the new generation of African Americans; within a year they were recording albums, receiving numerous invitations to perform at colleges and cultural centers, and being given protection and support from the Black Panthers. They would even receive a feature article in *Muhammad Speaks*, a newspaper that was increasingly embracing other black artists like Baraka, Marvin x, Sanchez, and Nikki Giovanni.⁶⁹

A final important influence of Islam in the transformation of African American culture during this period came by way of the new black/Pan-African studies movement. The 1960s and early 1970s witnessed the emergence of a wave of both reprints of works by black-focused authors from the late-nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries, including Edward Blyden, J.A. Rogers, and Marcus Garvey, as well as numerous African American intellectuals who wrote and taught at colleges while focusing on spreading the 'black' perspective of history and culture. A few Muslim BAM artists, most notably Touré and Marvin x, obtained short-term teaching posts in California schools; Marvin x used this platform to require students at Fresno State to read *Muhammad Speaks*, Elijah Muhammad's writings, and Baraka's *Black Mass*.⁷⁰ However, the vast majority of the new intellectuals were not Muslims, and even if most had been inspired and culturally validated by Malcolm x's career, Islam for the most part played only a secondary role in this current. In fact, some of the non-Muslim black intellectuals who rose to fame during this period possessed very critical views of Islam. The most prominent of these individuals was Harlem's Yosef Ben-Jochannan, widely known as 'Dr. Ben.' In his 1970 book *African Origins of the Major Western Religions*, Dr. Ben argues, as the book's title implies, that Christianity, Judaism, and Islam can all be traced to Africa; however, he portrays Islam as an essentially Arab religion that is self-contradictory and possesses a legacy of supporting the African slave trade.

These assertions, however, would not go unaddressed in the Muslim community, and in 1973, Agadem Lumumba Diara, a Muslim from Detroit, pub-

68 See Abiodun Oyewole, Umar Bin Hassan, and Kim Green, *On a Mission: Selected Poems and a History of The Last Poets* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1996).

69 See March 14, 1969, 36.

70 x, *Somethin' Proper*, 200, 206.

lished a book-length refutation of Dr. Ben and other Pan-Africanist critics of Islam.⁷¹ Diara appears to have been the only Muslim during this period to run a relatively successful Pan-African black publishing house, Agascha Productions, which published at least two Pan-African-based prose books and at least four books of poetry.⁷² Although a self-proclaimed “devout” Ahmadi, Diara, who ran his company with his wife, Schavi, was clearly influenced by a wide variety of Islamic currents:⁷³ the covers of two of his books contain the NOI crescent and star image, he cites from *Muhammad Speaks*, he shows great reverence for Malcolm, and his writings demonstrate familiarity and agreement with a variety of traditional and modern Sunni movements, including those led by African Americans. Having come to his faith in the late 1960s,⁷⁴ like many other Islam-influenced cultural leaders and artists—and, as we will see, activists as well—Diara’s adherence to an Islam that he understood as deeply connected to numerous diverse and even contradictory elements of African American culture reflected the religion’s pervasiveness and widespread influence at the time. Even if fewer than twenty thousand people officially converted to Islam during this period (see Chapter 15), Islam itself was, in a very real sense, truly converting black culture.

Activism and Direct Action

After Malcolm’s death, beliefs about who he was and what he meant for America were, like Islam itself, tied up with several different, often contradictory, ideologies. For many African Americans who desired to live a middle-class life, Malcolm symbolized everything that was wrong with black culture: he was seen as an arrogant, angry demagogue whose influence only hurt the black community. But for many other African Americans, Malcolm and Islam primarily represented true black culture, self-respect, and a new liberating internal spiritual life. In the eyes of liberal whites, meanwhile, post-hajj Malcolm was often seen as the ideal promoter of the peaceful and just coexistence between races and religions—a view that more and more immigrant Muslims were adhering to as well, with some even beginning to refer to him as a *sha-*

71 See his *Islam and Pan-Africanism* (Detroit: Agascha Productions, 1973).

72 The above-mentioned collection of poetry by Yusuf Hakim Ali was one of these books.

73 The “devout” comment is in *Hey! Let a Revolutionary Brother and Sister Come in ...* (Detroit: Agascha House Productions, 1971), 26.

74 Diara, *Islam*, 46; Diara and Diara, *Hey!*, back cover.

heed, a martyr.⁷⁵ And for those who were interested in direct action, Malcolm and Islam were primarily looked at as the main representatives and sources of change—even revolution—in America. But, again, despite Malcolm's pre-eminence, other Islamic currents were impacting political thinking as well. Sometimes the Islamic influence was spread by way of Muslim converts who had joined the various direct action efforts of the period; sometimes it was through Muslims who, via their speeches and writings, were merely influencing the actual participants; and sometimes it was simply through the memories and images of the various Muslim figures who had played major roles in legitimizing both direct action and, in the eyes of some people, violent revolution. In the era of widespread direct action, then, Islam would shape the struggle for black equality and justice in myriad ways.

Riots

Surprisingly, the religion had only a limited influence over what was perhaps the most dramatic form of the black struggle during this period: the riot. African American-led uprisings had started breaking out in 1963, with major ones in Birmingham and Philadelphia and at least ten smaller ones erupting in eight different cities that year.⁷⁶ Initially those committing the riotous activities were protestors, but it was increasingly common for the rioters to be non-organized urban dwellers, making the events larger and more unpredictable. In 1964, there were four larger riots—two in New York City, one in Rochester, and one in Philadelphia—and twelve smaller riots, and by this time, the riots were clearly a product of urban resentment, as the majority of the participants were not involved with any nationalist or civil rights movement, even if some activist leaders, like Philadelphia's Shaykh Muhammad Hassan, were present in the streets. The year of Malcolm's assassination saw twenty-two small riots in nineteen cities and one major riot, which took place in the Watts neighborhood of Los Angeles that August, and it was in the latter riot that, out of all those that had occurred up to that point, the Islamic influence was felt the strongest. Film crews recorded protestors who, while wearing sweatshirts

75 Sulayman Shahid Mufassir, "Return of the Prodigal: The Rise of Orthodox Islam in Black America," *Black World* 22, no. 1 (1972): 59–61; [Ansar Al-Islam, Inc.], *The Orthodox Islamic Funeral Service* (n.p.: Ansar Al-Islam, Inc.; Islamic Information Service, n.d.). For more on the immigrant embrace of Malcolm, see Bowen, *HCTIUS*, 1:349–51.

76 Richard Maxwell Brown, *Strain of Violence: Historical Studies of American Violence and Vigilantism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), 325. The following riot numbers are taken from this source.

depicting Malcolm's face, were yelling "Long live Malcolm X!"⁷⁷ The Los Angeles Police Department believed, despite Malcolm having left the NOI, that the Nation was to blame for the chaos,⁷⁸ and this was perhaps true from a certain perspective. A survey conducted in late 1965 and early 1966 of nearly 600 black residents of the area discovered that, although the NOI as an organization and Elijah Muhammad as a leader were not especially admired, thirty percent of the local population agreed with many of the Nation's views, reflecting a growing militant attitude.⁷⁹

In the ensuing, increasingly frequent urban riots, similar pro-militant views were held, but there were—perhaps surprisingly—few direct connections to Islam. Nineteen sixty-six saw two major riots and fifty-one lesser ones; the following year the numbers shot up to eight major and 156 lesser riots; and in 1968 there were four major riots and 150 lesser ones, before tapering off in 1969 and 1970, which saw no major riots and fewer than one hundred smaller ones each year—and in almost none of these riots were Islamic themes recorded; in fact, Muslims were usually explicitly instructed by their ministers to not get involved with the unrest.⁸⁰ What is most notable about these riots is that they were generally much less violent towards humans than previous eras of riots in American history.⁸¹ The rioters' frustrations were typically taken out on the immediate signs of their oppressive environment: businesses and buildings; looting was rampant as was property destruction, although NOI businesses were usually left unharmed.⁸² The loss of life, then, was not nearly as bad as that of riots in periods where whites were the main participants. There were deaths, but even these were very different from those in riots before World War II as in the 1960s riots the vast majority of casualties were produced not by the rioters themselves, but by the police.

77 Horne, *Fire This Time*, 105–06, 125–26; Goldman, *Death and Life*, 378; Komozi Woodard, *A Nation within a Nation: Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones) and Black Power Politics* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 41.

78 Horne, *Fire This Time*, 125–27.

79 T.M. Tomlinson, "Determinants of Black Politics: Riots and the Growth of Militancy," *Psychiatry* 33, no. 2 (1970): 251–53.

80 Brown, *Strain of Violence*, 326. For an example of Muslim non-involvement, see New Libya FBI file, Airtel, 8/5/1968, 75–76.

81 For this conclusion and an overview of American rioting, see Paul A. Gilje, *Rioting in America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), esp. 157–61.

82 Again, see, for example, New Libya FBI file, Airtel, 8/5/1968, 75–76, which also mentions that local business owners traveled to the temple for protection during the Cleveland riot.

This is not to say, however, that no 1960s rioters ever killed or harmed anyone. In fact, guerrilla warfare tactics were employed, with snipers appearing in riots in several cities; RAM members even took credit for some of this activity and, as we will see, one small RAM-affiliated Muslim group's use of snipers actually set off a major riot in 1968.⁸³ Violence was also notoriously a part of the prison riots of the early 1970s, although, again, Muslims—especially NOI members but also Five Percenters and Sunnis—seem to have been involved not with violence but with the protection of prisoners and guards.⁸⁴ Islam therefore does not appear to have had a direct role in sparking the vast majority of the riots of the 1960s and early 1970s—at most, (with the one exception, discussed below) the Muslims, through their fearlessness in criticizing white America, had given many non-Muslims the confidence to lash out in ways that the NOI would not approve.

College Activism

College campuses, meanwhile, were sites of activism where Malcolm and the NOI's presence were consistently felt at a very deep level.⁸⁵ Malcolm was almost universally considered a saint among black students, who were increasingly reading his books, putting posters of him up on walls, holding commemorations on his birthday, and taking on a militant, FOI-like attitude and dress style. When student movements took over buildings on campuses across the country in 1968 and 1969, they frequently named the buildings 'Malcolm x University.' Two post-secondary schools in fact formally added 'Malcolm x' to their names—Malcolm x College and Malcolm x Liberation University—and some high schools informally adopted the name 'Malcolm x High.' The push for Black Studies programs at the time was also largely inspired by Malcolm, namely, his admonishment to African Americans that they learn their

83 Gilje, *Rioting in America*, 160; Akinyele O. Umoja, "The Black Liberation Army and the Radical Legacy of the Black Panther Party," in *Black Power in the Belly of the Beast*, ed. Judson L. Jeffries (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 226.

84 The most infamous of the prison riots was the Attica riot of 1971; for Five Percenter involvement, see Knight, *Five Percenters*, 160–64; for a firsthand account of NOI involvement see Richard x Clark, *Brothers of Attica*, ed. Leonard Levitt (New York: Links Books, 1973).

85 On this topic, see Harry Edwards, *Black Students* (New York: Free Press, 1970), 44–53; Martha Biondi, *The Black Revolution on Campus* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), *passim.*; Ibram H. Rogers, "'People all over the World Are Supporting You': Malcolm x, Ideological Formations, and Black Student Activism, 1960–1972," *Journal of African American History* 96, no. 1 (2011): 28–32.

history and culture, and his speeches and writings often became required readings in these courses.

Unsurprisingly, then, the most prominent student activist group, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), was also significantly influenced by Malcolm and the NOI.⁸⁶ Malcolm had met with its members on multiple occasions during the last year of his life, and soon after, especially as the group increasingly affiliated itself with RAM, the movement underwent a radicalization that reflected Malcolm's influence. Members were now required to read Malcolm's *Autobiography* and speeches, and it was SNCC leader Stokely Carmichael, who had long seen Malcolm as a great figure, who became largely responsible for turning the NOI-inspired concept of 'black' into the 'Black Power' slogan, which itself would dramatically influence African American culture and identity.⁸⁷

But Islam was also impacting college students in ways other than by inspiring the organized protest activities that were the focus of groups like SNCC. Besides the occasional BAM artist teaching in California classrooms, there were representatives of the NOI continuing Malcolm's well-established tradition of lecturing at colleges and universities, picking up the pace in the late 1960s as the black student movement expanded.⁸⁸ Now, however, the focus was much more on black colleges and universities as opposed to white-majority schools, which Malcolm had frequently visited. After Malcolm's murder, many white student liberals lost respect for the NOI, and invitations to Ivy League and other white-majority institutions appear to have all but dried up for a few years. It was therefore the newly-created black college student organizations that were responsible for bringing in the ministers—with the NOI's rising star, New York's Minister Louis Farrakhan, being a favorite guest. Outreach to black students also came through *Muhammad Speaks* articles that were explicitly written for college students, the most notable of which were those penned by college stu-

86 For an overview, see Rogers, "People all over the World," 23–26.

87 In the assessment of activist Rev. Albert Cleage, "Malcolm X laid the entire foundation for everything Stokely Carmichael says. Stokely hasn't said one word that was not completely implicit in everything that Malcolm X taught. He is just a voice carrying on upon the basic foundation that Malcolm X put down." See Albert Cleage and George Breitman, *Myths about Malcolm X* (New York: Merit Publishers, 1968), 11. Carmichael popularized the 'Black Power' saying in the summer of 1966.

88 See *Muhammad Speaks* for the following dates: October 22, 1965, 2, 3, 4, 10; March 25, 1966, 6; May 26, 1967, 25; August 23, 1968, 3; December 11, 1970, 18; January 22, 1971, 15; March 26, 1971, 23; March 17, 1972, 15; June 4, 1971, 15; October 13, 1972, 18; November 24, 1972, 15; June 15, 1973, 15; June 29, 1973, 18.

dent Anna 4X Karriem for her column “Islam in Tuskegee,” which ran from August 1968 through October 1970, roughly corresponding to the peak of the black student movement.

The presence of Muslim students in colleges was in fact growing at the time. Since at least the 1950s, one of the NOI’s goals was to gain more college-educated Muslims,⁸⁹ and as more and more middle-class African Americans joined the movement, this became a reality—with several of these students excelling in the sciences, business, education, and even Arabic studies.⁹⁰ By the mid-1960s, *Muhammad Speaks* was frequently printing articles by and about Muslim college students, showing an especially obvious display of pride when these students were graduates of the University of Islam.⁹¹ At a few historically black schools, most notably Central State University and North Carolina A&T State University, there was a sufficient number of NOI members that temples were actually established on campus, and at Howard University the Muslim population was large enough that in 1971 virtually the entire student body united to demand that the cafeteria always provide food that met Muslim dietary restrictions.⁹² In several cases, the college Muslim population rose because college activists had become disillusioned with negative aspects of the activist movement, particularly the self-interested motives of many of its leaders and the general absence of strong economic, cultural, and educational plans and programs.⁹³ For others ex-activist converts, the key factor was their feeling the Black Power organizations lacked a spiritual component, or at least one that was sufficient for helping them overcome their personal struggles.⁹⁴ This activist background of several college Muslim converts may at least partly explain why a number of Muslim students—or at least students that embraced

89 Marable, *Malcolm*, 152.

90 Maceo Hazziez, for example, graduated with an Arabic Studies degree from Columbia University in 1968; see *Muslim Journal*, January 26, 1990, 18.

91 See, for example, the issues from the following dates: April 16, 1965, 21; July 30, 1965, 23; July 25, 1969, 17, 19; August 1, 1969, 22; October 9, 1970, 18; January 29, 1971, 18; May 7, 1971, 11; June 11, 1971, 18; June 25, 1971, 18; January 21, 1972, 18; June 29, 1973, 18; October 5, 1973, 11; February 8, 1974, 3; July 12, 1974, 16; September 6, 1974, 5; February 14, 1975, 16.

92 *Muhammad Speaks*, April 18, 1969, 32; May 22, 1970, 18; May 21, 1971, 29.

93 Ula Taylor, “Elijah Muhammad’s Nation of Islam: Separatism, Regendering, and a Secular Approach to Black Power after Malcolm X (1965–1975),” in *Freedom North: Black Freedom Struggles Outside the South, 1940–1980*, eds. Jeanne Theoharis and Komozi Woodard (New York: Palgrave, 2003), 183–86.

94 See, e.g., Huber C. Palmer, “Three Black Nationalist Organizations and Their Impact upon Their Times” (PhD diss., Claremont Graduate School, 1973), 116–17; x, *Somethin’ Proper*, 104.

a Muslim identity—were in many instances high performing students and frequent submitters of essays, letters, and poems to black student newspapers—a few of which, notably, had Muslim editors.⁹⁵

Black Power Organizations

Outside of higher education, a whole generation of revolutionary-minded Black Power organizations started to spring up, and Islam was frequently penetrating and shaping these groups as well. To some extent, this was inevitable, as these movements were largely created because of Malcolm's murder. The martyrdom of their revolutionary hero—whom some explicitly referred to as a 'saint'⁹⁶—inspired many to organize themselves and in some cases pick up arms. In these groups, then, Malcolm x was nearly universally acknowledged as the principal luminary of their philosophy; several small organizations—like Detroit's Malcolm x Black Hand Society and the Sons of Malcolm and Hakim Jamal's Malcolm x Foundation—even incorporated his name directly into their own. And in many groups, members were explicitly instructed to read speeches of and writings about Malcolm. Such was the case, for example, in the Black Brotherhood Improvement Association, a secular group that had been founded in New York by Herman Ferguson, a former OAAU leader and the only non-Muslim member of the MMI.⁹⁷

Yet, despite the powerful influence of Malcolm's legacy, one could also see the frequent use of terms and concepts popularized by the NOI, MSTA, and other Muslim movements, and occasionally the mixed influences were combined in a single view of the world, suggesting that these Black Power activists were looking past Muslim sectarian differences and seeing Islam in general as representative of an assertive liberating force. Interestingly, except in cases where the group's head was a Muslim, this Islamophilic pattern of blending

95 See, e.g., Palmer, "Three Black Nationalist," 117; *The Voice* (Fayetteville State College), October 1967 and February 11, 1972; *Shaka* (San Jose State College), December 18, 1970 and February 5, 1971, MPSRC, reel 48; *Black Torch* (Temple University), January 26, 1972, MPSRC, reel 27.

96 Usually it was 'Saint Malcolm,' but in some cases, such as in the Sunni-influenced *Black Newark* newspaper, it was 'Saint Malik'; see *Black Newark*, April 1968, 2.

97 Ferguson, *An Unlikely Warrior*, 130–35, 150–63. Ferguson's path to the MMI can be summarized as follows: In 1963, he had asked NOI members in New York if he could join their group without becoming a Muslim; they tentatively agreed, but because the Chicago headquarters never approved it, he could not join, and at that point he decided that he would join any group Malcolm created if he ever split from the NOI; see Ferguson, *An Unlikely Warrior*, 124.

influences does not seem to have been dependent on whether or not an organization had Muslims in supporting leadership roles. Marion, Illinois's Black Culture Society, for example, had Muslims for its secretary and treasurer positions and another Muslim was a regular contributor to the group's *Black Pride* newsletter; yet their journal juxtaposed praise for Malcolm with frequent citations of the NOI's *Muhammad Speaks*.⁹⁸ Philadelphia's black power journal *The Black Ghetto* did not have an obvious direct Muslim influence, but it still contained references to 'nation,' 'our own,' and 'moon people'—all concepts popularized by Muslim groups.⁹⁹ Another Philadelphia paper, the *Black Manifesto News*, contained numerous references to Malcolm while at the same time it endorsed the local Black Education Development Conference, one of whose leaders was a Rev. Muhammad Kenyatta, a Christian who, as his chosen name indicated, was inspired by Muslims—both Malcolm and the NOI.¹⁰⁰ In Harlem, the people who ran the journal *Utambuzi* were explicitly supportive of three distinct Muslim figures and movements: Malcolm X, the Five Percenters, and "Allah's Messenger, The Honorable Elijah Muhammad."¹⁰¹ And in Cleveland, members of the Afro Set and New Libya were extremely eclectic, blending the teachings of Malcolm, the NOI, Sunni Islam, Sufism, the Moors, and the Moorish offshoot Clock of Destiny.¹⁰²

Mixed Islamic influences were also very popular in Newark, a city that, because it had a relatively high concentration of Black Power and Islamic groups, saw a unique array of Muslim identities and interactions. One of the most colorful Muslim figures was the Moor Clinton Hopson Bey, an itinerant activist who was involved with, besides several small organizations throughout the country, RAM and SNCC.¹⁰³ It was with the latter group that Bey and his common-law wife, Ozzie Bey, ran Newark's Black Liberation Center out of the couple's restaurant. A former NOI Muslim, Willie 16X, also known as Willie Williams and Saladine M. Mohaddan, was another Newark activist-slash-

98 See *Black Pride* in MPSRC, reel 5.

99 *The Black Ghetto* in MPSRC, reel 5.

100 *Black Manifesto News* in MPSRC, reel 5; Damani Keita Davis, "The Rise of Islam in Black Philadelphia: The Nation of Islam's Role in Reviving an Alternative Religious Concept within an Urbanized Black Population, 1967–1976" (MA thesis, Ohio State University, 2001), 100.

101 *Utambuzi* in MPSRC, reel 5.

102 Keegan, *Blacktown, U.S.A.*, 117–48, 317–45. For more on the Cleveland groups, see below.

103 US Congress, House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), *Subversive Influences in Riots, Looting, and Burning, Part 4 (Newark, N.J.O.)* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1968), 1884, 1888–90, 1946.

business owner, running an insurance firm called the Black Star Agency.¹⁰⁴ Known for his ability to be, as one police officer put it, “on the fringes of any movement,” in 1967 Willie started his own group called the Black Star Foundation, which, prior to his arrest for assault and battery, aimed to collect forty-three million dollars to start a ‘nation’ for African Americans. Willie also sometimes worked with the artist Amiri Baraka, as did Abu Ansar, who was apparently a Sunni Muslim and the first editor of *Black Newark*, a newspaper that in the late 1960s featured multiple black BAM artists, the AAUAA’s Hesham Jaaber, RAM’s Max Stanford, Karenga, numerous references to Malcolm X, and even an advertisement for a Moor-owned business.¹⁰⁵ Baraka, meanwhile, because of his unrelenting activism, was affiliated with several other Muslims as well, including the speaker Omar Ahmed as well as the former NOI and MMI member Charles Kenyatta, the notorious head of New York’s violent, Malcolm-inspired Mau Mau organization.¹⁰⁶

Although the majority of the Black Power groups did not participate in armed violence, some, like Kenyatta’s Mau Mau, did—or they at least attempted to—and in several cases they similarly had mixed Islamic influences. This was a feature, for example, of the small, but nationally-spread Black Liberation Front, a RAM-connected organization that in early 1965 planned to plant bombs on the Statue of Liberty, the Washington Monument, and the Liberty Bell, which it considered false symbols of liberty.¹⁰⁷ One of the members of this group, Khaleel Sayyed, who was apparently a Sunni Muslim and a member of SNCC, had been sent from Howard University by RAM to join the OAAU and the MMI prior to planning the bombing activities.¹⁰⁸ After Sayyed’s arrest in early 1965, the group put together a pamphlet that was intended to recruit more Howard students, and on the cover was a quote by Malcolm X in which diplomacy was rejected as a white trick.¹⁰⁹ Other BLF members may have also been Sunnis, but at least one Muslim BLF leader was happy to praise *Muhammad Speaks*.¹¹⁰

104 Ibid., 1949.

105 Ibid., 1943; *Black Newark/Black News* (1968/1969).

106 HUAC, *Subversive Influences*, 1918–19, 1943.

107 The BLF had been deeply connected to RAM since its inception in the summer of 1963; see Ahmad, *We Will Return*, 110, 119, 122, 126, 129, 130. See also the BLF FBI file.

108 “Conspirators Will Appeal,” *Austin Statesman*, June 15, 1965, 21; BLF FBI file, Report, 5/21/1965, New York file 100–154851, 16.

109 BLF FBI file, Airtel, SAC, WFO to Director, FBI, 3/5/1965.

110 See, e.g., “College Students Thank the Messenger for M.S.,” *Muhammad Speaks*, December 25, 1970, 14.

Cleveland's New Libya movement, meanwhile, was involved with one of the most historically significant incidents of violence connected to a Black Power group, and again multiple Islamic influences were present. The prime minister of the group, Fred Ahmed Evans, a decorated Korean War veteran with a history of assault, was a locally-influential astrologer-prophet whose views had been significantly shaped by Emmett 'Tonelli' Cobb, one of the prominent transmitters of the mixed MSTA and NOI teachings that made up the Clock of Destiny doctrines.¹¹¹ Evans, who was for a time a mentor of Umar Ben Hassan of the Last Poets, was also affiliated with Harrell x (Harrell Jones), who led, with his Muslim 'deputy prime minister' Sababa Akil, the Afro Set and had reportedly recruited Evans into RAM.¹¹² The New Libya organization seems to have first coalesced in 1967 in Evans' newly-established African American culture and astrology store where eventually a small following of mostly male black youths—sixty people at its peak—started regularly gathering.¹¹³ There, despite plans for holding classes on the Bible and black history,¹¹⁴ the members spent most of their time in informal discussions of local racial politics and the 'beastly' nature of whites; they also frequently listened to recordings of Malcolm x speeches and planned to commit crimes and violence during the following summer's riots, which they believed were inevitably going to take place.¹¹⁵ As it would turn out, however, New Libya was not to be a mere riot participant—it was an instigator. During the night and early morning of July 23 and 24, 1968, hours after being evicted from their latest meeting place, Evans and about four of his followers—most of whom used Moorish and Arabic names—participated in a deadly sniper-involved shootout with police that resulted in a massive riot breaking out in the city.¹¹⁶ This was not the first time that police had engaged

111 Louis H. Masotti and Jerome R. Corsi, *Shoot-out in Cleveland: Black Militants and the Police: July 23, 1968* (New York: Praeger, 1969), 21–22. For more on Evans and his group, see Keegan, *Blacktown, U.S.A.*, 317–45; Leonard N. Moore, *Carl B. Stokes and the Rise of Black Political Power* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 79–99; the New Libya FBI file.

112 Oyewole et al., *Last Poets*, 25–26; Ahmad, *We Will Return*, 136–37; Keegan, *Blacktown, U.S.A.*, 117–48.

113 The New Libya FBI file indicates that the shop was primarily a hangout for undisciplined, but militant-minded youths who, during their nationalistic discussions, regularly consumed alcohol and marijuana—in many ways, then, the group paralleled New York's Five Percenters.

114 The fact that this group planned to have Bible classes suggests that it had been influenced by the Nation, which had run its own 'Bible Study Classes' wherein it taught Muslims how to use the Bible to proselytize to Christians.

115 See the reports from February to June 1968 in the New Libya FBI file.

116 New Libya FBI file; Masotti and Corsi, *Shoot-out in Cleveland, passim*.

in gunfire with black militants, but the Cleveland incident was the first time that such a shootout sparked off a large-scale riot. From that point forward, many Americans, black and white, would strongly identify urban riots with organized black militancy. While such a connection made most people more fearful of and angry towards both phenomena, for militants this public perception convinced them that the black masses were truly supporting their cause. After Evans was sentenced for execution in September 1969 for his role in the shootout, *Utambuzi* praised him as “what all black men and women must be—defenders of their nation and people.”¹¹⁷ For many it seemed that there was now proof that Malcolm’s prediction of revolutionary guerrilla warfare had a realistic chance of success.

The more well-known Black Power organizations similarly showed mixed Islamic connections, although, again, reverence for Malcolm was dominant. Stanford’s RAM, as we have already seen, was strongly linked to Malcolm, and after his death developed connections with various Muslims in Cleveland and Newark.¹¹⁸ In 1965, the group also fostered ties with New York’s Five Percenters and, over a year before the Black Panther Party was established, organized some of them into what was called the Black Panther Social and Athletic Club. Other leading RAM affiliates in the city included one Muhammad Zaid and the former MMI and OAAU member and current leader of the Black Brotherhood Improvement Association, Herman Ferguson.¹¹⁹ Prominent Muslim RAM members were also in Pittsburgh and Philadelphia, the latter of which had a local cell that was especially Muslim-heavy, as several ex-NOI members joined and led the group, which instituted a youth paramilitary training program that was very similar to the training of the FOI. In October 1968, RAM, faced with increasing government repression, dissolved itself with the hope that it would continue as a nameless, decentralized, and underground revolutionary movement that would serve as the ‘left wing’ of a variety of Black Power organizations—it thus became a foundational component in the development of what was later known as the Black Liberation Army.¹²⁰ Stanford would personally go underground as well, and he would soon convert to Islam, taking the name Muhammad Ahmad.¹²¹

117 Ardele Jones, “A Soul Speaks out,” *Utambuzi* 3, no. [8?] (November 5, 1969), 10, MPSRC, reel 5.

118 The following is based almost entirely on Ahmad, *We Will Return*, 144–60.

119 Ferguson, *An Unlikely Warrior*, 160–62; Ahmad, *We Will Return*, 151.

120 On RAM’s connections with the BLA, see Umoja, “Black Liberation Army,” 226, 229.

121 Ahmad was possibly identifying as a Muslim in 1968, or perhaps even earlier, as that year he was noted as having the alias of Allah Muhammad (see US Congress, House Un-

The year 1968 marked the birth of yet another important Black Power organization with Muslim connections. In March, Detroit's Malcolm x Society sponsored a Black Government Conference, which ended with one hundred people signing a declaration of independence from the United States, forming what was called the Republic of New Africa (RNA).¹²² The two main figures behind the RNA were the brothers Milton and Richard Henry, later known as Imari and Gaich Obadele. The Obadeles were the well-educated civil rights-minded activists who had started GOAL and the Freedom Now Party, both of which, as we have seen, showed significant support for Malcolm during the last years of his life. When Malcolm was killed, the Obadeles became greatly disillusioned with reformist activities and decided to organize in Detroit the Malcolm x Society, which focused on self-defense from police brutality, connecting the African American struggle with anti-colonial movements, and demanding that the US give land to African Americans so they could have a separate 'nation'—the NOI and Malcolm x influences were clear. After building contacts with Audley Moore,¹²³ Adefunmi, Stanford, Robert F. Williams, Herman Ferguson, and Malcolm's widow, Betty Shabazz, the group was able to organize the March 1968 conference and start the RNA. Arguing that the Fourteenth Amendment offers but does not actually grant citizenship for black people, the RNA demanded that the American government give African Americans, first, five Southern states and, later, at an unspecified time, reparations. Although the RNA did not participate in guerrilla warfare, it did have a military force populated by former RAM members, and the group advocated for others to employ such

American Activities Committee, *Subversive Influences*, 1947). Given that the name 'Allah' was not common in most Muslim groups but was often used by Five Percenter, it is likely that if this was indeed a name Stanford used, he had taken it while interacting with that group. Stanford did not embrace Sunni Islam, however, until after 1975.

122 This discussion of the RNA relies primarily on four sources: Donald Cunnigen, "The Republic of New Africa in Mississippi," in *Black Power in the Belly of the Beast*, ed. Judson L. Jeffries (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 93–115; Raymond L. Hall, *Black Separatism in the United States* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1978); Imari Abubakari Obadele, *Foundations of the Black Nation* (Detroit: House of Songhay, [1975]); Dan Berger, "The Malcolm x Doctrine: The Republic of New Afrika and National Liberation on US Soil," in *New World Coming: The Sixties and the Shaping of Global Consciousness*, eds. Karen Dubinsky, Catherine Krull, Susan Lord, Sean Mills, and Scott Rutherford (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2009), 46–55.

123 Moore, who will be discussed in more detail below, insisted that she had actually initiated and organized the RNA, but was not pleased with how it turned out because she felt the group did not plan properly; see Gilkes, "Interview with Audley," 163.

a style of warfare with the hope that it would stimulate the government to accede to its demands.¹²⁴ The RNA also established what was called a ‘provisional government’ with ‘consulates’ in several major cities across the country, and in 1971 it set up its headquarters in Jackson, Mississippi where the group took steps to start building the future capital of its new nation, calling it El Malik, in homage to Malcolm. However, after several US government attempts at repression between 1969 and 1981, the RNA fizzled out. Memory of the RNA would nevertheless linger and its ‘Free the Land’ motto would influence Muslim nationalist efforts into the 1980s.¹²⁵

The most famous Black Power organization, the Black Panther Party, was also strongly connected to diverse Islamic currents, even if it was typical in that Malcolm was its primary Muslim influence.¹²⁶ The BPP founder Huey P. Newton, a college friend of Marvin X and a former member of Donald Warden’s Afro-American Association, had been inspired by Malcolm when he heard him speak in Oakland in the early 1960s. He soon began studying black history and even visited the local NOI temple, but, because he did not like its religious teachings, he refused to join, and by 1966, he desired to create a new non-Islamic movement that would be based primarily on the philosophy of Malcolm. Along with Bobby Seale, who also was an avid attendee of the Oakland temple,¹²⁷ Newton studied carefully Malcolm’s speeches and writings and in the fall established the BPP, an organization whose “Ten-Point Program” was clearly modeled on the NOI’s “What the Muslims Want.” Soon, the Panthers were a national revolutionary movement that saw Malcolm as its prophet. Malcolm’s *Autobiography* and a book of his speeches became required reading in its classes, and its *Muhammad Speaks*-inspired newspaper, upon its 1967 launch, pledged allegiance to the man who had so deeply inspired its founders and regularly announced information about his memorials and commemorations. In addition, Muslims and ex-Muslims had a prominent presence in the group: two of the most famous Panthers, Eldridge Cleaver and Alprentice ‘Bunchy’ Carter,

124 On the RAM connections, see Muhammad Ahmad, “RAM: The Revolutionary Action Movement,” in *Black Power in the Belly of the Beast*, ed. Judson L. Jeffries (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 270.

125 The most notable would be the Islamic Republic of New Afrika, which developed in the mid-1980s.

126 An incredibly useful overview of this topic is in Rogers, “People all over the World,” 26–28. For more on the BPP’s founders and overall development, see Murch, *Living for the City* and Joshua Bloom and Waldo E. Martin, Jr., *Black against Empire: The History and Politics of the Black Panther Party* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013).

127 Cummins, *Rise and Fall*, 95.

had joined the NOI in prison prior to their Panther membership—Marvin X was apparently responsible for connecting Cleaver to the BPP¹²⁸—and in almost every BPP local chapter there were at least a few Muslims, most of whom had come out of the NOI.¹²⁹

Because the greater New York area was Malcolm X's main home and was also the location of two of the largest NOI temples in the country, Harlem's Temple No. 7 and Newark's Temple No. 25, it was almost inevitable that Islam would play a disproportionately larger role in the area's main Panther chapter. As it turned out, most of the New York BPP's core members, known in the press as the 'Panther 21,' had in fact either been Muslims (NOI, Moorish, and Ahmadi) or had at least flirted with the NOI prior to joining the group.¹³⁰ However, the most famous Islamic element to rise from the New York Panther community was the name Shakur (Arabic for 'the thankful'), which would later be known worldwide as the surname of the rapper Tupac. The name was initially used by El Hajj Sallahudin Shakur, a man who had joined the NOI in the early 1960s and had taken the Shakur name in the same way that many other NOI Muslims were unofficially adopting Arabic names at the time.¹³¹ Upon learning of his father's conversion, Sallahudin's son, Lumumba, who had independently joined the NOI while in prison, adopted the name out of respect for his father. After the son's release, Lumumba and Sallahudin—the latter having been a former member of the MMI—briefly joined the OAAU before becoming members of the BPP in 1968.¹³² Because of their strong personalities and their well-

128 X, *Somethin' Proper*, 124–25.

129 Muslim names are mentioned in numerous books and essays on local BPP branches; see the following volumes: Yohuru Williams and Jama Lazerow, eds., *Liberated Territory: Untold Local Perspectives on the Black Panther Party* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008); Judson L. Jeffries, ed., *Comrades: A Local History of the Black Panther Party* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007); Judson L. Jeffries, ed., *On the Ground: The Black Panther Party in Communities across America* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2010); Andrew Witt, *The Black Panthers in the Midwest: The Community Programs and Services of the Black Panther Party in Milwaukee, 1966–1977* (New York: Routledge, 2007).

130 Turner, *Islam in the*, 143; Kuwasi Balagoon, Joan Bird, Cetewayo, Robert Collier, Dharuba, Richard Harris, Ali Bey Hassan, Jamal, Abayama Katara, Kwando Kinshasa, Baba Odinga, Shaba Ogun Om, Curtis Powell, Afeni Shakur, Lumumba Shakur, and Clark Squire, *Look for Me in the Whirlwind: The Collective Autobiography of the New York 21* (New York: Random House, 1971), esp. 237–49. It is important to point out that none of them appear to have been high-ranking Muslims, and several admitted to indulging in drug use, adopting their own Arabic names, and polygamy, all of which were against the official rules of the NOI.

131 Balagoon et al., *Look for Me*, 242.

132 Balagoon et al., *Look for Me*, 242; Kalonji Jama Changa, "Tupac 2Pac and the Revolutionary

known commitment to Malcolm, the Shakurs were highly respected among the local Panthers, and this led to many friends and family members taking the Shakur name out of respect.¹³³ Although Tupac's father was Billy Garland, a Jersey City Panther, the son received the surname Shakur from his Black Panther mother, Afeni, who had briefly married Lumumba in 1968 and, after the two separated, married Mutulu Shakur, another Panther friend from the region.¹³⁴ In addition to the core Muslim and Shakur members, though, the New York BPP worked in cooperation with a number of Five Percenters—some of whom were RAM affiliates and served as the group's Black Guard—as well as another RAM affiliate, the former MMI and OAAU member Herman Ferguson.¹³⁵ There were also apparently some direct ties with the NOI, but relations were severely dampened due to the actions of the FBI's counterintelligence program, COINTELPRO, which aimed to create bad blood between the New York BPP and the Muslims.¹³⁶

In 1970, Newton was released from prison after a two-and-a-half-year incarceration. Because by that time he had begun to reject much of the revolutionary ideology of his earlier years in favor of reformist ideas, the BPP began to experience a number of schisms and membership decline, particularly after the group started both expelling those members who were involved with 'unauthorized' military and clandestine activities and experiencing increased COINTELPRO pressure.¹³⁷ Several Panthers subsequently joined the RNA, but the

Shakur Family," June 13, 2006, accessed April 7, 2016, <https://www.thuglifearmy.com/interviews/3578-tupac-2pac-and-the-revolutionary-shakur-family.html>.

133 Changa, "Tupac 2Pac."

134 XXL Staff, "True Blood: Billy Garland, Tupac's Father, Speaks [Feature From the Sept. 2011 Issue]," *XXL*, September 10, 2012, accessed April 7, 2016, <http://www.xxlmag.com/news/2012/09/true-blood-billy-garland-tupacs-father-speaks-excerpt-from-the-sept-2011-issue/?trackback=tsmclip>. Afeni would later marry Mutulu Shakur, the brother of Assata Shakur, who became Tupac's stepfather and was involved with the RNA and various BLA activities. The famous California Panther Geronimo Pratt was Tupac's godfather. For more on Afeni's time as a Panther, see Joseph, *Panther Baby*, *passim*.

135 Umoja, "Black Liberation Army," 229; Balagoon et al., *Look for Me*, 247–48; Ahmad, *We Will Return*, 144–48.

136 COINTELPRO file, Airtel, Director, FBI to SAC, New York, 12/21/1970; Airtel, SAC, New York to Director, FBI, 12/21/1970. On the FBI's attempt to foster division between the Muslims and the BPP in other cities, see, e.g., COINTELPRO file, Memorandum, SAC, Richmond to Director, FBI, 12/31/1970; Airtel, Director, FBI to SAC, Richmond, 1/14/1971; Memorandum, SAC, Buffalo to Director, FBI, 12/10/70.

137 For a summary of these events, see Umoja, "Black Liberation Army," 230–39. For more, see Gaidi Faraj, "Unearthing the Underground: A Study of Radical Activism in the Black Pan-

most famous outlet for the radicals was the underground Black Liberation Army. RAM's underground revolutionary community had been organizing people, including Black Panthers in New York, since the 1960s, but with the Newton rupture this new movement began to grow at a much faster rate. In 1971, BLA members across the country killed several police officers, and the most notorious of these incidents were those committed by New York members, many of whom were either Muslims or had Arabic names, such as the famous non-Muslim and sister of Mutulu, Assata Shakur, who like many others took her surname out of respect for the prominent Panther family.¹³⁸

Al Sultan Nasser Ahmad Shabazz

In some cases, particularly when Black Power-connected groups were able to survive for more than a few years, their Islamic influences and leanings changed over time. This seems to have been the case for the community of people who followed Al Sultan Nasser Ahmad Shabazz. Shabazz's background remains somewhat obscure, but the rumors and clues that we have suggest that the path he probably took as a black nationalist was a rather winding one. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, when Shabazz achieved a small level of prominence as a Black Power leader in California, it was said that he had formerly gone as Charles CX DeBiew while an active member of the San Francisco NOI temple, and that he had even helped establish the temples in Seattle and Portland.¹³⁹ Shabazz also claimed at the time that he had previously been a member of the Communist Party for eleven years, and that when the Party did not help him while he served a four-year prison sentence in Louisiana, he came to the conclusion, like many black Communists of that era, that the organization was exploiting its black members, and he therefore left the group.¹⁴⁰ Although records concerning his supposed membership in the Communist Party have not yet surfaced, periodical articles from 1961 confirm that a Charles CX DeBiew was indeed a member of the San Francisco temple and, having become a minister, had also set up the Portland NOI group in the summer of that year.¹⁴¹ However, the available FBI records concerning the activities of the Seattle

ther Party and the Black Liberation Army" (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2007).

138 Assata Shakur, *Assata: An Autobiography* (Westport, CT: Lawrence Hill & Company, 1987), 186.

139 Ogbar, *Black Power*, 132; Reginald Major, *A Panther Is a Black Cat* (New York: William Morrow & Company, 1971), 109.

140 Major, *A Panther Is a Black*, 110.

141 "Jail 2 Muslims for Fighting Calif. Bailiffs," *Jet*, June 15, 1961, 53; William Hilliard, "Leader of

temple during the early 1960s refer not to a Minister Charles CX DeBiew, but rather to a Minister Charles X Perkins, an individual who claimed to have been born into an MSTA family in Philadelphia but had embraced the NOI in the 1950s after years of not following any religion. Despite the fact that in the late 1960s and early 1970s Shabazz was not identified either as a Perkins or as having come from a Moorish family, it is very likely that he was this individual. Perkins, first of all, was reported as having ties to both Portland and California, just like DeBiew/Shabazz, and like DeBiew/Shabazz, he too he had served a few—“two or three”—years in prison.¹⁴² In addition, although Perkins and DeBiew/Shabazz shared a low opinion of communists, Perkins was still willing to attend a meeting with several white communists and socialists in 1962, suggesting at least an appreciation of their cause.

Interestingly, it is that very meeting with communists and socialists that most firmly connects Perkins with DeBiew/Shabazz. According to FBI records, on July 4 of that year, Perkins and several other Muslims visited the apartment of Gloria Warner Martin, a white supporter of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee, a pro-Cuba, white-dominated activist organization in the US and Canada.¹⁴³ Several other white FPCC supporters, some of whom were also in the Socialist Workers Party, were in attendance that day as well, as it was they who had been responsible for bringing to Seattle the guest of honor, the ex-communist, ex-Garveyite, and current independent black nationalist Audley Moore, later famously known as ‘Queen Mother.’¹⁴⁴ Moore—who decades earlier had been influenced by the communist notion that African Americans should possess their own land in North America—had recently become determined to form, just in time for the upcoming centennial of the Emancipation Proclamation, a slavery reparations movement to obtain both land and repayment from the US government so that American blacks could separate from whites, and was now on a tour attempting to organize support for her cause.¹⁴⁵

Portland Established Muslims Denies ‘Black Supremacy’ Movement Charge,” *Oregonian*, August 31, 1961, 8.

- 142 NOI FBI file, Memorandum, SA Erling W. Harbo to SAC, Seattle, 8/12, 8/19, and 8/30/1962.
- 143 National Emancipation Proclamation Centennial Observance Committee (NEPCOC) FBI file, Memorandum, SA Erling W. Harbo to SAC, Seattle, 7/25/1962. Martin’s support for the FPCC is attested to in FPCC FBI file, Memorandum, SA Erling W. Harbo to SAC, Seattle, 6/26/1961, 2. For more on the FPCC, see Van Goss, *Where the Boys Are: Cuba, Cold War America and the Making of a New Left* (New York: Verso, 1993).
- 144 See *ibid.*, and compare the names mentioned in both. Moore was given the name ‘Queen Mother’ in 1972 by the Ashanti people while she was visiting Africa.
- 145 See Gilkes, “Interview with Audley,” *passim.*, esp. 153–63.

By that time, Moore had already been in contact with the NOI for at least four years. In the fall of 1958, at which time Moore held residences in both New York and New Orleans, Moore allowed a newly-formed NOI group in the latter city to hold meetings for free at the boarding house she owned.¹⁴⁶ Although not a Muslim, Moore seems to have had found common cause with the group, and was observed attending New Orleans Nation meetings as late as 1961.¹⁴⁷ She may have been visiting New York temples as well during this period, as she would later claim that both she and her sister Eloise were influential in teaching Malcolm X and Muhammad about Africa.¹⁴⁸ Nevertheless, prior to her arrival in Seattle, the available evidence suggests that Moore's new reparations efforts were not connected with any Muslims up until her West Coast visit that year.

It seems that the key link between Seattle's Muslims and Moore was Barry X McCray, the individual who had been responsible for bringing Islam to Seattle from California in 1961, and who was also a member of both the local SWP and the FPCC.¹⁴⁹ McCray was apparently also responsible for connecting his white radical associates with local non-Muslim black activists and Muslims—including not only a fellow Muslim SWP sympathizer, but also the aforementioned Charles X Perkins and his wife, Mary X.¹⁵⁰ The connection with the Muslims became a decisive factor for Moore's movement when, at the July 4 meeting, Charles X became extremely vocal in his belief that Moore should not be dependent on her white supporters, and should instead come stay with him.¹⁵¹ For her own part, Moore, who was never afraid of denouncing whites anyway, started berating her hosts, and announced her belief that the Muslims would make key allies in her movement as they had a massive influence among African Americans across the country. By the end of the tense meeting

146 Audley Moore FBI file, Memorandum, 9/7/1960; Report, 7/2/1962, New Orleans file 100-3751, 8-9, 23.

147 Ibid.

148 Gilkes, "Interview with Audley," 151. Moore here probably overstates her sister's influence on Malcolm—since we know he had been reading African history back in his prison days in the late 1940s—but to what extent Eloise was influential is unclear.

149 See Stanton H. Patty, "Black Muslims Push Tentacles toward Seattle" and "Black Muslim Member Gives forth with Torrent of Hate," *Seattle Times*, May 16, 1961 and Barry McCray's FBI file. The information in his file suggests that McCray was the only black member of the local FPCC group.

150 The Muslim sympathizer of the SWP was Mary Wright (see NOI FBI file, Memorandum, SA Erling W. Harbo to SAC, Seattle, 6/26/1961, 3 and NEPCOC FBI file, Memorandum, SA Erling W. Harbo to SAC, Seattle, 7/25/1962). In 1961, Charles CX DeBiew's wife's name was listed as Iantha.

151 NEPCOC FBI file, Memorandum, SA Erling W. Harbo to SAC, Seattle, 7/25/1962.

the non-Muslim African Americans in attendance had been won over to Moore and Perkins's views and were now committed to the cause of obtaining a separate state and reparations.

Over the next several months, the connection between the reparations effort and the Muslims was further solidified. Following the July 4 meeting, another gathering was held at Charles x's home and at that time Moore, Mary x, and five local non-Muslim female black activists organized with the support of the white SWP member Tom Warner the Northwestern Council of what was being called the Reparations Committee; Mary x—the group's sole official Muslim member—was named the group's 'Good and Welfare Chairman.'¹⁵² After this important organizing event, Council member and prominent Seattle activist Flo Ware then traveled with Moore to San Francisco where Moore organized another local branch for her movement and was almost certainly hosted by Muslim associates of Charles x; meanwhile the Council's secretary-treasurer, Althea Darling, stayed behind and worked with Mary x to run a Muslim-owned fruit stand.¹⁵³ In mid-August, after Ware returned to Seattle to find that the Council needed reorganizing, she and Charles x announced at an NOI meeting that they were going to do just that, with Charles x promising that he would make the reorganized Council a part of the local NOI and that he would serve as its chairman.¹⁵⁴ Two months later, after visiting several other states and earning the allegiance of other black nationalists, including the Yoruba Temple's Adefunmi, Moore held in Philadelphia a National Emancipation Proclamation Centennial Conference, in which resolutions were made concerning the movement's goals, and members were elected to serve on the national council of what was soon called the Reparations Committee for United States Slaves' Descendants, Inc.¹⁵⁵ Nasser Shabazz would later claim that not only was he in attendance at the conference, but that he was named the group's national chairman at the time.¹⁵⁶ Given, then, that in a booklet Moore published about the meeting around late 1963 it was a "Charles H. Davis" who was

152 See the photograph with the caption beginning with "Members of Northwestern Council, Reparations Committee" in the *Los Angeles Herald-Dispatch*, July 28, 1962, Florestine Ware Papers, Box 1/20–21, Clippings, University of Washington Libraries Special Collections. My thanks to James Stack for locating this document.

153 NOI FBI file, Memorandum, SA Erling W. Harbo to SAC, Seattle, 8/30/1962.

154 Ibid.

155 As alluded to in a note in Chapter 13, it is very likely that Wallace Muhammad, who called a group he formed in Philadelphia in 1963 the Afro-Descendant Upliftment Society, had come into contact with Moore's reparations movement.

156 AD NIP, *African Descendants Manifesto* ([San Francisco]: [AD NIP], 1973), esp. 21.

named the national chairman, it is extremely likely that Shabazz/Charles CX DeBiew, Charles H. Davis, and Charles x Perkins were all one and the same.¹⁵⁷

Although Moore's efforts were vitally important in the popularization of the concept of reparations during the Black Power era and afterwards, her organization quickly fell apart and its members looked for new outlets for their nationalist visions. It appears that it was in 1967 that Shabazz resurfaced in California, where he was the head of the newly-formed African Descendants Nationalist Independence Partition Party. According to Shabazz, whose assertion appears to be backed up by available FBI records, the AD NIP had grown directly out of Moore's Reparations Committee; indeed, the new group's 'Central Committee Politburo' included both Moore and Adefunmi.¹⁵⁸ Desiring to obtain for African Americans by 1973 their own land from the Southern part of the United States, which would be called the United African Descendants People's Republic, Shabazz attempted to unite as many movements as possible in his rhetoric, organization style, and symbols. Female members participated in the UNIA-like Black Nurses auxiliary; males joined the Black Guard auxiliary in which they wore black-color military uniforms, a form and style at once suggestive of the NOI, RAM, and the Black Panthers; the group announced that it would hold holiday celebrations for 'patriots' like Malcolm x, Patrice Lumumba, Medgar Evers, and those who had died in the decade's race bombings and riots; in his speeches and writings, Shabazz cited Mao Zedong, which appealed to the communist-leaning; he apparently encouraged members to take full Arabic names, which appealed to both NOI Muslims and Sunnis; and he even cultivated links with Adefunmi's Egyptian-Yoruba movement by making frequent use of the ankh symbol.¹⁵⁹ These symbolic connections, however, were not enough to raise the AD NIP to national prominence. After spending a few years working with California poverty programs, dialoging with the Black Panthers, and making appearances at Malcolm x memorials with Moore and Adefunmi, Shabazz's movement had died out by mid-1975.¹⁶⁰

157 Audley A. Moore, *Why Reparations? Money for Negroes* (Los Angeles: Reparations Committee, Inc., [1963?]), 4.

158 AD NIP, *African Descendants Manifesto*, 21; "US Racial Revolutionary Warfare," *Weekly Review*, September 1, 1967, 4–5; Audley Moore FBI file, Summary, 46. I was not able to obtain the FBI file on the AD NIP in time for this book.

159 "US Racial Revolutionary Warfare," 5; AD NIP, *African Descendants Manifesto*, *passim*.

160 Major, *A Panther Is a Black*, 109–10, 157–58; C. Gerald Fraser, "Ceremonies Held for Malcolm x," *New York Times*, May 20, 1971, 45.

Organized Muslim Activism

For all of its criticisms of the civil rights movement, the NOI itself had long been performing the kinds of activities that would characterize civil rights organizations of a wide variety of perspectives. Direct action, for example, had been used by the NOI since its early 1930s marches to police stations and courthouses. When Malcolm X directed the Harlem crowd upset over the Hinton incident in 1957—an event that has been looked upon as the beginning of the Black Power era—he was actually simply following an old NOI tradition. But the Nation was also behaving in some ways like the NAACP, which many saw as the civil rights antithesis of the direct action movement, and whose leaders Malcolm X had called Uncle Toms. Starting in the late 1950s, many members of the NOI, despite Elijah Muhammad's rejection of the practice, were more than willing to use American courts to obtain fair treatment and justice in the United States. The numerous court actions of Muslim prisoners attests to this; and their success in reforming laws concerning freedom of religion shows that to an extent the NOI was successfully employing the same tools. Courtrooms, however, were not limited to use for prison grievances, as Muslims employed lawyers for a number of additional battles, such as when a Cincinnati Muslim attorney won the right for public employees to use the surname X and the Detroit Muslims sued the local *Detroit Free Press* newspaper for libel.¹⁶¹ In some cases, Malcolm X himself was satisfied by just threatening to sue those who falsely accused the Muslims of various crimes.¹⁶² In addition, local Muslim temples, like Charles X Perkins's group, occasionally worked with activist and Black Power organizations on different projects. In New York during the early 1960s, for instance, Muslims in various boroughs were coming to the aid of the black activist movement led by Herman Ferguson; in Cleveland the local temple helped the city's BPP and the Muslim-populated Afro Set to organize a fundraising picnic to help rebuild a free health center; Philadelphia's Temple No. 12 cooperated with several black activist groups in the late 1960s; and in 1972, Louis Farrakhan spoke at the Congress of African People, a national back convention put on with the strong support and leadership of Baraka and Karenga, among others.¹⁶³ *Muhammad Speaks* also showed support for

161 *Muhammad Speaks*, September 22, 1967, 26; "Muslim Group Sues Paper over Article," *Michigan Chronicle*, August 6, 1960, 1, 4.

162 "Muslims to Sue Adlai Stevenson," *New York Amsterdam News*, February 25, 1961, 1.

163 Ferguson, *An Unlikely Warrior*, 98, 101, 115, 117–19, 123–24; Ryan Nissim-Sabat, "Panthers Set up Shop in Cleveland," in *Comrades: A Local History of the Black Panther Party*, ed. Judson L. Jeffries (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 116; Davis, "Rise of Islam," 50–78; Baraka, *Autobiography*, 290.

civil rights and Black Power activities, particularly after Malcolm's assassination. Baraka, Karenga, Carmichael, and Robert F. Williams were the subject of numerous articles, as were the many student activist efforts.

Some Moors were involved with activism too. In September 1967, towards the end of a summer that had been fraught with riots, when unrest started breaking out again in the Brownsville section of Brooklyn, the MSTA temple on Strauss Street worked with the Congress of Racial Equality and various community leaders to plan and publicize their strategy for dealing with the chaos.¹⁶⁴ The most active of the activist Moors during this period, however, was the Washington, DC-based Col. Hassan Jeru-Ahmed, also known as Hassan Jeru-Ahmed Bey.¹⁶⁵ Born Albert Roy Osborne in 1924, after spending

164 Barry Gottehrer, *The Mayor's Man* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1975), 79; "Brooklyn Beset by Trouble Again," *New York Times*, September 7, 1967, 25.

165 The present discussion of Jeru-Ahmed is based on the following sources: US Congress, House Un-American Activities Committee, *Subversive Influences*, 1884–89, 1895, 1940–42; George Weeks, "'Black Beret' Mercenaries Seeking to Win Nationhood," *Rockford Morning Star*, December 27, 1966, C2; "Negro Mercenaries Plan to Halt Newark Hearing," *Jersey Journal*, May 22, 1967, 4; "Violent Outbursts Interrupt Hearing on New College Site," *Trenton Evening Times*, May 23, 1967, 12; David Rosenzweig, "Negroes Break up Hearing on Razing," *Knickerbocker News*, May 23, 1967, 8A; "Newark's Central Warders Protest Blight Hearings," *Jersey Journal*, June 21, 1967, 18; Michael Adams and Roberta Hornig, "D.C. Selects Panel to Study Tensions," *Evening Star*, August 11, 1967, B1; Ernest Holsendolph, "D.C. 'Black Army' Leader Denies Promoting Newark Riots," *Evening Star*, August 5, 1967, 3; "Blackman's Army Leader Arrested Over Motel Bill," *Evening Star*, August 26, 1967, A3; Paul Delaney, "Militant Urges Ghetto Plan to Include Whites," *Evening Star*, December 21, 1967, B2; Gerald Somerville, "Differing Black Groups Unite in Home Project," *Evening Star*, August 18, 1968, B5; "SNCC Unit Here to Split with National," *Evening Star*, September 9, 1968, B3; "No Charges to Be Pressed in SNCC Quarters Gunfight," *Evening Star*, September 10, 1968, B1; COINTELPRO file, Memorandum, SAC, WFO to Director, FBI, 12/12/1968, 3; "Black 'Colonization' Plan Promoted again," *Evening Star*, June 27, 1969, B6; "3 More Get Petitions for School Board Race," *Evening Star*, August 30, 1969, A14; William Taaffe, "Black Army Seeks to Clasp Addict's Hand," *Evening Star*, September 6, 1969, A22; James K. Batten, "Organization Tries Exporting Negroes as Solution to Problems," *Oregonian*, September 7, 1969; Timothy Hutchens, "Volunteer Program on Heroin Is Hailed," *Evening Star*, October 22, 1969, C1; John Fialka, "Black Men Versus the Drug Problem," *Sunday Star* (Washington), November 9, 1969, B1; "Blackman's Center," *Greensboro Record*, January 29, 1970, A10; "Methadone Clinics Shut after 'Official' Pressure," *Evening Star*, February 5, 1970, 1, A4; William Delaney, "Methadone Center Seeks D.C. Parley," *Evening Star*, February 6, 1970, 1, A4; William Delaney, "Methadone Center Back in Operation," *Evening Star*, February 7, 1970, 1, A3; John Fialka, "One Doctor against Heroin and Apathy," *Evening Star*, February 9, 1970, B1, B4; William Grigg, "Tydings Will Seek Drug Unit Shakeup in D.C. Health Dept.,"

some time in the military and most of his thirties committing various small crimes, in the early 1960s, probably after encountering some form of Islam, Jeru-Ahmed decided to change his ways. It would not be until 1965, however, when Jeru-Ahmed was in Los Angeles surveying the destruction brought by the Watts riot, that he developed a strong vision. In 1966, after returning to Washington, he organized a few dozen people as the Blackman's Volunteer Army of Liberation (BVAL). By the end of the year his group was already making headlines when it dubiously claimed to have thirty-one branches across the country as well as a rural 'training ground' that was used to prepare members for combat in African anti-colonial struggles. The principal aim of the BVAL at the time was immigration to Africa, and its members were willing to fight on the side of Africans against Europeans in order to help attain 'nationhood' for all African and African-descended people. Members, most of whom had Arabic names with Moorish suffixes, were proud to display their militancy in their clothing: black berets, military shirts, khaki pants, and tall black boots.

But Jeru-Ahmed had other projects as well, as he hoped to obtain for black people still living in the US the "full and equal rights [...] guaranteed by the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution."¹⁶⁶ In May 1967, he briefly

Evening Star, February 14, 1970, 1; William Delaney, "Gude Wants to Help Methadone Center," *Evening Star*, February 18, 1970, C6; "Hassan Is Ordered to Remove Stickers," *Evening Star*, March 2, 1970, B4; Lance Gay, "Young White Addicts Turn to Ghetto for Aid," *Evening Star*, March 16, 1970, B1, B4; "Letters to the Editor," *Evening Star*, April 3, 1970, A6; Geoffrey Gould, "'Black Man's Army' Helps Addicts," *Mobile Register*, April 19, 1970, 7A; Timothy Hutchens, "Methadone Center Begins Addict Drug-Relapse test," *Evening Star*, May 1, 1970, B4; "US Orders More Controls for Methadone Programs," *Evening Star*, June 12, 1970, A7; Lance Gay, "Aides in Prince Georges Back Black Drug Clinic," *Evening Star*, August 28, 1970, B4; Timothy Hutchens, "City Opens Anti-Drug Push," *Evening Star*, September 2, 1970, C1; "Unique 'Army' Wages Drug War," *Boston Sunday Advertiser*, January 17, 1971, 64; Jack Anderson, "Though Aware of Private Army," *Mobile Register*, April 14, 1971, 4A; Duncan Spencer, "Hassan Accused of Anti-Semitism, Fund Cutoff Asked," *Evening Star*, April 21, 1971, B1; "Black Nationalist Expands Operations," *Omaha World-Herald*, May 5, 1971, 61; "US Cash for Group Led by Anti-Semite Hit," *Jewish Transcript*, May 6, 1971, 5; Gus Constantine, "Tapping the Ghetto's Creativity," *Evening Star*, June 16, 1971, F15; "Hassan Vows to Continue Despite Cut," *Evening Star*, July 7, 1971, B5; "2 Concerts Scheduled at Moorish Center," *Evening Star*, July 8, 1971, B1; Larry Barrett, "Sanders Afro-Music Is Wall-to-Wall Heavy," *Evening Star*, July 12, 1971, A17; "ADL Welcomes Suit by Col. Hassan," *Jewish Journal*, July 23, 1971, 5; Glenn Dixon, "Hassan's Army Pleads Poverty," *Evening Star*, December 17, 1971, 18; "Gen. Hassan on Black Nationalism," *Evening Star*, June 27, 1975, 1, A6.

166 Hosendolph, "D.C. 'Black Army.'"

moved to Newark, where he connected with Clinton Hopson Bey's Black Liberation Center, which served as a base while he protested the planned displacement of tens of thousands of African Americans for the building of a medical college in the city. Over the next year he led several public protests in Newark and Washington in an attempt to improve the position of local African American communities. By mid-1968, Jeru-Ahmed had also set up in Washington, apparently with a grant from the local government, an urban revival program that was part vocational training, part job placement, and part slum renovation. He soon had formed an alliance with the regional SNCC head as well, but his relationship was not nearly as good with the Panthers, as he was reportedly involved with a shootout with one BPP member.

In November, Jeru-Ahmed's activities took a more nationalist turn when he announced the creation of the United Moorish Republic and its 'provisional government'—a term that suggests he had been influenced by the RNA's program—for which the BVAL would be its military force.¹⁶⁷ Nevertheless, like the RNA, Jeru-Ahmed did not believe in leading an armed revolution in the US and continued to work on various projects to help African Americans. During this period, Jeru-Ahmed served as an advisor to the revived American Colonization Society, a white-led group that attempted to pay for African Americans to move to Africa; in the spring he organized a BVAL security patrol to control crime in his Washington neighborhood; and in August he supported high-ranking BVAL member Maj. Rafiq M. Bilal-El, a former Howard University assistant professor, in his campaign for a seat on the local district board of education.

Jeru-Ahmed's greatest accomplishment, however, was the establishment of the Blackman's Development Center, a combination methadone clinic and job training program. The idea for the center came about when the BVAL security patrol discovered that much of the crime being committed in the local community was done by heroin addicts. Jeru-Ahmed decided that the best solution to the problem was to freely supply in large quantities the drug used to wean people off of that addiction. After obtaining the help of a local black doctor and setting up his first clinic in June, within three months Jeru-Ahmed had so many clients that he opened two more centers and was regularly serving one thousand addicts per day, several of whom joined the BVAL, converted to Islam, took what one reporter termed "Moorish or African-sounding 'free'

167 As will be pointed out in Chapter 15, Jeru-Ahmed would eventually be linked with the Dingle-El brothers, who were once members of the Givens-El faction. Therefore, it is possible that Jeru-Ahmed's ideas about a Moorish republic had been at least partly inspired by Givens-El's concept of a Moorish government within America.

names rather than the 'slave names,'"¹⁶⁸ and started working at the Center. By the end of 1969, the Backman's Development Center had become the most successful methadone clinic in Washington's history, having helped over ten thousand residents. The program was in fact impacting the local drug trade so significantly that there were several confrontations between BVAL members and dealers, with one leading to a BVAL member being shot. As an ex-criminal himself, however, Jeru-Ahmed would not be intimidated, and he personally "visited"—as he put it—several dealers. Besides a brief closure in early 1970 due to the government's criticism of the Center's program, the Center grew that year, gaining a thirty-five volunteer doctors, over 200 BVAL support staff, and even a white suburban clientele.

The Center's growth and Jeru-Ahmed's reputation were so strong in 1970 that the group was able to open a gas station, pest control business, and a tailor shop, and local courts released at least 300 addicts to the care of the BVAL head. In early 1971, Jeru-Ahmed was also given nearly \$800,000 in government grants, which he used to continue to expand his activities, obtaining over 300 acres of land and planning to start a Moorish University of Science and Technology as well as a Moorish Center of Performing Arts, which was to be connected to a Moorish Officers Club. The Club and Center opened in the summer and were able to immediately bring in prominent performers like Pharoah Sanders and Nina Simone. When a reporter visited the Club, Jeru-Ahmed identified what were his mixed Islamic "antecedents": Noble Drew Ali and Elijah Muhammad—and his programs and ideology certainly reflected this.¹⁶⁹

Despite these accomplishments, however, Jeru-Ahmed's success would not last. It appears that because over the years he had made numerous anti-Semitic remarks, the Anti-Defamation League was able to persuade the government to withdraw his funds. By December, the Blackman's Development Center was out of money and, therefore, clients, and the Center soon folded as well. Jeru-Ahmed's group would stay alive and would eventually build ties with other Moorish communities, but it would never again achieve what had been done between 1966 and 1971.

Orthodox Muslim groups, meanwhile, were also drawn into activist participation during the 1960s and 1970s. In 1961, for example, the MBUSA and the IMS (303 Mosque) both took part in an anti-colonial demonstration at the United Nations building in New York, which, when the protestors resisted being

168 Gould, "Black Man's Army." Note that here they are combining MSTA and NOI concepts.

169 Constantine, "Tapping the Ghetto's." Again, note the combining of NOI and MSTA themes.

moved, resulted in dozens being injured—and led to UN Ambassador Adlai Stevenson incorrectly blaming the NOI for the incident.¹⁷⁰ Heshaam Jaaber, the AAUAA leader who conducted Malcolm X's funeral, was strongly tied to Newark's Black Power scene, and in 1968 even spoke at a local conference along with Karenga and Adefunmi.¹⁷¹ Another orthodox Muslim, Osman Sharrieff—the early NOI member who had first split from Muhammad in Chicago back in the 1930s—would take an activist stand himself in the 1970s. In 1974, Sharrieff, while serving as the chairman of the Leadership Council of the nineteen-member Lost-Found Moslem Movement in the United States of North America, filed a lawsuit in the US Court of Claims demanding reparations in the sum of \$4,750,000.¹⁷² His group, also known as Al-Masjid Al-Islam, argued that slavery violated the Fifth Amendment, and, because it resulted in severe economic disadvantages for African Americans, each member was asking for \$250,000 to make up for this. Sharrieff, who had been claiming to be an orthodox Muslim since at least 1964, inadvertently revealed that his new views were still very much shaped by the NOI teachings:

I have studied our past history, learned from other members of the Lost-Found Moslems, and I have learned that our ancestors were the original Moslems, that they were possessed of a great heritage in civilization, and that they were deprived of them and subjected to a system of chattel slavery designed to destroy their culture completely.¹⁷³

As we will see in the following chapter, such a perspective was actually very common among orthodox—Sunni—African American Muslims during this period.

As the above examples indicate, by the early 1970s Islam had profoundly reshaped African American life. From Black America's folk culture and cultural organizations to its direct activism and community-development programs, Islam—particularly an understanding of Islam that was highly shaped by the NOI and Malcolm X—had truly fostered an institutional change. Nevertheless, as we will now see, despite it now being increasingly common for African

170 "Riot in Gallery Halts U.N. Debate," *New York Times*, February 16, 1961, 1, 10; "Muslims to Sue"; "Nationalists in on Three Disturbances," *New York Amsterdam News*, May 27, 1961, 2.

171 *Black Newark*, April 1968, 5.

172 "Suit for 'Reparations' of \$4,750,000 Filed against the United States of America," *Muslim Star* 14, no. 10 (1974): 2, IMJC Papers, Box 8, BHL.

173 Ibid.

Americans to identify with and as Muslims without joining an existing Muslim community, Islamic organizations remained at the core of conversion to Islam in the post-Malcolm period.

Islamic Organizations in the Post-Malcolm World

The NOI's rise and Malcolm X's death had unleashed, in addition to a cultural revolution, a reenergization of Islamic organizing. Between 1965 and early 1975, although the NOI was still proving to be the cultural pole of the AAIR's second era and was actually increasing its influence, there actually were more varieties of formal Islamic teachings and communities circulating in black America than there had been perhaps at any point in the past. Not only had many of the interwar movements and their various factions survived, but several new Islamic organizations and philosophies had also emerged, bringing with them a wide array of orthodox and nonorthodox perspectives on what it meant to be both a Muslim and an African American in the United States. Part of this was due to the influence of Malcolm's own efforts, which inspired many to seek out new ways of combining activism with orthodox Islam. But in some ways, this was also a consequence of Malcolm's murder, as it had shattered much of the trust people once put in the NOI, thus allowing for non-NOI groups—particularly those that borrowed much of their teachings and practices from the Nation while mixing them with other doctrines—to grab a piece of the expanding Islamic market.

The Sunni Resurgence

Malcolm X, as we have already seen, was many things to many people. He had inspired revolutionary organizations, a diverse array of artistic expressions, and various forms of activism—even the prominent nonviolent civil rights activist and close friend of Martin Luther King Reverend Ralph Abernathy would come to call Malcolm one of the “heroes in our crusade.”¹ But one of the most significant *religious* legacies left by Malcolm was making Sunni Islam a legitimate religious choice for African Americans.² Had Malcolm lived, most African American Sunnis would have undoubtedly been in the MMI or whatever organization Malcolm ended up being associated with, but his early

1 Morris, *Origins*, 88.

2 Baraka (in his *Autobiography*, 267) noted this, and explained that Malcolm's example had been what made Sunni Islam an attractive religious path for his own life.

death opened up the a market for both existing movements and new ones, leading to a rapidly growing and increasingly diverse Sunni community.

For a number of reasons, there are very few available records concerning African American Sunni conversions before 1975. Sometimes Muslim organizations did not keep records or their records were very incomplete; sometimes records were lost; and sometimes organizations or their leaders decided not to share their records with outsiders. Because of this situation, we will never have an entirely clear picture of the state of Sunni conversion during the post-Malcolm era. However, there is some information from the period that gives us a useful overall picture. For instance, a 1973 study of Muslims in America conducted by the Muslim World League, apparently with the assistance of the Washington, DC Islamic Center, found that “many thousands” of African Americans were embracing orthodox Islam every year.³ In addition, the Center made available some data on African American conversion through its newsletter, which ran from 1972 through the early 1980s.⁴ In each issue of the irregularly published *Bulletin*, recent converts’ names and locations are listed, as are Muslim marriages and each spouse’s home country. Unfortunately, the published data does not indicate which, if any, local Muslim organization the convert was affiliated with; it does not identify whether any of these converts were Shi’i, which was undoubtedly the case for some;⁵ it does not indicate the convert’s race; and it does not provide equal amounts of information for all American regions, as the data appears to lean heavily towards East Coast Muslims, leaving out many Midwest and West Coast communities, which probably produced a few thousand converts. However, because we know, first of all, that Shi’i converts and white converts to Sunni Islam made up only a small minority of Amer-

3 “Muslims in America,” *Al-Ittihad* 11, no. 3 (1974): 15–16. For a critique of the methodology of this study, see Bowen, *HCTIUS*, 1:328n14.

4 The issues of the *Bulletin* that were used for this study were from October and November 1972, August and December 1974, and July 1975, and were contained in the IMJC Papers, Box 9, BHL.

5 This is suggested by two things: a) the fact that that several of the listed marriages were between Iranians (who were mostly Shi’ah) and Americans, and that even in the US the Shi’ah, unlike the Sunnis, generally required both parties in a marriage to be Muslim (see Liyakat Nathani Takim, *Shi’ism in America* [New York: New York University Press, 2009], 22, 241n51); b) the Islamic Center’s director, Dr. Muhammad Abdul-Rauf, maintained a good relationship with the leading Shi’i imam in the US, Shaykh Mohammad Jawad Chirri through the FIA and the Council of Imams in North America (for the latter group, see “Council of Imams in North America,” *Bulletin of the Islamic Center Washington, D.C.* 3, no. 3 [1974]: 22, IMJC Papers, Box 9, BHL).

ican converts during this period,⁶ it is safe to assume that the vast majority of the converts listed in the *Bulletin* were African American Sunnis. Furthermore, since other evidence indicates that the East Coast did indeed have more Sunni converts than any other region, this data may actually be fairly representative of East Coast conversions. With these factors acknowledged, then, we can use this information to reach some initial conclusions, however limited and tentative they may be.

Some useful information can be extracted from the *Bulletin* data regarding the converts' backgrounds. Interestingly, as indicated by the converts' names, at least one NOI member, a half-a-dozen MSTA members, and a few Ahmadiis embraced Sunni Islam by early 1975. In terms of region, the most heavily-represented areas producing converts were New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Washington, DC—locations, which, as we will see, had several highly active black Sunni groups. Regarding marriages, although Muslim immigrants typically preferred white spouses,⁷ it is very likely that some of the immigrant-American unions—particularly those involving Africa-born immigrants—were with African American spouses.

The most valuable information that arises from the *Bulletin* data, however, is that which concerns rates of conversion. The five available issues of this journal that address conversions taking place before mid-1975 list converts from different date ranges relative to the journal's publication: the earliest two issues, for example, list converts from the previous month; the next two available issues list converts from the previous three months; and the final issue, published in July 1975, does not give a date range, but probably reflects converts from the previous four or five months.⁸ If we assume the July 1975 issue covers five months, this data suggests that the average monthly convert rate during this period was roughly 50 people, with a low month of 20 (October 1972) and a high monthly average of 57 (in early 1975). There seems to have

6 Bowen, *HCTIUS*, 1:325–38.

7 See, e.g., Bowen, *HCTIUS*, 1:233–34. In no study of African American Sunni conversion is the phenomenon of African American-immigrant intermarriage ever identified as a significant phenomenon, if it is mentioned at all. It seems that immigrant Muslims were generally extremely reluctant to marry African Americans. White-immigrant intermarriage, on the other hand, is frequently cited in observations of white converts. See, e.g., Bowen, *HCTIUS*, 1:passim.; M. Arif Ghayur, "Muslims in the United States: Settlers and Visitors," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 454 (March 1981): 153, 158.

8 I have deduced that the July 1975 issue covers four or five months based on the fact that it is the second issue of the current volume, and we know that the first issue of that volume, which is not available, came out after the December 1974 issue, which is available.

been, furthermore, a slight increase in conversion towards the middle of the decade. If we assume, nevertheless, that the average rate was consistent from January 1970 through early 1975, then, out of the groups that reported to the *Bulletin*, there were around 3,000 converts, the vast majority of whom were African American Sunnis. If we add to this an estimate of 2,000 converts from the Midwest and West Coast, then we can conclude that (very) roughly 5,000 African Americans embraced Sunni Islam in the early 1970s. While this estimate does not address what might be called ‘recidivism’—the phenomenon of converts leaving either their Muslim community or Islam altogether—it still provides a helpful picture for understanding the numerical significance of the rise of Sunni Islam among African Americans.

As we will see shortly, it is likely that, although some of these converts embraced Islam through connections with Islamic groups that had existed prior to 1965, many were individuals who had joined up with three relatively new groups: the Mosque of Islamic Brotherhood, the Dar-ul-Islam, and the Islamic Party of North America. Each of these East Coast-based organizations was very active in promoting conversion, and, since they all seem to have been strongly influenced by the legacy of Malcolm X, the NOI, and black nationalism, they were better able than the other orthodox Islamic communities to take advantage of the broader NOI-influenced cultural change of the period. Because of their similar background, moreover, many of the new black Sunnis shared several perspectives and practices with each other and with other African American Muslims. There was, for example, a widespread belief among the Sunnis that African Americans’ forefathers—that is, the vast majority of African slaves in America—were Muslims. Indeed, as the MWL learned, many black Sunnis resented the word ‘convert’—the NOI had mostly employed the term ‘re-convert,’ but *Muhammad Speaks* and some individual NOI Muslims did indeed sometimes use ‘convert’—and preferred instead ‘returnee.’⁹ African American Sunnis during this period were also often focused on improving the black community’s economic self-sufficiency, physical health, moral behavior, and self-defense—all of which were themes central to the program of the NOI. In addition, there was a strong conservative bent in the groups, which was manifested in their limited roles given to women, their promotion of polygamy,¹⁰ their desire to have independent Muslim communities, and the great interest shown for popular conservative Pan-Islamic thinkers, such as Abdul A’la

9 [Abdul Basit Naeem], “The Black Man and Islam,” *Muslim World & the USA* (August–September 1956): 13; *Muhammad Speaks*, March 12, 1965, 15; April 11, 1968, 27; Joint Legislative Committee, *Activities of*, 69; “Muslims in America,” *Al-Ittihad* 11, no. 3 (1974): 16.

10 Mayes, “Muslims of African Descent,” 60.

Mawdudi, Hassan al-Banna, and Syed Qutb. By also developing ties with immigrant organizations that were similarly interested in these thinkers, the period's African American Sunni communities were creating a new Islamic current that blended black nationalist Islamic themes with contemporary international Islamic ideologies.

The Old Guard and Pan-Islam

Somewhat surprisingly, it seems that the older black-majority Sunni organizations did not benefit significantly from the increased African American interest in Sunni Islam during the late 1960s and early 1970s. Evidence suggests, for example, that there was only minimal growth in the older Cleveland and Pittsburgh communities. In Philadelphia, although Nasir Ahmad's IMB was able to survive, apparently by being replenished by international Muslim students,¹¹ the other Sunni groups suffered: Shaykh Hassan was crippled in 1971 after being shot over a factional dispute and Talib Dawud's MBUSA seems to have faded out.¹² The main New York organizations—the IMA, IMS, and AOI—remained open and occasionally received white, black, and Latino converts, with Sheikh Daoud's IMA being the most popular, but despite his efforts and the efforts of the IMS's young and charismatic Yemeni imam, Sheikh Muhammad Hashim, there does not seem to have been a strong proselytization program coming out of those mosques.¹³

Interestingly, though, Sheikh Daoud was indirectly responsible for some Islamic growth outside of New York state, as it was at the IMA where a group of jazz musicians who were apparently influenced by the MSTA, cultural nationalism, and the IMA's previously-mentioned separatist faction decided to move to Detroit and establish a new Muslim community.¹⁴ Known to most as 'the Beys,' in the early 1970s the group established a 100–150-person mosque (Masjid as-Salaam), where, despite identifying as Sunni, these Muslims supported non-mainstream Islamic practices, such as isolation from Christians, refusal to work or pay taxes, polygamy, drug use, and musical performance. Other African

11 Organization of Arab Students FBI file, Report, 3/31/1970.

12 Romero, "Malcolm X."

13 Ihsan Bagby has told me that the majority of the members of these groups were Caribbeans. Ihsan Bagby phone conversation with the author, February 23, 2011; Ibrahim Gonzalez phone interview with the author, December 27 and 28, 2010; Ramon Ocasio phone interview with the author, April 4, 2016. A 1967 newspaper article lists the name of the AOI's imam as Ahmed Hashim. ("Many Persons and Groups Remember Harlem Patients," *New York Amsterdam News*, January 7, 1967, 18).

14 Howell, *Old Islam*, 241–49.

American Sunnis in the city, however, continued to attend the smaller Al-Mu'mineen Mosque, even after the Arab influence there began increasing and Hajj Sammsan left in 1964 to start a new group in eastern Detroit.¹⁵ Meanwhile, New Jersey's main black Sunni community, the AAUAA saw a few schisms but also some growth, as it was this group that recruited Amiri Baraka as well as small community of Latinos that would be known as the Banu Sakr.¹⁶

Somewhat surprisingly, the immigrant Muslim community appears to have become a more important—though by not means the predominant—point of contact for African Americans seeking to embrace Sunni Islam after Malcolm's death. Due largely to the postwar increase of international students as well as the 1965 immigration reforms that allowed many more Muslims to come to the US, dozens of new immigrant-led mosques and Islamic organizations were being established; by the mid-1970s, there were over one hundred.¹⁷ African Americans interested in Sunni Islam were occasionally visiting these mosques, particularly in Detroit, Washington, DC, and New York, where the Islamic Center on Riverside Drive had emerged as a relatively popular destination for converts.¹⁸ Although there are some reports of anti-black racist views being held by some immigrants during this period,¹⁹ there were probably a handful of places where African Americans obtained prominent positions in such communities. This was the case in the Los Angeles immigrant-majority Muslim community that eventually adopted the name Islamic Center of Southern California. When the group was initially formed as the Muslim Association in the early 1950s, Saeed Akmal, a black convert who had come out of the mixed MSTA-Ahmadi-Sunni Pittsburgh community, was one of the founders, and for a period served as the group's president.²⁰ In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Saeed's son, Farooq,

15 Howell, *Old Islam*, 192–214.

16 Nash, *Islam among*, 64–83; Ramon Ocasio phone interview with the author, April 4 and 5, 2016.

17 On post-1965 immigrants, see GhaneaBassiri, *A History*, 293–94 and Bowen, *HCTIUS*, 1:325–26. For an incomplete but still extensive list of US Muslim organizations in 1976, see “Muslim Organizations in America,” in Ecumenism Research Agency, *The State of the Churches in the U.S.A. and Canada, 1976: As Shown in Their Own Official Yearbooks and Other Reports: A Study Resource* (Peoria, AZ: Ecumenism Research Agency, [1977]), roll 6.

18 Atif Amin Wasfi, “Dearborn Arab-Moslem Community: A Study of Acculturation” (PhD diss., Michigan State University, 1964), 176–77; Ramon Ocasio phone interview with the author, April 4 and 5, 2016.

19 Wasfi, “Dearborn,” 176–77; Mayes, “Muslims of African Descent,” 61–62.

20 Ghulam Muhammad, “Islam in America,” *Islamic Review* 43, no. 9 (1955): 39; Juan E. Campo, “Islam in California: Views from *The Minaret*,” *Muslim World* 86 (1996): 295; “Muslims Celebrate the Contributions of African American Muslims During Black His-

joined the center's executive board and other African Americans were known to occasionally visit the Center as well.²¹

Although immigrant mosques at the time tended to be monoethnic and were relatively isolationist, because of the influence of the new Islamic umbrella organizations and conferences and the spread of international Pan-Islamic movements, there was increasing interethnic contact. Some of the national and regional efforts to bring Muslims together were small, such as the East Coast Conferences that were put on annually starting in 1965 and apparently attracted only a handful of mosques in the northeast.²² However there were two larger national institutions that united dozens of Muslim groups, including several with African American members. One was the FIA, which, as was discussed in Chapter 11, was established primarily by second-generation Arab immigrants in 1952, and had embraced as member organizations a number of the early Sunni groups with significant black membership, such as the IMA, IMS, AAUAA, and Al-Mu'mineen Mosque. However, because these African American-majority organizations were not attracting many new converts the FIA does not seem to have been a particularly popular destination for new black Muslims. What appears to have been somewhat more popular was the Muslim Students' Association of the United States and Canada (MSA). The MSA was officially established in January 1963 after over a year of planning by members of the growing community of Muslim college students who desired a means for social, emotional, and spiritual support while they were living isolated from their families and home cultures.²³ Due to the rising numbers of international students at the time, within five years over one hundred Muslim student groups and 1,000 individuals would join the organization. Because many of the students also saw the MSA as a tool to foster Pan-Islamic unity, which they hoped

tory Month," February 23, 2003, accessed September 28, 2013, <https://www.mpac.org/programs/interfaith/muslims-celebrate-the-contributions-of-african-american-muslims-during-black-history-month.php>; Mohammad Yacoob, "Brief History of the Islamic Center of Southern California (1952–1972)," May 22, 2013, accessed September 28, 2013, <http://www.islamicity.com/articles/Articles.asp?ref=IC1305-5455>. For more on the history of ICSF, see Mary Jane O'Donnell, "E Pluribus Unum: The Islamic Center of Southern California and the Making of an American Muslim Identity," in *Race, Religion, Region: Landscapes of Encounter in the American West*, ed. Fay Botham and Sara M. Patterson (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2006), 125–38.

21 "Muslims Celebrate the Contributions"; Yacoob, "Brief History"; John Dart, "Moslems in US Seek Recognition by Nixon," *Los Angeles Times*, December 5, 1970, A29.

22 Organization of Arab Students FBI file, Report, 3/31/1970.

23 For an overview of the development of Muslim student groups in America, see Bowen, *HCTIUS*, 1:310–12.

would help strengthen activism in their home countries, members put great effort into Islamic revivalist activities, which included such things as developing intellectual and educational programs, courting prominent Muslims for their support in the US and abroad, and trying to convert Americans.²⁴ It was due to these activities that some African Americans came into touch with the MSA and occasionally joined the organization.²⁵

Contact with the MSA was important because it was one of the main paths for the new wave of African American Sunnis to learn about international organized Sunni movements and intellectual currents. Through the AAUAA, AOI, and IMA there had been some interaction with international Islamic organizations like those of Maulana Siddiqui and the YMMA back in the 1940s and 1950s, and starting in the 1950s a small number of African Americans—mostly in Detroit and California—joined up with the Tablighi Jama'at, a Pakistan-based peripatetic quietest movement that focused on personal moral reform.²⁶ There had also been some contact with the Muslim-populated Algerian nationalist movement, which in the late 1960s was trying to encourage black Sunnis in US prisons to spread Islam and to come to Algeria, with at least one convert being said to have taken up the Algerians' offer.²⁷ However, the MSA brought African

24 For more on the MSA's activities during this period, see Bowen, *HCTIUS*, 1:338–51.

25 The MSA apparently provided teaching materials and pamphlets for several African American Sunni groups; see, e.g., Mayes, “Muslims of African Descent,” 59; Muslim Students Association, “Islam at a Glance” enclosed in AAUAA FBI file, Report, 4/16/1973, Bufallo file 157- DEAD. The individual who seems to have played the biggest role in connecting the MSA with African Americans was Sulayman Shahid Mufassir, who edited the MSA's journal *Al-Ittihad* and published in other forums several articles about black Muslims.

26 On the Tablighis in Detroit, see Howell, *Old Islam, passim*. I was told about Tablighis in California in a phone conversation with Sadat Ahmad, June 7, 2011. Tablighis apparently had contact with New York Muslims as well; see Mayes, “Muslims of African Descent,” 59.

27 Undated, unsigned letter in the IRM Papers, IRM Prison Program, Personal Correspondence 1970s, Georgia State University. Algerian nationalism had been spread in the US since at least the mid-1950s. At that time, the FBI learned that two distinct and opposing factions of the Algerian liberation movement both had representatives in the US. One was known as the Algerian National Movement, and was headed in the US by El Abed Bouhafa, a Tunisian who was rumored to once have been affiliated with Frederick Turner-El; the other was the famous FLN—the Algerian Front of National Liberation—whose American unit was led by Mohammed Yazid and Abed Chandlerli. Bouhafa's group was relatively moderate; it primarily focused on distributing propaganda, building ties with liberal whites, and attempting to require American Muslims to give loans to the Algerian nationalists; the activities of the other group at the time are not known. See El Abed Bouhafa FBI file, Report, 6/4/1957, New York file 97-1146, 5-6; Office of Naval Intelligence, Report, 7/1/1957, “Support of Algerian Fighters by the Algerian Movement in the USA.”

American Sunnis in touch with the highly conservative Pan-Islamic reformist thought of Pakistan's Abdul A'la Mawdudi and Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood leaders Hassan al-Banna and Syed Qutb. Among the several views shared by these authors were a strong desire to obtain an Islamic state, the belief that Muslims needed to more strictly adhere to the Qur'an and Sunna, and the view that Western culture was at the same time both fundamentally corrupt and pervasive in the Muslim-majority world.²⁸ All thus agreed that an Islamic 'revolution' needed to take place in order to remove Western influence and set up the Islamic state—although, for these thinkers, but particularly Mawdudi, this revolution was to be primarily a moral and religious reformation, since no new Islamic state could function well if its leaders and citizens remained corrupt.

There are obviously several similarities between the views of these orthodox Muslim leaders and those of African American Muslims who had been influenced by Malcolm and the Nation, particularly the desire for a separate state, the belief in the pervasiveness of evil Western (i.e., 'white') culture, and the need to have a mass moral and religious reformation. To an extent, then, the Pan-Islamic writers confirmed for African Americans that the core teachings of the NOI were indeed Islamic. Yet at the same time, by accepting the teachings of Sunnis, African American Muslims not only gained access to the global Muslim community, which some assumed would be an ally in the effort to spread the Islamic religious revolution, they also acquired membership in a form of Islam whose religious legitimacy was rarely questioned, which helped remove the stigma of being in what was frequently ridiculed as a 'fake' religion. Although they would soon obtain their own means to acquire translations of these writers, initially much of the African American Sunni access to these thinkers' works was through the publications of the MSA. Overall, the MSA leaned heavily towards the conservative moral revolution stance, a trait due in part to the group being strongly supported by the newly formed Muslim World League, an organization that to a great extent promoted the views of its Saudi

28 These writers were frequently featured in the MSA's journal, *Al-Ittihad*. For useful summaries and examples of their views, see Roxanne L. Euben and Muhammad Qasim Zaman, eds., *Princeton Readings in Islamist Thought: Texts and Contexts from Al-Banna to Bin Laden* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009) and Hamid Enayat, *Modern Islamic Political Thought* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982). It should be pointed out, however, that although the above scholars emphasize al-Banna and Qutb's support of violence, this does not seem to have been a strong influence on African American Sunnis in the 1960s and 1970s. I have been told, in fact, that the Muslim Brotherhood was looked upon as primarily a community service organization.

Arabian sponsors, who were characterized by Wahhabi-based conservatism and desire for the political stability needed to keep Saudi oil revenues high.²⁹

Still, the MSA was not African Americans' only connection to conservative Pan-Islamic thought: Malcolm X himself had linked the black Muslim community with the Saudis, the MWL, and even the Muslim Brotherhood back in 1964. However, although eventually these links would play an important role in shaping African American Sunni Islam, in the years immediately following his death it was appearing as if these connections would not survive. Morale and membership in his MMI organization had been on the decline since before the assassination; and after it took place some members left the country,³⁰ and several others were murdered.³¹ In March 1965 Malcolm's sister Ella took control of the group and, in an attempt to avoid further conflicts with Temple No. 7 members, at some point moved its headquarters to Boston.³² There, Ella was reportedly advised by AAUAA leader Hesham Jaaber to name as the group's imam an activist who had never met Malcolm, one James Smalls. According to some accounts, originally this position was supposed to go to Kili Ahmad Tawfiq, an MMI member who was studying at the Azhar from September 1964 to November 1966.³³ When, then, Tawfiq returned to the US and found his position taken, he, along with a handful of other MMI members moved to New York City where they would start a new organization. After this point, although a few members stayed affiliated with the group into the early 1970s and a Patterson, New Jersey branch appears to have remained in existence until at least mid-decade, it seems that the MMI soon disintegrated to almost nothing.³⁴ It

29 On the MSA's ideological leanings during this period, see Bowen, *HCTIUS*, 1:338–51. On the MWL and Pan-Islam generally, see Abdullah Mohamed Sindi, "The Muslim World and Its Efforts in Pan-Islamism" (PhD diss., University of Southern California, 1978) and Jacob M. Landau, *The Politics of Pan-Islam: Ideology and Organization* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

30 Such as James 67X Shabazz, as well as, apparently, a government informant who reportedly used one of the scholarships to Islamic universities Malcolm had been given; see Bruce Perry, introduction to *Malcolm X: The Last Speeches*, by Malcolm X (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1989), 7–10; Evanzz, *Messenger*, 570n73.

31 Marable, *Malcolm*, 459–60, 468; Evanzz, *Messenger*, 327, 367–69.

32 Amir Al-Islam, "Sunni Islam in the African American Experience: The Dialectic and Dialogic of Race, Ethnicity, and Islamicity Mapping and Decoding the Mosque of Islamic Brotherhood, 1964–2001" (PhD diss., New York University, 2010), 28, 280–81.

33 Al-Islam, "Sunni Islam," 265–67, 280–81.

34 A "Moslem Mosque, Inc.," located at 32 Chestnut Street in Patterson, is listed in "Muslim Organizations in America." Omar Karim claims that in 1966 or 1967 he wrote to the MMI in New York and was told it was no longer functioning (see Bashir, *Top of the Clock*, 145),

would be through Tawfiq's group, then, that the conservative Pan-Islamic currents that Malcolm had linked to his US followers would have their first major direct impact on African American Islam.

Mosque of Islamic Brotherhood

Tawfiq was born in South Carolina in 1936 to parents who had been both Garveyites and members of the MSTA.³⁵ In 1944, the family moved to New York where their son excelled in sports and music, and, having a deep interest in Islam, as a teen embraced the Sunni tradition through conversations with a Pakistani merchant. However, despite his commitment to orthodoxy, Tawfiq was deeply impressed with Malcolm X, and in the early 1960s went to hear the minister at rallies and at Temple No. 7. In 1964 he joined both the OAAU and MMI,³⁶ and it appears that he was one of the individuals who used one of Malcolm's Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs scholarships to attend the Azhar.³⁷ While in Cairo, Tawfiq studied a variety of languages, including Arabic, as well as the Qur'an, Islamic law, and Hadith. Being activist-oriented, he also joined the many students who were supportive of al-Banna's Muslim Brotherhood and took part in protests to criticize both the Egyptian government's repression of the organization and the Azhar's treatment of its students. Apparently it was because of his involvement with these activities that in late November 1966 Tawfiq was arrested with dozens of other Egyptian Azhar students and was sent back to America.³⁸ It was at this point that he traveled to Boston and then, upon learning that Smalls had been appointed the MMI imam, returned to New York to start his own organization.

Having been trained at the Azhar, Tawfiq was regarded as an authority in New York's Sunni community. He began his new movement by giving *khutbahs* (sermons) at the IMS in Harlem, winning over several of its younger members,

but a number of MMI members appeared at the Malcolm X Day in New York in 1971 (see C. Gerald Fraser, "Ceremonies Held for Malcolm X," *New York Times*, May 20, 1971, 45).

35 The following account is taken almost exclusively from Al-Islam, "Sunni Islam." On Tawfiq's parents, see Al-Islam, "Sunni Islam," 77, 263–64.

36 Al-Islam (in "Sunni Islam," 265) writes that Tawfiq's membership in the MMI "cannot be confirmed through any membership rosters or documents." This, it turns out, is incorrect, as Tawfiq is indeed listed on an MMI attendance form for a June 25, 1964 meeting, a copy of which is in Box 13, Folder 10, Mosque Attendance, *The Malcolm X Collection: Papers*, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library.

37 There are some conflicts in the accounts of how he ended up at the Azhar; see Al-Islam, "Sunni Islam," 265–66.

38 "Cairo Police Free Student and Send Him Back to US," *New York Times*, December 9, 1966, 17.

and before the end of 1967 he had established in Brooklyn what was called the Mosque of Islamic Brotherhood (MIB), for which he was the imam.³⁹ Things were off to a slow start, however; in early 1969, the group purchased a rundown house in upstate New York that the members hoped to renovate and use as a colony and training camp, but the project had to be abandoned by the end of the year.⁴⁰ Still, all was not lost; 1970, in fact, proved to be a turning point in the group's history, as it was during that year that the MIB finally gained significant local popularity after moving its headquarters to Harlem. Soon, as word about Tawfiq spread, the organization gained approximately one hundred members; when it reached its peak in early 1974, 200–300 Muslims belonged to the movement.⁴¹ Those who joined the MIB were apparently attracted to Tawfiq's unique melding of Malcolm X/NOI-inspired teachings, classical Islamic training, and Muslim Brotherhood-influenced activism and Pan-Islamism.

The most obvious influences on the group were Malcolm and the legacy of the NOI, which Tawfiq modified to fit his Sunni-based program. Instead of emphasizing, for instance, African American descent from the Tribe of Shabazz—or even from Ham, Canaan, or Moab, which other African American Muslim leaders had promoted—Tawfiq insisted American blacks should identify as 'Kushites,' descendants of Ham's son Kush whose progeny was traditionally considered to have inhabited northeastern Africa and western Arabia—thus continuing the black Muslim tradition of identifying the African American as, as one MIB member put it, "the only man who constitutes an Afro-Asian union within himself."⁴² The MIB, furthermore, insisted that African Americans—they implied all African Americans—were descendants of Muslim slaves and therefore modern black Muslims should not be regarded as 'converts' but rather as a people "declaring what [they have] always been."⁴³ White America, meanwhile, which was given the Revelation-rooted label "the beast," was criticized for the enslavement and oppression of the Kushites and for "tagging" the African American with both a "false race name that affords him no awareness of his deriation [*sic*] from a far-off, fascinating land" and "the name of his former slavemaster"—obvious MSTA/NOI-derived concepts.⁴⁴ Women in

39 Al-Islam, "Sunni Islam," 281–82; Mayes, "Muslims of African Descent," 55.

40 MIB FBI file, Memorandum, SAC, New York to Director, FBI, 3/29/1974, enclosure, 2.

41 Al-Islam, "Sunni Islam," 283.

42 Shaikh A.M. Ben-Amin Bey [pseud.?], "A Special Letter to Muslims," *Western Sunrise* 1, no. 5 (1972): 2, 6, 7, MMIRM, Box 3, WRHS.

43 Bey, "A Special Letter to Muslims."

44 Bey, "A Special Letter to Muslims"; Shaikh A.M. Ben-Amin Bey, "The Shaikh Looks at the Negro," *Western Sunrise* 2, no. 5 (1972): 10.

the MIB were even dressed very similarly to those in the NOI and were permitted similarly restricted roles in the community. Finally, as in the NOI, in Tawfiq's group Latinos and Native Americans were identified as ancient kin, and several Puerto Rican-Americans joined up with the Sunni organization.⁴⁵

One could see the influence of Malcolm and the NOI in several other elements of the group as well. The MIB's articles of incorporation, for example, were identical to those of the MMI. The group's magazine, *Western Sunrise*, reflected Muhammad and Malcolm's interest in black history when it regularly ran laudatory stories on prominent black figures like Marcus Garvey, J.A. Rogers, and of course Malcolm himself, who was regarded as one of the "chosen ones to be standards and beacons for the people in their darkest moments."⁴⁶ Like *Muhammad Speaks*, *Western Sunrise* also kept readers abreast of black activist activities, especially praising Black Power leaders who had become Muslims, such as Max Stanford and H. Rap Brown, and seeking photo opportunities with famous contemporary black activist leaders.⁴⁷ Notably, the MIB attracted the prominent Black Arts Movement writer Askia Touré, who brought to the organization his strong personal ties to the black liberation movement as well as his advanced writing skills, which were employed for the MIB magazine. In line with the endorsement of radical activists, the group also promoted self-defense and protection of the community from both drug dealers and competing Muslim groups. In addition, MIB Muslims were encouraged to eat healthily, and economic self-sufficiency was fostered through the group's starting its own health food store, restaurant, and tea room. The NOI's public interaction served as a model as well, with the MIB holding public bazaars, jazz concerts, and lectures, some of which were given by Imam Tawfiq at local colleges and universities. Even some of the black folk roots of the NOI made their appearance in Tawfiq's discourse, particularly in an essay on the topic of the 'Dry Bones,' which he penned for the *Western Sunrise*.⁴⁸

Despite the numerous NOI influences, however, the classical Islamic and modern Pan-Islamic influences were also apparent. As scholar and former MIB member Amir Al-Islam has noted, the "MIB was the first African American

45 Al-Islam, "Sunni Islam," 284–85; Dannin, *Black Pilgrimage*, 69.

46 K. Ahmad Tawfiq, "Al-Hajj Malik al-Shabazz: His Legacy," *Western Sunrise* 1, no. 5 (1972): 1, MMIRM, Box 3, WRHS.

47 Askia Muhammad Touré, "What Happened to the 'Revolution'?" *Western Sunrise* 2, no. 6 (1972): 4, 11. Regarding photo opportunities, volume 2, no. 7 contains photographs of Stokely Carmichael and Queen Mother Audley Moore and volume 2, no. 9 has a picture of Ossie Davis reading the journal.

48 K. Ahmad Tawfiq, "Dry Bones in the Valley," *Western Sunrise* 2, no. 5 (1972): 6, 14.

Sunni Muslim group that systematically drew from the exegesis and canons of Islam to address the challenges facing African Americans.⁴⁹ *Western Sunrise* articles, Tawfiq's khutbahs, and the MIB's numerous classes were filled with discussions of intricate details about the Qur'an, hadith, Islamic law, history, and classical Muslim interpretations of religious issues. Tawfiq's aim in including such information was in large part to create an Islamic intelligentsia that could ably address the black community's problems from a deeply Islamic perspective. Tawfiq, though, was no Salafi.⁵⁰ Like the Muslim Brotherhood founder al-Banna, he was accepting of Sufism as a legitimate part of Islam and he believed in political activism, as opposed to quietism or an exclusive commitment to religiously-inspired revolutionary action.⁵¹ Therefore, MIB members and their affiliates, including African American Sunni college students in the MSA, took part in several public protests and demonstrations.⁵² Occasionally the Muslim Brotherhood influence was even more direct: the MIB borrowed its motto from the Egyptian group and Tawfiq translated and published al-Banna's book *The Message of Education and Guidance*.⁵³ Furthermore, the MIB's prison program, although it was without doubt influenced by the NOI's success in prisons, may have also reflected a belief that African American incarceration paralleled that of the jailing of numerous Muslim Brotherhood members in Egypt.

Although the MIB encouraged cooperation and assistance between Sunni communities, by the early 1970s resentments were growing, often fueled by both Tawfiq's frequent criticizing of the Islamic actions and levels of knowledge of the other Sunni communities and his support for the NOI in the wake of an April 1972 police raid on Temple No. 7—an action that earned him an especially negative reputation among other black Sunnis.⁵⁴ In October 1972, to help cool the smoldering tensions, the MIB publicly announced that it had “declared a period of amnesty to all who have unresolved differences with the

49 Al-Islam, “Sunni Islam,” 293.

50 Nevertheless, in 1973, Tawfiq performed the hajj at the personal invitation of the Saudi Prince Faisal, a follower of the anti-Sufi and quietist Wahhabi movement; see “Imam Tawfiq Invited to Saudi Arabia,” *Western Sunrise* 2, no. 8 (1973): 1.

51 “Mevlevi Dervishes Visit New York City,” *Western Sunrise* 2, no. 8 (1973): 7; *Western Sunrise* 2, 5 (1972): 14.

52 Al-Islam, “Sunni Islam,” 298–99; *Western Sunrise* 2, no. 7 (1972): 1, 2.

53 (New York: Western Sunrise Press, 1977).

54 Bey, “A Special Letter to Muslims”; Al-Islam, “Sunni Islam,” 303, 300–01. Apparently, Mawdudi himself was highly critical of the NOI; see Mayes's reference to a letter Mawdudi wrote in 1973 in “Muslims of African Descent,” 72.

Mosque” for that year’s Ramadan.⁵⁵ Physical confrontations between Sunnis were thus avoided for the next year, although in June members of the MIB fought with individuals from a new non-Sunni Muslim sect called the Ansaaru Allah Community (see below) when the latter group attempted to proselytize and peddle in Harlem.⁵⁶ Sheikh Daoud, who had once been a teacher for the Ansaar leader, had to broker a peace agreement to end the violence. Peace with other Sunni communities, however, came to a dramatic end on February 4, 1974.⁵⁷ On that day, Tawfiq and his security guards traveled to the head mosque of the Brooklyn-based Dar-ul-Islam (DAR), the group that had been developing out of the IMA since the early 1960s. Apparently an article and editorial that offended Tawfiq had been run in the DAR’s magazine in January and February, and Tawfiq demanded a retraction.⁵⁸ The DAR imam refused, and this led to a shootout that left two members from each group dead.⁵⁹ This event had significant consequences for the MIB. Membership quickly fell off, with several Muslims apparently going to the Islamic Center at Riverside Drive, and Tawfiq, realizing that cooperation with the DAR and other Sunni groups was essential for the successful spread of Islam in America, began working with them to formalize a peaceful coexistence.

Dar-ul-Islam

The largest and probably most influential African American Sunni organization in the post-Malcolm period, the Dar-ul-Islam, had many similarities with the MIB, but there were also several important differences.⁶⁰ The core of the DAR movement was essentially the same NOI-influenced Sunni community

55 “Amnesty,” *Western Sunrise* 2, no. 6 (1972): 2.

56 Al-Islam, “Sunni Islam,” 301–03; MIB FBI file, Memorandum, SAC, New York to Director, FBI, 9/20/1973.

57 For this event, see Al-Islam, “Sunni Islam,” 259–62, 303–04; MIB FBI file, Teletype, New York to Director, 2/7/1974 and Memorandum, SAC, New York to Director, FBI, 3/29/1974; Marc Kalech, Irving Lieberman, and Dick Belsky, “FBI Joins Probe of Moslem Slayings,” *New York Post*, February 5, 1974, 1, 3.

58 According to an FBI source, what offended Tawfiq the most was the February editorial statement suggesting that the MSTA, NOI, DAR, and MIB “all had similar goals and were similar in many ways”; MIB FBI file, Teletype, New York to Director, 2/7/1974.

59 The men from the MIB who died happened to be former members of both the NOI and MMI; see *ibid.*

60 In addition to Curtis, “Urban Muslims,” this section relied largely on Ali, “Muslim School Planning”; Mahmoud Andrade Ibrahim al Amreeki, *The Dar-ul-Islam Movement: An American Odyssey Revisited* (n.p.: Dar-ul-Islam History Project, 2010); and Kamal Hassan Ali, *Dar-Ul-Islam: Principle, Praxis, Movement* (n.p.: Dar-ul-Islam History Project, 2010).

that had developed in the IMA in the early 1960s. The impetus for the community's new efforts came in 1967 when Sheikh Daoud began issuing Sunni identification cards to distinguish his followers from the NOI Muslims. Seeing this as an intolerably patronizing act, since Sheikh Daoud did not also make non-black members carry the cards, the black nationalist-leaning Muslims became more determined than ever before to start their separate community. This time, however, the more focused and better organized group, now calling itself the Dar-ul-Islam (Abode of Islam), expanded quickly, obtaining around 200 members by 1968.⁶¹ That year, two significant events would significantly shape what direction the movement would take. One was the election of Yahya Abdul-Kareem as the community's imam. The charismatic Imam Yahya was one of the DAR's original members in the early 1960s and was well-respected as a serious student of Islam. It would be under his direction that the movement would grow significantly. The other important event that year was a clash with the FBI. After DAR members assisted a Muslim who was being arrested for draft evasion by plainclothes federal agents, the FBI retaliated by ransacking the organization's Brownsville, Brooklyn mosque and arresting several Muslims. The event politicized the DAR even more and led to the forming of an eighty-odd-member paramilitary order called R'ad ('thunder,' a reference to the thirteenth chapter of the Qur'an).

Although Imam Yahya had done some of his Islamic training under Dr. Fazlur Rahman Ansari, a progressive Sunni and Sufi student of Maulana Siddiqi,⁶² the predominant religious views of the DAR were mostly shaped by conservative Pan-Islamic figures, especially Mawdudi, al-Banna, and Qutb.⁶³ As a result, its members believed strongly in following Islamic law, separating themselves as much as possible from non-Muslims, wearing 'Islamic' clothing—usually robes and turbans—and obtaining land on which the group would function in complete independence.⁶⁴ Numerous Islam study groups were organized, women's and youth auxiliaries were established, and members regularly attempted to secure in their workplaces the right wear their distinct Islamic clothing and beards. Having also been inspired by the NOI's economic nationalism, the group ran several small businesses, and it also, like the MIB

61 Amreeki, *Dar-ul-Islam*, 39.

62 For information about Ansari's pre-DAR work with American Muslims, see Bowen, *HCTIUS*, 1:300, 314–16.

63 Curtis, "Urban Muslims," 62–63; Ali, "Muslim School Planning," 52.

64 In addition to the already cited sources, see Bilal Abdullah Rahman, "Interview," *Al-Jihadul Akbar* (August 1974): 16–19, from Amistad Research Center, Tulane University.

and the NOI before it, published a magazine, held public bazaars, and put considerable effort into spreading the message of Islam to black Americans outside and inside of prisons—sometimes even explicitly promoting Islam as the ‘old time religion.’⁶⁵

The DAR’s most important effort, however, was commenced in 1969, when the organization started sending delegates out of state to unite with other small Sunni communities. The first group to join up with the New York mosque was Cleveland’s Masjid al-Mu’min, a small break-off from Akram’s mosque, which was composed primarily of elderly Muslims under the guidance of one Imam Sheikh Nabi.⁶⁶ After winning over the masjid members, the youthful DAR Muslims, led by Imam Mutawwaf Abdush Shaheed, instituted in the mosque both new religion-focused activities—such as regularly performing the five daily prayers, holding the Friday Jum’ah prayer, and teaching classes on Islam and Arabic—and community efforts, including the running of a halfway house and neighborhood drug patrols, giving first aid classes, and creating a community garden and food donation projects. Soon, the Cleveland group, now alternatively known as the Islamic Revivalist Movement (IRM), was also making significant outreach efforts. In addition to putting up billboards, hosting a radio show, and making appearances on local television stations, the IRM ran a successful prison program through which the mosque developed close relationships with various Ohio prisons, and by 1971 had set up a contract with the state government to have its Sunni ministers travel to all prisons in the

65 The group actually produced two periodicals: its more well-known magazine, *Al-Jihadul Akbar*, and *Umm al-Mu’minun* (Mothers of the Believers), a newsletter published by the New York women’s auxiliary of the same name. Few libraries have any issues of either journal; Tulane’s Amistad Research Center has a single copy of the former, and a copy of the latter is in the MMIRM, WRHS. New York’s Schomburg Center has the largest collection of DAR documents, but I was unable to utilize it for this book. On ‘old time religion’: “Atlanta Murder: Muslims Determined to Spread True Islam,” *Western Sunrise* 2, no. 9 (1973): 4. On prisons: An October 1972 letter claims that DAR prison activity was being conducted in New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Georgia, New Jersey, Kansas, and Washington, DC; see Muslim Penal Committee Darul-Islam, “No Reply from Congressman Rangel,” *Western Sunrise* 2, no. 8 (1973): 10, 12, 14.

66 According to Ihsan Bagby, who was a member of the mosque at the time, the group was led by one African American and one Indian; phone conversation with the author, February 23, 2011. The following discussion relies primarily on M.A. Shaheed, “The History of Masjid al-Mu’min-Islamic Revivalist Movement,” unpublished essay, MMIRM, Box 1, Folder 17, WRHS. There are preserved collections of documents from Cleveland’s DAR group, one at the Western Reserve Historical Society and the other at Georgia State University.

state.⁶⁷ These efforts appear to have been relatively successful. By 1974, the IRM reportedly had 3,500 members; Shaheed would even at one point claim that 4,000 people joined the IRM in a single year.⁶⁸ Although both numbers were probably exaggerations, existing records suggest there were certainly hundreds converted by the group in the early 1970s.

Unfortunately, there are relatively few publicly-accessible documents concerning the other twenty-nine communities that had aligned with the DAR by 1975.⁶⁹ From the information that we have, it seems that many of these DAR affiliates were formally established only after the New York mosque had commenced its national proselytization effort. The Detroit DAR group, to take one example, was started by members who arrived in the city from the already-established DAR communities in New York, Cleveland, and Philadelphia (the latter of which was probably the third DAR community).⁷⁰ The Ossining, New York group was also formed after the Brooklyn mosque started expanding. During Ramadan in early 1972, a group of five Muslims who were aware of the DAR's activities decided that the time was right to form a mosque, and within days were making converts at their newly-created Sunna Allah Masjid.⁷¹ Founded probably in the same year, Atlanta's Masjid Talib was established largely through the efforts of Ihsan Bagby, a convert who had joined the DAR through the IRM in 1969 and, after claiming conscientious objector status, had been sent to fulfill his selective service duties in Atlanta, where he soon after set up the local DAR branch.⁷² The Baltimore community, Masjid Saffat,

67 This contract was ended in 1974 due to the IRM feeling that the state was treating its representatives unfairly; see David Treadwell, "Muslim Sect Won't Renew Prison Pact," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, September 8, 1974, 30-A.

68 "3 Charged in Shootout Are not in Sunni Sect, Spokesman Says," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, May 31, 1974, 15-C; Dannin, *Black Pilgrimage*, 72. It should be pointed out that the IRM membership pledges housed at Georgia State University contain, on the back side of each pledge, comments about the convert's behavior, and several of the pledges indicate that the convert left the mosque, thus suggesting that the IRM, like the NOI, had an extremely high turnover rate, and that *active* membership was probably much smaller than 3,500.

69 Curtis, "Urban Muslims," 61. The DAR would claim that at its peak during the late 1970s/early 1980s, it had over forty affiliates in the following states: New York, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, Washington, DC, North Carolina, South Carolina, Alabama, Georgia, Tennessee, Louisiana, Missouri, Texas, Florida, Michigan, Illinois, Colorado, Washington, and Alaska.

70 Howell, *Old Islam*, 246. It appears that the 'Beys' group mentioned above may have split off from the DAR.

71 "Letters to the Editor," *Western Sunrise* 1, no. 5 (1972): 6, MMIRM, Box 3, WRHS.

72 Dannin, *Black Pilgrimage*, 239-40; Amin Abdur-Rashid, "Atlanta Mosque Launches Pro-

was born in June 1971, when a small number of converts who had for years been discussing establishing a mosque finally rented an apartment to serve in this function.⁷³ The converts began to actively proselytize, and by the following April, apparently after being joined by several immigrants, there were enough members that they could move into a three-story building on Myrtle Avenue.⁷⁴ Like other DAR communities, Masjid Saffat was soon running regular classes and lectures on Islamic topics, performing community support work, spreading Islam in local prisons, and starting its own businesses—the Baltimore group was in fact responsible for the DAR's profitable incense brand, Dar-ul-Miska.⁷⁵ Masjid Saffat, like all the other DAR communities, had its own imam who was elected by members of the local group; most of the leaders of other positions at both the local and national level were referred to as amirs.

While the movement was growing throughout the US, the Brooklyn community—now based at what was named Yasin Mosque on Herkimer Place in Brooklyn—remained the DAR's undisputed center, and, although the DAR network was rather loosely structured, its Imam Yahya was recognized as the movement's national imam. By 1969, Yahya had developed ties with the prince of Saudi Arabia who paid for several New York DAR amirs to take the hajj that year and for a number of other members to study at the Islamic University in Medina.⁷⁶ Connections would also be forged with the MSA, MWL, MIB, and the Islamic Party of North America. Through its various efforts, the group not only successfully recruited former NOI members, Five Percenters, and affiliates of Malcolm X, in 1971 it gained the conversion of former famed SNCC leader H. Rap Brown, who, taking the name Jamil Abdullah Al-Amin, embraced Islam under the DAR while imprisoned in New York.⁷⁷

Due to the group's growth and increasing prominence, the DAR and its members had numerous confrontations with several different parties. When DAR Muslims, for example, attempted to enter NOI temples, they were stopped by the FOI, and in some cases DAR members were harassed by Nation Muslims in

gram," *Western Sunrise* 2, no. 5 (1972): 2, 13; Ihsan Bagby, phone conversation with the author, February 23, 2011.

73 Taifa Abdullah, "Masjid Saffat, Baltimore," *Criterion* (Karachi) 8, no. 8 (1973): 22–24.

74 On immigrants at the mosque in its early years, see Bruce Robertson, "No Ayatollahs for Baltimore's Muslims," *Baltimore Magazine* (April 1980): 123.

75 Abdullah, "Masjid Saffat"; Amreeki, *Daru-ul-Islam*, 47–48.

76 Amreeki, *Daru-ul-Islam*, 53–54; Ali, *Dar-Ul-Islam*, 55–58.

77 Amreeki, *Daru-ul-Islam*, 23, 26–27, 50–51; Dannin, *Black Pilgrimage*, 150–64; Barboza, *American Jihad*, 48–51.

public settings.⁷⁸ In early 1973, just a day after the NOI murders of members of the Hanafi sect (see below), convinced that a major NOI assault on the Sunnis was imminent but lacking weapons to protect themselves and the funds to buy them, four DAR Muslims attempted to steal guns and ammunition from a sporting goods store, a poorly-planned effort that led to a headline-grabbing forty-eight-hour standoff, the death of a police officer, and the imprisonment of the Muslims.⁷⁹ Beyond these events, however, because many DAR members across the country joined the movement either in prison or as ex-criminals, just like in the NOI, several members and former members were also involved with other more self-interested violent crimes.⁸⁰ However, the most well-known of the DAR Muslim conflicts was the February 4, 1974 battle with the MIB Muslims—the event described above.⁸¹ From the DAR's perspective, Imam Tawfiq was, like Sheikh Daoud, very arrogant; DAR members even made it a point to make not-so-veiled public criticisms of Tawfiq, such as when in the group's magazine one member decried “brothers who called themselves scholars by saying they're from the university of al-Ahzar [*sic*], or Medina, or whatever university, and flaunting [their] credentials.”⁸² It appears, however, that, unlike for the MIB, this incident did not significantly negatively impact membership in the DAR, and the group would continue to grow in the 1970s. Nevertheless, both movements, along with the Islamic Party of North America, concluded that it would be best to reduce fighting and develop a formal relationship, and after setting up meetings through the MSA in the summer of 1974, in 1975 the various groups created an umbrella organization called the North American Association of Muslims through which they would cultivate cooperative activities for Muslims in the US.⁸³

Islamic Party of North America

The third new prominent African American Sunni movement during this period was Yusuf Muzaffaruddin Hamid's Islamic Party of North America.⁸⁴

78 Amreeki, *Dar-ul-Islam*, 34–35; Dannin, *Black Pilgrimage*, 141–43.

79 Dannin, *Black Pilgrimage*, 144–50.

80 E.g., “3 Charged in Shootout”; Treadwell, “Muslim Sect Won't.”

81 Notably, one of the men who died in this shootout was a Latino, William Howard Garcia; see MIB FBI file, Teletype, New York to Director, 2/7/1974.

82 Al-Islam, “Sunni Islam,” 303; Rahman, “Interview,” 18.

83 Al-Islam, “Sunni Islam,” 305–06; Letter, Salahuddin Abdul Wahid to [Imam M.A. Shaheed], [1976], IRM, Dar-ul-Islam correspondence and documents 1970s, Georgia State University.

84 The following discussion relies mainly on Khalid Fattah Griggs, *Come Let Us Change this World: A Brief History of the Islamic Party Hamid 1971–1991* (Winston-Salem: Vision Media,

Born into a family of Georgia preachers in 1944, from a young age Hamid—born James Cornelius Washington—had hoped to effect social change, but as time passed he came to believe that the constraints of the church would not allow him to do all that he desired in this realm.⁸⁵ After moving to New York to pursue a career as a trumpet player, Washington soon found himself among the jazz artist Ahmadiyyas; Talib Dawud became an important early mentor and, after embracing Islam, in the spring of 1967 Washington legally changed his name to Hamid.⁸⁶ Hamid's understanding of his religion, however, would shift significantly between 1968 and 1969.⁸⁷ During this period he traveled across Africa and Asia visiting various Muslim figures and institutions, briefly staying, for example, as a houseguest of Mawdudi and meeting with members of Mawdudi's Jamaati-Islami, the Said Nursi Movement, the Hizb ut-Tahrir, and the Muslim Brotherhood.⁸⁸ He also attended, for a short time, the Islamic University in Medina, where, like Tawfiq, he became involved with student activism, which similarly brought him into conflict with the administration and led to his departure from the school.⁸⁹ In early 1969 Hamid returned to the US and obtained a job at the Washington, DC Islamic Center. Having studied and been inspired by the reformist and revolutionary work of the Pan-Islamists he met abroad, Hamid concluded that in order to bring a true Islamic revival in America he would need to start by building up a local community that shared his views. Disappointed by the fact that the Islamic Center was not actively involved with spreading Islam and social justice to African Americans in the DC area, in July 1969 he and eleven other Islamic Center Sunnis—most of whom were African Americans, although there were apparently also some South Asians—formed the Masjid al-Ummah, the Community Mosque, to do

2007) and "History as a Weapon," *Vision* 6 (1989), in MPSRC, reel 48. Also see Muhammed al-Ahari, ed., *Taking Islam to the Street: The Expanded Edition; The Constitution, Da'wah and History of the Islamic Party in North America* (Chicago: Magribine Press, 2016).

85 Griggs, *Come Let Us*, 71; IPNA FBI file, Enclosure to Memorandum, SAC, WFO to Acting Director, FBI, 4/12/1973.

86 IPNA FBI file, Enclosure to Memorandum, SAC, WFO to Acting Director, FBI, 4/12/1973.

87 It seems that Hamid may have told some people that his travels through the Muslim-majority world commenced in 1965; however the FBI discovered that Hamid—who had only legally changed his name in May 1967, which suggests he was in the US at the time—first applied for a passport in August 1967, at which time he indicated that his plan was to leave for Saudi Arabia in March 1968. See IPNA FBI file, Enclosure to Memorandum, SAC, WFO to Acting Director, FBI, 4/12/1973.

88 "History as a Weapon."

89 Griggs, *Come Let Us*, 12.

this work.⁹⁰ By the second half of 1971, through the group's efforts over one hundred people had joined the mosque and hundreds more had begun learning about Islam through the group's proselytization programs.

Already by 1970, however, Hamid and company had also commenced making plans to reach the next stage of their vision. They soon began meeting with various American Muslim organizations, both at Muslim conferences and, presumably, through their connections with the Islamic Center.⁹¹ Then, at a December 1971 meeting in DC, the group established two institutions: the Federation of Muslim Communities—an alliance with a Muslim group from Pittsburgh and another from Chicago—and what was called the Islamic Party of North America, a national program designed to promote Islamic proselytization and reform, and for which the Federation communities would serve as the first member organizations.⁹² As repeatedly stated in *al-islam*, IPNA's journal that it began to publish soon after forming, the organization's goal was to

90 Sulayman Shahid Mufassir, "A Brief History of Masjid ul-Ummah," *Criterion* (Karachi) 6, no. 6 (1971): 50–55.

91 The group reportedly attended an April 1970 conference in Philadelphia where eighteen other American Muslim organizations were represented; see Mufassir, "A Brief History," 53.

92 Griggs (in *Come Let Us*, 14) adds that a Muslim community in Akron was also involved at the beginning; however, no representative from that community signed the Federation's "Declaration"; see McCloud, *African American*, 177–78. The Chicago mosque, known as the Muslim Community Mosque, was located at 140 West 99th Street, and led by Dawud Salahuddin, an African American who had converted around 1958 while living in Philadelphia. The mosque had in early 1973 thirty or forty members, which included both whites and blacks. This mosque was not identical with Chicago's Muslim Community Center, which was an immigrant-majority community, and at the time was located at 1651 North Kedzie. The Pittsburgh group was usually listed as the 'Islamic Center,' but in IPNA publications it also appears under the title of 'Islamic Party of North America'—it being the only local group to publicly take the IPNA name. Although it is not known exactly what the connections were between these various groups, I suspect—given a) Hamid's connection with Talib Dawud, b) the fact that Salahuddin was from one of the cities in which Dawud was relatively influential, c) the strong likelihood that the original IPNA groups were African American-majority, and d) that these groups were willing to adhere to the more traditional form of Islam promoted by IPNA—that these early IPNA groups were all formerly affiliated with Dawud and his Ahmadi-Sunni MBUSA. On the Chicago IPNA group, see several references to it in IPNA's journal, *al-islam*, and IPNA FBI file, Teletype, [SAC,] Chicago to Acting Director, [FBI], 2/6/1973. On the immigrant Muslim Community Center, see FIA FBI file, Enclosure to Airtel, SAC, Chicago to Acting Director, FBI, 3/26/1973 and Garbi Schmidt, *Islam in Urban America: Sunni Muslims in Chicago* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004), 23, 35–36, 166–67.

stimulate an Islamic revival that would bring justice for all people and eventually lead to the formation of an Islamic state.⁹³ For Hamid, the Islamic revival was to be a strictly orthodox, nonviolent, and non-nationalistic one and, reflective of his early influence from Talib Dawud, the NOI was absolutely not to be accepted under any circumstances.⁹⁴ Due to these positions, IPNA publicly criticized immigrants and black Sunni groups that supported the NOI, including the MIB, telling its members that although IPNA Muslims respected Malcolm, they agreed with his later views concerning the acceptance of whites into Islam and therefore could not accept the NOI as a legitimate Muslim organization.⁹⁵ Conflicts also emerged with the DAR, apparently due to IPNA refusing to join up with it.

In spite of its differences with other black Sunni communities, IPNA was very similar in many regards. For instance, it subscribed to the thesis that Islam was the original religion of the majority of the enslaved Africans in America, and therefore that the African Muslims' "culture and heritage is a genuine part" of the culture and heritage of the modern African American.⁹⁶ IPNA members also taught classes on Islam and spoke at colleges and universities, they allowed for Muslims to perform non-Qur'anic music, they did significant community service and prison work, they encouraged economic self-sufficiency and set up various businesses, and they even obtained a notable Latino convert element. By employing many of the core practices that were attracting African Americans to a wide variety of groups at the time, IPNA was able to have some degree of success. Within six months it had Muslims as far away as Eugene, Oregon selling *al-islam*,⁹⁷ and by the next year, when Hamid was claiming that

93 See McCloud, *African American*, 179–85. Copies of *al-islam* have been put online by Georgia State University through its After Malcolm Digital Archive Project.

94 Opposing views may have been self-suppressed by some members. For example, one Southern-born imam for the group, Yusef Abdula, had an interest in non-Abrahamic, African-based practices and would later join the Yoruba movement (see Hucks, *Yoruba Traditions*, 196–97). Also, in the summer of 1969 an immigrant who would become a prominent member of and advocate for IPNA, Sulayman Shahid Mufassir, publicly praised *Muhammad Speaks* for its coverage of events in Africa and the Arab world (see *Muhammad Speaks*, August 1, 1969, 14).

95 "Editorial: Oust Rauf—Heresy Condemned," *al-islam* 1, no. spring 2 (1972): 2; "Nationalism: The Antithesis of Islam," *al-islam* 1, no. summer 2 (1972): 5–6.

96 Ibn Al-Zinji, "Islam in Africa," *al-islam* 1, no. spring 2 (1972): 9.

97 The spring and summer 1972 issues of *al-Islam* lists agents in the following cities: Indianapolis; Petersburg, Virginia; Raleigh; Elizabeth, New Jersey; Atlanta; Pittsburgh; Houston; Berkeley; Baltimore (at DAR's Masjid Saffat); Chicago; Rochester, Michigan; Altadena, California; Columbia, Missouri; two locations in Philadelphia (one presumably at the local

“thousands” of American Muslims—black, white, and immigrant—belonged to the group, new IPNA-affiliated communities could be found in the Bronx, Philadelphia, Indianapolis, Wichita, and Houston, the latter of which served as the home of a strong IPNA mosque and prison program.⁹⁸ Despite this national expansion, however, many IPNA members shared similar backgrounds and, probably, social networks. A significant number of the core members were, for instance, former Howard University students, some of whom, like the former BVAL member Dawud Salahuddin, had joined other Islamic groups prior to IPNA.⁹⁹ Others were former members of the Black Panthers and the Latino activist Young Lords movement.¹⁰⁰ What these individuals saw in the Islamic Party was a militant movement dedicated to the liberation of the oppressed, but one that was also relatively intellectual compared to other black Islamic organizations. It was the latter characteristic, in fact, that led to the group having what many considered to be a more elaborate and convincing vision of an egalitarian society—that of an ideal Muslim world—than what the Black Power and other black Sunni groups were offering. Soon, dozens of Muslims began moving into Masjid al-Ummah, which at its peak in the mid-to-late 1970s had around eighty to one hundred dedicated members.¹⁰¹ Because, further-

DAR mosque); Wichita; Akron; Eugene; Oakland; Summit, New Jersey; Boston; Detroit; New Orleans; Pontiac; and Los Angeles.

- 98 The Indianapolis mosque, located at 309 East 25th Street, was known as Masjid Fajr; led by one Abdul Hakim, the group had around forty-two members in early 1973. The Philadelphia community was indirectly connected to the FBI's discovery of IPNA. The FBI first learned of IPNA in early 1973 when two Muslims affiliated with the group were arrested for violation of the 1935 Firearms Act, when they were discovered to have in their possession a number of guns. The arrests occurred shortly after the Hanafi murders, and the individuals happened to also be carrying on them IPNA literature critical of the NOI—so the FBI immediately became suspicious that a war was about to explode between various Muslim groups. As it turns out, however, the two individuals were traveling through the country selling silver and leather items for El Medina and African Emporium, small Philadelphia-based Muslim-owned businesses, and the guns were apparently primarily for protecting their expensive inventory. On these and the other listed IPNA communities, see IPNA FBI file, *passim.*, esp. Enclosure to Memorandum, SAC, Indianapolis to Acting Director, FBI, 3/27/1973; Enclosure to Memorandum, SAC, Indianapolis to Acting Director, FBI, 3/28/1973; “Mosques in North America,” *al-islam* 3, no. summer 1 (1972–1973): 14; “New Masjid in Houston,” *al-islam* 3, no. winter 1 (1973–1974): 16.
- 99 Ira Silverman, “An American Terrorist,” *New Yorker*, August 5, 2002, 30–31; Dannin, *Black Pilgrimage*, 74.
- 100 Ramon Ocasio phone interview with the author, July 5, 2016.
- 101 Ramon Ocasio phone interview with the author, July 5, 2016. Mr. Ocasio informed me that

more, many of the translations of Mawdudi and Syed Qutb's work—including the latter's famous *Milestones*—were first mass-distributed to American Muslim, IPNA also played a significant role in connecting African Americans with the contemporary Pan-Islamic revival.

The Nonorthodox Presence

Even with the growth of interest in Sunni Islam, nonorthodox Islamic movements and independent figures remained an important element of African American Islamic culture during this period. In fact, as we will see, it seems that by the end of the 1960s, the doctrines of Fard had started regaining their status as the dominant Islamic ideology in the black community. But what most distinguished the nonorthodox current at the time was its diversity. Not since the 1920s and early 1930s had there been so many different forms of black Muslim identities and teachings. A big factor contributing to this was the constant forming of schisms and new doctrines within the NOI's local temples; there were many instances of small groups of Muslims breaking off from the mainstream NOI, particularly when they desired to mix their teachings with revolutionary rhetoric. The year 1974, for instance, saw the emergence of two such groups. In October, a small coterie of Montgomery NOI Muslims took over a black radio station apparently to start a revolutionary movement; the group ended up in a shootout with police, leaving one officer dead and the Muslims arrested.¹⁰² Out in Detroit, meanwhile, two former members of the NOI expanded Nation mythology to include a black god-created 'Fathership,' which was much larger than the Mother Plane, and argued that 'Neo-Muslims' should become revolutionary warriors willing to kill whites and black non-believers in order to usher in the ascendancy of the socialistic 'Nation of Tu'lam.'¹⁰³ Unsur-

prospective members were put on a one-year probation before they were considered full members of the movement, a program that weeded out many individuals.

102 See Ray Jenkins, "Three Seized in a Fatal Shootout in Montgomery, Ala.," *New York Times*, October 13, 1974, 48.

103 Bi'sana Ta'laha El'Shabazziz Sula Muhammadia and Master Tu'biz Jihadia Muhammadia, *The Holy Book of Life Volume Two, Spiritual Government* (Detroit: Harlo, 1974). This book contains several claims that appear to have been produced purely by the authors' imagination, but from the perspective of the historian interested in uncovering the untold histories of Islam in America, there is one section that stands out. On page 66, the Muhammadias assert that "For many years the Black metropolis of Northern New Jersey has produced some of the best qualified Black men, women, and some children in all walks

prisingly, the NOI's headquarters and Elijah Muhammad himself repeatedly and publicly criticized such break-off sects as well as the unapproved groups, independent exploiters, and strange teachings that were spreading within the movement.¹⁰⁴

Frequently, however, the period's diverse Islamic identities were claimed by independent individuals and small groups that had little-to-no affiliation with the NOI. A 1972 newspaper article reports, for instance, that in the early 1960s one Daud Abdullah, born David Stockton, became and began living as a "Sufi Moslem"—seemingly without joining a Sufi community—after discovering what he believed was a "religious philosophy that would give some meaning to his life."¹⁰⁵ A handful of African Americans also joined the Philadelphia-based Sufi movement of the Sri Lankan Bawa Muhaiyaddeen, although the explicitly Sufi elements of his teachings were not revealed to his followers before 1976.¹⁰⁶ In some cases, mystical Islamic themes were employed in the lingering conjure community. In Florida, the traveling Prophet Warkiee Sarheed laced his discourse with references to Ramadan, Mecca, and the Qur'an.¹⁰⁷ Interestingly, the robe- and turban-wearing conjurer informed the folklorist Harry Middleton Hyatt that he was not the only Islam-influenced black hoodoo doctor in the Americas during this period and that he belonged to an international hoodoo organization that met every year during Ramadan—the next meeting was to take place in Kingston, Jamaica, but other years' meetings

of life, but for some reason they never fully realized it. Equality and proportionately, for years un-numbered, the Islamic [sic] atmosphere of Northern New Jersey, especially the City of Newark, have produced some of the finest creative, talented, and genuine thinkers, leaders and dedicated followers that the world ever knew." It is unclear which individuals the Muhammadias are referring to in this section. Could this be a reference to Noble Drew Ali (whom the Muhammadias acknowledge later in their book) or even Suleiman, both of whom were important pioneers for African American Islam?

104 See *Muhammad Speaks* for the following dates: October 1, 1971, 3; April 21, 1972, 24; April 28, 1972, 30; June 9, 1972, 15; October 27, 1972, 88–89; June 22, 1973, 9; January 18, 1974, 3. For information about a schism in San Diego, see COINTELPRO file, Memorandum, SAC, San Diego to Director, FBI, 12/4/1970.

105 Lafayette Haynes, "His Holy Day Complicates Life," *Boston Globe*, November 15, 1972, 31.

106 For an example of his teachings in the early 1970s, see M.R. Bawa Muhaiyaddeen, Lex Hixon, and Will Noffke, *Truth & Light: Brief Explanations* (Philadelphia: Guru Bawa Fellowship of Philadelphia, 1974). That African Americans were members of the group is confirmed by photographs published in Chloë Le Pichon, Dwaraka Ganesan, Saburah Posner, and Sulaiha Schwartz, eds., *The Mirror: Photographs and Reflections on Life with M.R. Bawa Muhaiyaddeen* ([Philadelphia]: Chloë Le Pichon, 2010).

107 Hyatt, *Hoodoo*, 4612–83, esp. 4671.

were in either the US or Ghana, the two other centers of the society.¹⁰⁸ Apparently the most influential figure in this community was a “livin’ Gawd” named Abadoola (Abdullah).¹⁰⁹ Sarheed indicated that this “great man,” whose name he often chanted, sometimes visited the US from his Ghanese home, but was also able to communicate with Sarheed, and presumably others, through psychic power.¹¹⁰

Still, the most influential nonorthodox identities were those that were promoted in groups that had relatively large organized communities. Nonorthodox Islam therefore saw a small resurgence in the various Ahmadi and Moorish organizations; the emergence of a popular eclectic movement that mixed Sunni teachings with those of Drew Ali and Fard; and periods of new growth for the more purely Fardian groups—the Five Percenters and the Nation of Islam. As a result of these developments, by the mid-point of the 1970s organized African American Islam had become one of the most vibrant, creative, and influential religious markets in the United States.

The Qadianis and Moors

The Qadiani movement seems to have made modest gains in the 1960s and 1970s.¹¹¹ After experiencing its small revival in the 1950s, the community remained predominantly composed of African Americans, who made up over ninety-five percent of its convert population in the early 1970s;¹¹² the remaining percent was composed of white wives of the black converts, most of whom, it seems, were liberal-leaning individuals.¹¹³ Although a proportion of the new converts were college-educated and middle-class, one study reported that unskilled laborers and those with drug convictions made up a noticeable element in the group.¹¹⁴ Motivations for joining were similar to those of the early black converts: resentment towards the Christian church and a sense that Islam

108 Ibid., *Hoodoo*, 4671.

109 Ibid., 4631, 4646, 4658–59, 4671.

110 Sarheed, interestingly, also noted that “Gawd”—it is not clear if he was referring to Abadoola—was a “mahstah math’matician” who was responsible for ensuring that the planets properly rotated around the Sun; see *ibid.*, 4649.

111 For more on the Qadianis during this period, see Turner, *Islam in the African American*, 138–46, 196–99.

112 Tony Poon-Chiang Chi, “A Case Study of the Missionary Stance of the Ahmadiyya Movement in North America” (PhD diss., Northwestern University, 1973), 110, 178n23; Nusrat Bashir, phone interview with the author, August 28, 2014.

113 Nusrat Bashir interview. Also see Bowen, *HCTIUS*, 1:331.

114 Chi, “A Case Study,” 119; Nusrat Bashir interview.

was the religion of Africans,¹¹⁵ the latter motive being reflective of the strong black consciousness theme present in the movement, with some male members having even come out of the MSTA and NOI.¹¹⁶ Yet, despite occasionally handing out literature, holding small public protests criticizing Christianity, and sending some of its converts to study and the movement's international headquarters in Rabwah, Pakistan, the group's twenty-six local *jamaats* (communities) remained fairly inward-looking and almost never had more than fifty members each.¹¹⁷ In 1975, the 'missionary in charge' of the movement in the US was the Pakistani Muhammad Siddiq Shahid (who replaced Abdur Rehman Khan Bengalee, who had died in 1972) and its national amir of *jamaats* was Rashid Ahmad American, an African American who had first trained in Pakistan in 1949.¹¹⁸

The Moorish movement during this period, despite apparently receiving moderate increased interest due to the general popularity of Islam and the work of Col. Hassan Jeru-Ahmed, continued to be characterized by widespread factionalism. For example, in New York City, one could find a Moorish Divine National Movement; Jarad Faruck Bey's Moorish American Religious League; a temple for the Givens-El faction; and a 1,500-member branch of the MSTA, Inc. led by Joseph Jeffries-El, an ambitious leader whose community sponsored a popular Moorish American basketball league as well as the development of a multi-million dollar housing project that was planned to be called Noble Drew Ali Plaza.¹¹⁹ By the early 1970s Chicago also had at least four separate

115 Chi, "A Case Study," 121, 150; Nusrat Bashir interview; Anwar Iqbal, "Ahmadis Find Place to Worship without Fear," *Chicago Tribune*, July 24, 1987.

116 Some also wore afro hairdos; see Chi, "A Case Study," 150; Whyte, "Christian Elements," 23.

117 Chi, "A Case Study," 121, 150; Nusrat Bashir interview; Ahmadiyya Movement FBI file, *passim.*; Munawar Ahmad Anees, "Ahmadiyyat in America," *Muslim Sunrise* 43, no. 1 & 2 (1976): 13–14; Rashid Ahmad American, "A Brief Summary of the Ahmadiyya Movement in America," *Muslim Sunrise* 42, no. 4 (1975): 12–13; "... and Christianity," *Milwaukee Courier*, December 30, 1972, 1.

118 Anees, "Ahmadiyyat in America," 13–14.

119 "The Truth?" *New York Amsterdam News*, November 27, 1965, 46; "Moorish Group Leaders Honored," *New York Amsterdam News*, November 20, 1976, B4; Malcolm Nash, "In Our Churches," *New York Amsterdam News*, June 9, 1962, 27; Robert E. Tomasson, "A Minister Spurs Housing in Brownsville," *New York Times*, April 8, 1973; "Housing and Development Administration The City of New York Public Notice," *New York Times*, June 11, 1973, 58; "MEAC vs. CIAA All-Star Game Sunday in NY," *Afro-American*, March 30, 1974, 11; Donald Huff, "D.C. Pro League Basketball Proves Lively Crowd Pleaser," *Washington Post*, July 14, 1974, D7.

Moorish organizations.¹²⁰ The two smallest were the inactive group led by Charles Highbaugh Bey on South Calumet Street and, over on North Orleans Street, the remnants of Temple No. 1 of the MSTA, Inc., now headed by R. Love-El, who had taken the reins of the faction in 1971 after a decade during which the group's previous head, J. Blakely Bey, expelled several leading members in Virginia.¹²¹ South Wabash Street was home to the headquarters of the heirs of Givens-El's movement, which had about 300 members in Chicago and temples in ten other cities throughout the country. And at 957 East 75th Street was the 'Grand Major Temple' of a group known alternatively as the MSTA, the MSTA Inc. Divine and National Movement, and the Moorish Kingdom of North America.¹²² Founded and led, it seems, sometime in the 1960s by one Henry Hayes-Bey, this organization's leaders attempted to develop connections with not only Moorish groups across the country—by 1973 it had affiliated temples in seven cities—but also with the NOI, which 75th Street member J. McGee-Bey publicly praised in 1962.¹²³

In 1969, the MSTA, Inc.'s grand governor of Maryland, Rufus German Bey, a Moor who had joined the movement in the 1920s, became a member of the the 75th Street temple and in 1972 was elected its national grand sheik.¹²⁴ Then, in 1975, without making it known to Love-El, German Bey dissolved the corporation of the MSTA, Inc. in Chicago, left the 75th Street temple, and incorporated a combined version of the groups (called the 'MSTA, Inc. Supreme Grand Major Temple') in his hometown of Baltimore, taking with him the group's influential Mufti Force auxiliary.¹²⁵ Meanwhile, the Dingle-El brothers—who, despite hav-

120 See MSTA FBI file, Report, [1973], "Extremist Muslim Groups and Violence: Moorish Science Temple of America," in AMP.

121 "Legal Notices," *Progress-Index*, March 29, 1966, 20.

122 For these different names, see Dingle-El, *Resurrection*, 163.

123 SAB, phone conversation with the author; "Letters to the Editor," *Muhammad Speaks* (May 1962): 13. Prior to this, in 1961, L. Ferrell Bey of Chicago had reached out to Elijah Muhammad, apparently urging him to follow Drew Ali's teachings; Muhammad replied saying that he was Drew Ali's "brother" in the same work of resurrecting of the African American, and urging Ferrell Bey to follow him instead; see Letter, Elijah Muhammad to L. Ferrell Bey, January 6, 1961, Schomburg Center MSTA collection. During the summer and fall of 1972, this group occasionally had essays promoting their teachings in the *Chicago-South Suburban News* newspaper.

124 Way-El, *Noble Drew Ali*, 187; Oishi, "Mine Eyes."

125 Way-El, *Noble Drew Ali*, 187; R. Love El, *Branch Temple Information* ([Detroit]: [Allied Print], [1980s?]), 21, BHL; "Moorish Science Temple" (advertisement), *Washington Post*, July 14, 1978, C10; Moorish Science Temple of America, A Not for Profit Corporation, by R. Love El, President vs. Bro. Densmore Bey, Bro. Jessie Johnson El, Bro. Shanay El, Bro.

ing come to the MSTA through the Givens-El faction, had at one point aligned with German Bey—in 1972 broke off to form their own community in Baltimore.¹²⁶ Richardson Dingle-El claimed to be the third reincarnated Noble Drew Ali, whereas his brother Timothy asserted that he, like the original Noble Drew Ali, was a ‘mental warrior,’ and as such his proper ‘hangout’ was the courtroom.¹²⁷ The brothers’ group thus started classes to study law and history so that members could pursue numerous legal challenges with various politicians and government officials. Soon, the Dingle-El faction had gained attention for its many attempts to change state and federal government racial designations and to obtain for descendants of slaves reparations, tax-exempt status, and even citizenship, since, the organization argued, the Dred Scott decision had denied African Americans citizenship (an assertion, as we have seen, that was not employed by Drew Ali, but was present in the NOI in the 1940s and may have been used in the Givens-El faction, which had claimed to rule a ‘Moorish’ government in America). The community also soon developed a relationship with the United Moorish Republic/BVAL head Col. Hassan Jeru-Ahmed.¹²⁸

The Ansaars

One of the more eclectic groups to appear during the post-Malcolm period was the Ansaaru Allah Community (AAC), which blended several Sunni and sectarian Islamic teachings along with some Black Hebrew and black cultural nationalist ideas.¹²⁹ Just as it is with the MSTA and NOI, the background of the

Fishburn Bey, Sister C. Price Bey and “Moorish Science Temple of America,” by Sister E. Liggins El, Agent, 80 CH 6273 (1982), in AMP; Letter, Timothy Dingle-El to Sis. Price-Bey, March 20, 1975, AMP. As mentioned in Chapter 4, the Mufti auxiliary was in existence as early as the 1930s, and it primarily functioned as a group that watched over the temple. The University of California possesses a pamphlet describing the roles of this institution within the MSTA entitled *Mufti Laws of the Moorish Science Temple of America* (n.p.: Moorish Science Temple of America, Inc., [1970s]).

126 See Dingle-El, *Resurrection* and Rommani M. Amenu-El, *The Negro, the Black, the Moor* (Baltimore: Gateway Press, 2008).

127 Dingle-El, *Resurrection*, 3.

128 Amenu-El, *Negro, the Black*, 190, 202. It is possible that Jeru-Ahmed’s Moorish government ideas had primarily been inspired by the Givens-El group.

129 The following discussion of the group’s history is based primarily on four sources: Yvonne Haddad and Jane Smith, *Mission to America: Five Islamic Sectarian Communities in North America* (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida, 1993), 105–36; Susan Palmer, *The Nuwau-bian Nation: Black Spirituality and State Control* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010); Abu Ameenah Bilal Philips, *The Ansar Cult in America* (Riyadh: Tawheed Publications, 1988); As Sayyid Isa Al Haadi Al Mahdi, *The Ansaar Cult: The Truth about the Ansaarullah Community*

AAC's leader—typically referred to today as Dr. Malachi Z. York—has remained a matter of some contestation. York was probably born June 26, 1945, but both the location of his birth and his parentage are uncertain.¹³⁰ According to one of his sons, York's real father was rumored to be an American gangster or pimp, but York insisted that his father was a Sudanese descendant of the famous nineteenth-century Sudanese Muslim Mahdi, and that York himself was born in Omdurman, Sudan to an American mother.¹³¹ In any case, York spent the majority of his childhood in the US. For most of his first seven years, he lived in Massachusetts; then, he claims, from ages seven to twelve he lived in the Sudan; and finally he moved to Teaneck, New Jersey, although he frequently spent weekends visiting family in Brooklyn. It was in 1957 that York claims he first joined Sheikh Daoud Faisal's Brooklyn-based Islamic Mission of America—although the evidence for this specific date is somewhat weak, he does seem to have been a member since at least 1963.¹³² By the next year, however, York had become involved with a youth gang and in January 1965 he was convicted of multiple crimes, for which he was sent—after a brief stint on Rikers Island—to a youth rehabilitation center until October 1967.¹³³ It was apparently during this period that York became familiar with the teachings of Elijah Muhammad, presumably via incarcerated Nation members, and he began making preparations to start his own Islamic community.¹³⁴

in America: Truth Is Truth: Rebuttal to the Slanderers ([Brooklyn]: [The Original Tents of Kedar], 1989). I attempted to obtain, through the Freedom of Information Act, the group's FBI file from the 1970s, but I was told by the FBI that the file was destroyed in 2008.

130 Bilal Philips (in *Ansaar Cult*, 1) argues that in one instance York claimed to have been born in 1935, but York claims that this was a mere one-time printing error; see his book (under the name Mahdi) *Ansaar Cult*, 54; see also *Bilal* ([1974?]): [12], Labadie Collection, University of Michigan.

131 York insists that he was publicly claiming a connection with the Mahdi as early as 1971; see Mahdi, *Ansaar Cult*, 124.

132 York has printed in several of his books what he purports to be his 1957 identification card for the group (see, e.g., Mahdi, *Ansaar Cult*, 56); however his books regularly feature what are clearly altered images, so we cannot accept this identification card at face value. However, one of York's estranged sons, who is in fact a strong critic of his father and does not attempt to affirm most of the myths around his father, does insist that York was indeed a member of Faisal's 'State Street' mosque when he was eighteen, which would have been in 1963; see Palmer, *Nuwaubian*, 49 (York's son inaccurately refers to Faisal's group as the "Stateside mosque").

133 Palmer, *Nuwaubian*, 5; Mahdi, *Ansaar Cult*, 59–60.

134 Mahdi, *Ansaar Cult*, 60.

Almost immediately after being released, York began putting his plans into motion. Now going by the name Isa Abdullah, York opened a small shop in Brooklyn called Pure Sufi, which sold African cultural products, and created an Islamic community named Ansaar Pure Sufi.¹³⁵ The word ‘Ansaar’ is an Islamic-Arabic term for ‘helpers’; it refers to the people of Medina who helped the Prophet Muhammad after he left Mecca—but it is not clear why exactly this word was chosen; perhaps York viewed his community as the true ‘helpers’ of ‘Pure Sufi,’ which seems to be what he called his teachings at the time. However, why he also called his group ‘Sufi’ is even more unclear. Although the IMA had Sufi-leaning teachers, such as the Dr. Fazlur Ansari who had influenced the founders of the DAR, there does not seem to have been a true Sufi influence on York’s doctrines, which over the years have made almost no references to traditional or even modern Sufi concepts or teachers.

Little is known about York’s teachings during this early phase of his work. His group apparently often visited Sheikh Daoud’s IMA for Friday Jumah prayers, and York asserts that Sheikh Ahmed Hassoun—the Sudanese Sunni scholar who was Malcolm X’s spiritual advisor—was also his “teacher and guide.”¹³⁶ He claims, in addition, that people were coming to him to learn about Islam, although what he taught exactly is unknown.¹³⁷ York’s followers at this time wore, along with black and green robes, the symbols of a six-pointed star, an upward turned crescent, and an ankh, which suggests that York had begun mixing together several types of teachings, some of which were non-Islamic and suggest an influence from the black Israelite and Yoruba communities.¹³⁸ Apparently much of York’s interaction with such sectarian groups came when he and his followers would walk from Brooklyn up through Harlem to the Bronx where they would propagate their religion and peddle oils and incense; it was this activity, York says, that brought him into contact with the Five Percenters, for example, and probably also led to relationships with the Israelites and Yorubas.¹³⁹ In 1969, Ansaar Pure Sufi changed its name to the Nubian Islaamic Hebrews and put greater emphasis on its connection with Africa; members now wore dashikis, black fezzes, and a bone through the left ear.¹⁴⁰ This was followed in 1970 with yet another change. On June 26 that year, York hosted for

135 Mahdi, *Ansaar Cult*, 70.

136 Mahdi, *Ansaar Cult*, 33–34, 72. York spells Hassoun’s name ‘Hasuwn.’

137 Mahdi, *Ansaar Cult*, 92.

138 Mahdi, *Ansaar Cult*, 72–73. Because during this period the group’s identity also focused on West Africa, it is possible that the Yoruba Temple was an influence at the time.

139 Mahdi, *Ansaar Cult*, 60, 92.

140 Mahdi, *Ansaar Cult*, 73.

himself a birthday celebration picnic, inviting members of the IMA, DAR, and other New York mosques.¹⁴¹ At this event his group was renamed the Ansaaru Allah Community, which is the title it would retain for several years thereafter. For the AAC incarnation, York's followers wore turbans and long white robes and carried walking staffs—outfits reminiscent of those of Yoruba Temple members.

According to York, it was soon after this transformation into the AAC that his movement began its “actual growth.”¹⁴² The group attracted some African American Muslims from the IMA, DAR, and NOI,¹⁴³ but it appears that the majority of York's converts were individuals who had not already been in Islamic organizations. Member data from various sources indicates that most of these individuals were Christian before joining up with York, often becoming interested in his teachings when they read the publications York had started writing.¹⁴⁴ It seems, however, that the AAC, which would eventually have branches in over a dozen countries and a dozen American cities, remained mostly in New York before 1975, with only two additional small branches established in Trinidad and Philadelphia during 1973–74.¹⁴⁵

AAC Muslims lived in sex-segregated communal facilities and were required to cut all ties with non-member friends and family. During the day, they peddled, in addition to oils and incense, numerous small publications about Islam, most of which were booklets and newspapers written by York himself or his staff.¹⁴⁶ The contents of these early publications varied, but the writings frequently printed multiple sections from the Bible and the Qur'an while emphasizing the learning of Arabic, the figure of Bilal—the famous early black convert to Islam—and York's role as the “Reformer for this century.”¹⁴⁷ According to

141 Mahdi, *Ansaar Cult*, 81.

142 Mahdi, *Ansaar Cult*, 73.

143 We know of at least two former DAR Muslims and two former Nation members who joined his group; see Mahdi, *Ansaar Cult*, 60–62, 92, 113, 500; Palmer, *Nuwaubian Nation*, 61–62.

144 Mahdi, *Ansaar Cult*, 499–571; Palmer, *Nuwaubian Nation*, 54–64.

145 Mahdi, *Ansaar Cult*, 92–93, 100, 555. At one point, York claimed that the Philadelphia group did not open until 1978, but York's own records record a conversion in Philadelphia in 1975 and an AAC publication cited by Philip notes York visiting Philadelphia in 1974; Mahdi, *Ansaar Cult*, 130, 555; Philips, *Ansaar Cult*, 197.

146 The tendency to produce many small books about African religion is another element of York's group that is reminiscent of the Yoruba Temple.

147 *Bilal* ([1974?]), Labadie Collection, University of Michigan; Wilson Jeremiah Moses, *Black Messiahs and Uncle Toms: Social and Literary Manipulations of a Religious Myth*, rev. ed. (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993), 191–92; Philips, *Ansaar Cult*, *passim*. It is important to keep in mind that almost none of York's pre-1975 publications

York, in 1970, the seventh seal of Revelation was broken, and the world was currently in “the last half hour of the 6,000 years.” York, then, was functioning essentially as the messiah (Mahdi) of Revelation, and his job, he claimed, was to collect the 144,000 people who would be saved in an apocalypse that would take place in the year 2000. In addition to these teachings, York asserted that black people were in fact ‘Nubians’ whereas whites were ‘Canaanites’ and devils. Many of York’s other well-known claims, including the notion that black people are descendants of extraterrestrials, almost certainly did not appear until after 1976, when York began incorporating the ideas of the ancient astronaut theory promoter Zecharia Sitchin.¹⁴⁸ However, York was definitely still attempting to blend other Islamic sectarian ideas with his own during the early 1970s. One of his followers took him to visit the MSTA, which York subsequently joined,¹⁴⁹ and, as the references to 144,000 and whites as devils indicate, his teachings showed a significant NOI/Five Percenter influence.

Beyond offering an eclectic new view of the history and fate of African Americans, York has frequently also claimed to possess secret knowledge of the other black Islamic movements. Perhaps his most famous assertions center on W.D. Fard.¹⁵⁰ He has stated, first of all, that to understand who Fard truly was, one must first know about a man named Abdul Wali Farrad Muhammad Ali, who was distinct from W.D. Fard. This Farrad came to America in 1913 under the sponsorship of the House of Saud, he being of Saudi descent himself. He soon joined Noble Drew Ali’s Canaanite Temple in Newark where he “cause[ed] trouble amongst them teaching Arabic and his interpretation of Islam.”¹⁵¹ After a few years, this Farrad left Drew Ali’s group and in the early 1920s joined the Ahmadiyyas and Hassan al-Banna’s Muslim Brotherhood (York does not seem to have been aware that the latter group did not yet exist at that time), and then joined the MSTA before being murdered in 1929. W.D. Fard, on the

have been preserved in libraries and the vast majority of his writings that scholars have cited appeared after 1975. The above-cited *Bilal*, however, probably appeared in 1974. I have also cited Moses, who looked at York publications from the late 1970s, and Philips, who probably had the best access to early AAC writings and was able to cite three pieces dating from 1975 and earlier as well as several other items from the late 1970s.

- 148 Palmer, *Nuwaubian Nation*, 16, 24–25; see also Yusuf Nuruddin, “Ancient Black Astronauts and Extraterrestrial Jihads: Islamic Science Fiction as Urban Mythology,” *Socialism and Democracy* 20, no. 3 (2006): 127–65.
- 149 Mahdi, *Ansaar Cult*, 60; Palmer, *Nuwaubian Nation*, 5.
- 150 Malachi Z. York, *Shaikh Daoud Vs. W.D. Fard* (n.p.: Ancient & Mystic Order of Melchizedek, n.d.).
- 151 *Ibid.*, 9.

other hand, was a white government agent who was sent to cause division in the black community; in 1930 he joined the MSTA and posed as Farrad, and this enabled him to start the NOI. York adds that Sheikh Daoud, whom he insists was a former member of the MSTA, knew Fard as a Moor, and that after Fard left the NOI in 1934, he frequently visited Sheikh Daoud's IMA.¹⁵² This narrative, which cannot be backed up by any known historical evidence, has contributed significantly to the confusion about the Canaanite Temple and Fard's background.

The Five Percenters

The ability of the AAC to gain converts in New York reflected the fertility of the city's religious soil in the wake of Malcolm's death—and so did the expansion of the Five Percenters.¹⁵³ The group had been growing since 1964, but a turning point in its development arrived on May 31, 1965. That day, when around 150 'gods' gathered and walked through the streets of Harlem, several were accused of harassment and fighting, and they and Allah (Clarence 13X) were subsequently arrested and charged. After refusing lawyers, several of the youths were sent to jail, where they began proselytizing, and Allah was sentenced to Matteawan State Hospital for the Criminally Insane, where he would remain for almost two years. With their leader incarcerated, the young members began to believe that the world was about to come to an end—specifically on July 4, 1966—and this seems to have inspired the gods to spread their teachings even more.¹⁵⁴ Around this time the group also started holding every month what was called a 'House of Parliament,' where Five Percenters would take turns 'on the square,' detailing their knowledge of the NOI lessons and 'breaking it down' to explain how those lessons related to their own lives.

After being released in the spring of 1967, Allah started putting plans into motion for developing his community even further. Believing that it was through education that the gods would realize their divine attributes, and that this knowledge would turn them into better contributors to their communities, he sought to start a Five Percenter school similar to the Urban League's 'street academies'—small storefront schools where adult high school dropouts who hoped to help improve their communities, after receiving training, taught teenage dropouts—and Allah wanted to obtain one for his group. Fortunately for Allah, although the Urban League refused his request, during this period

152 Ibid., 8–15, 27–28, 73, 114, 118–20.

153 This section relies largely on Allah, *In the Name*; Knight, *Five Percenters*; the Five Percenter FBI file; and Gottehrer, *Mayor's Man*.

154 Labov et al., *A Study*, 145.

Mayor John Lindsay's office was also attempting to develop urban programs that would help improve conditions for racial minorities, and when mayoral aide Barry Gottehrer leaned about Allah he quickly secured a building for the Five Percenter school. Known as the 'Street Academy,' the school would be used for religious instruction and as a hangout, and was typically free from drug use. The Five Percenters thus began settling into their new community base.

Grounded by having a central meeting place and classes that standardized the doctrines, the Five Percenters developed further their very distinctive modes of talking, acting, identifying, and dressing, all of which were soon reflecting a variety of influences. The group's material culture, for instance, showed signs of African-focused cultural nationalism; many of the boys wore the now popular dashikis and kufis, sometimes tasseled, and females could be seen with colorful head wraps.¹⁵⁵ A flag and logo had been made as well: clearly having borrowed from the esoteric teachings of the NOI, the main element in the image was the number seven, next to which was a five-pointed star like on the NOI flag; this was all encircled, and behind the circle was a eight-pointed compass star that represented the rays of the sun. Notably, however, the flag was not red but black, white, and gold—a sign that the old red flag folk tradition no longer had a major influence on African American Islam. The flag was put up at the Street Academy and members made pins and medallions containing the flag's symbol. In addition to adopting a new visual symbol, though, the gods were also taking new names. In the movement's first few years, Allah had allowed the youths to choose traditional Arabic-Muslim names, but conflicts with the NOI caused him to discourage this practice and he instead suggested that the members choose words from the group's symbolic Supreme Alphabet—although many still ended up choosing 'Allah' for their surname.¹⁵⁶

Despite being a chronic gambler and drinker himself, Clarence continued to encourage the youths to advance in their education, avoid aggression, and not use drugs. They were also told to constantly spread the teachings; a popular

155 The Five Percenters also gave locations in New York names that were reminiscent of Islamic geography (e.g., Harlem is Mecca and Brooklyn is Medina)—a practice that may have been modeled a similar practice done by Adefunmi of the Yoruba Temple, who called parts of Harlem 'New Oyo,' after the ancient Nigerian kingdom. Given the other non-Islamic African elements in the Five Percenter community, it seems likely that there was indeed a strong Adefunmi influence.

156 Although this was likely both an homage to Clarence and to their own divinity, it is worth mentioning that adopting a word for 'God' into one's name was a known West African practice as well, and thus may have reflected a subtle current within African American culture; see Dillard, *Black Names*, 25–26.

expression in the group was ‘Each one, teach one’—a phrase that was a known proverb throughout the black community, but which had recently been popularized within the Black Power movement by Donald Warden’s Afro-American Association, which had, perhaps not coincidentally, made it out to New York by 1964.¹⁵⁷ The 1960s peak of the NOI offshoot occurred perhaps on April 4, 1968, when Allah led several hundred gods through Harlem to help Mayor Lindsay quell the widespread desire to riot after word had spread about Martin Luther King, Jr.’s assassination.

One June 13, 1969, Allah was shot dead. Because for so many Five Percenters he had been not just a leader, but a guiding and divine father figure, his murder brought great disillusionment. The community would thus crumble rapidly; a 1970 Parliament is said to have only had nine members in attendance. But by the following year, as the NOI regained popularity (see below), the movement was reborn. In April 1971 the group held an ‘Education Show and Prove’ wherein Five Percenters put on scientific and karate demonstrations, musical performances, and speaking sessions. The Street Academy was renamed ‘Allah School’ and became once again a popular meeting place for the group. The teachings also now started spreading more, but now they were increasingly moving both out of state and further into jails. By 1975, the Five Percenters were a culture on the rise.

The Nation of Islam

Perhaps the most surprising Islamic development during this period was the stagnation and then revival of the NOI. After Malcolm’s assassination it looked as if the Nation might soon collapse. Attendance at 1965’s Saviour’s Day, being held just five days after the murder, was a mere 3,000—uncharacteristically filling up only half of the hosting venue.¹⁵⁸ Meanwhile, official membership in the organization, which had already been growing smaller since Malcolm’s leaving the group in 1964, did not increase significantly for several years, and in some temples it actually declined.¹⁵⁹ Data from New York’s popular Temple No. 7, for example, shows a slight decrease in the number of active Muslims between 1964 and 1966, and Temple No. 1, the birthplace of the NOI, reportedly had seventy percent of its membership renounce Elijah Muhammad within a

157 “Afro-American Association,” *Afro-American Dignity News*, November 2, 1964, 10.

158 Austin C. Wehrwein, “Muhammad Says Muslims Must ‘Protect’ Themselves,” *New York Times*, February 27, 1965, 1, 10.

159 FBI observers noted, however, that the NOI did not have a “mass exodus” after Malcolm’s death; see COINTELPRO file, Airtel, SAC, Chicago to Director, FBI, 4/22/1968.

week of the murder.¹⁶⁰ New temple development, meanwhile, came to a near standstill, with only three new numbered temples being established between late 1963 and late 1969.¹⁶¹

Interest and sympathy from outsiders had declined as well. There was a significant drop in the number of stories on the group in the white press and, although outright support of the Muslims had shown only a slight decrease, surveys of African Americans revealed a noticeable increase in feelings of strong disapproval.¹⁶² And all this was true despite the NOI's numerous efforts to claim a bigger presence in the lives of African Americans on both sides of the civil rights issue. In 1965 and early 1966 *Muhammad Speaks* gave coverage to several civil rights events and Elijah Muhammad personally attempted to forge an alliance with Martin Luther King, Jr.¹⁶³ But when this failed, Muhammad harshly criticized King and, as early as 1966, he and his supporters shifted their focus to the Black Power movement, even claiming responsibility for the creation of the 'Black Power' concept.¹⁶⁴ In addition, *Muhammad Speaks* ran a number of stories on and interviews with Black Power and BAM leaders, and NOI representatives met with the BPP, SNCC, and CORE.¹⁶⁵ The Nation also—possibly in an attempt to counter the posthumous popularity Malcolm was winning through his martyrdom, recorded speeches, and *Autobiography*—in 1965 released a record album of portions of Elijah Muhammad's speeches as well as a new book by Muhammad, *Message to the Blackman in Amer-*

160 Mannan, *A History*, appendix; Albert J. Dunmore, "Muslim Revolt Seen," *Michigan Chronicle*, February 27, 1965, 1.

161 I am making this claim based primarily on the official temple list published in *Muhammad Speaks*. Temple No. 44 was set up by June 1963, but Temples No. 45, 46, and 47 were not listed as official numbered temples until May 1968 (they were apparently unnumbered 'baby' temples prior to that point). After May 1968, no new numbered temples appeared in the journal until December 1969, when Temples No. 48 and 49 were listed. That this pattern of the listing of official temples was fairly representative of real temple growth is suggested by the fact that the next numbered temple, No. 50 in Oklahoma City, which was not listed with a number until September 1971, was reportedly not opened as a baby temple until August 1969 (see *Muhammad Speaks*, March 30, 1973, 18).

162 Washington, "Magazine Coverage," 58; William Brink and Louis Harris, *Black and White: A Study of US Racial Attitudes Today* (New York: Clarion, 1967), 254, 262. Also see the results of a 1966 *Newsweek* survey discussed in Marx, *Protest and Prejudice*, 108.

163 Clegg, *Original Man*, 237–38; Evanzz, *Messenger*, 329–32; *Muhammad Speaks*, March 4, 1966, 3.

164 See, besides Chapter 14 and Davis, "Rise of Islam," *Muhammad Speaks* for August 12, 1966, 10, 19; September 9, 1966, 6, 7; and January 4, 1967, 3.

165 Evanzz, *Messenger*, 332 and *Muhammad Speaks*, October 7, 1966, 6.

ica.¹⁶⁶ Much longer, more nationalistic, and containing more detailed instructions for black economic development than Muhammad's earlier *Supreme Wisdom, Message* quickly became the main text of the group, although it was not popular enough by itself to spark a revival of the movement.

The Nation's failure to grow significantly in the mid-to-late 1960s was partly due to the influence of outside forces. One of these, as we have seen, was the perception that the new radical groups, but particularly the BPP, were the movements with the best programs for African Americans, a feeling that was especially prominent within the revolutionary atmosphere of the second half of the decade. At the same time, of course, many people believed that the NOI was indeed responsible for Malcolm's death, so it is not surprising that those who might have once given the NOI consideration now maintained their distance. Meanwhile, other violence connected to the movement kept people out of the temple doors. Sometimes this violence came from random whites who attacked Muslims; but sometimes it came from Muslims themselves—and then ex-Muslims retaliating—and then NOI Muslims who were retaliating against the retaliation.¹⁶⁷ Most significant, however, were the numerous police assaults on both temples and individual Muslims. Between 1965 and 1967, both the Newark and Los Angeles temples were either raided or shot at by police on two separate occasions, and Temple No. 7 was raided once, as was a Muslim business in Chicago.¹⁶⁸ In addition, Muslims selling *Muhammad Speaks* in the street fought with police in Atlanta, Omaha, and probably many other cities.¹⁶⁹

To top this all off, the FBI's counterintelligence program to stop what were labeled 'Black Extremists,' COINTELPRO, was verifiably working to cause problems for the movement. In the spring of 1968, it sent out a comic book to hundreds of members of Temple No. 7 and news media outlets across the country ridiculing NOI teachings while also accusing temple leaders of keeping for

166 This was the first publicly-sold record of Muhammad's speeches; see "Muhammad's Record Album on Nov. 10," *Muhammad Speaks*, November 5, 1965, 17.

167 Curtis, "Islam in Black," 37–38; "3 Muslims Slain in St. Louis," *Chicago Defender* (Ntl. ed.), January 14, 1967, 1; "Irked Buyer Shoots up Auto Agency," *Detroit Free Press*, March 21, 1967, 4; "Desecrators Hit Catholic Church," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, February 12, 1966, 38; "Find 'Grave' for Ex-Muslim," *Youngstown Vindicator*, August 7, 1969, 1, 20. Also see the following issues of *Muhammad Speaks*: November 18, 1966, 8; September 15, 1967, 6, 19; May 3, 1968, 22; September 27, 1968, 9. It should be pointed out that sometimes it appears that parties who committed crimes attempted to frame Muslims.

168 Evanzz, *Messenger*, 331–32; and the following *Muhammad Speaks*: September 16, 1965, 3; October 8, 1965, 2; December 31, 1965, 9; January 7, 1966, 25; December 16, 1966, 2; March 17, 1965, 9; April 7, 1967, 12, 19, 26, 27; August 4, 1967, 27.

169 Ibid.

themselves their groups' donation money and secretly living lavish lifestyles while rank-and-file members were still mostly poor.¹⁷⁰ In other cases the program pushed for IRS, schooling, and White Slave Law investigations for various individual Muslims and temples; it sent phony letters critical of the NOI to newspapers; it encouraged the anonymous harassment of NOI members; and, according to records, it fed information to a Florida "television source" to help it produce a program "exposing" the NOI—an effort that reportedly reduced visitor attendance to the Miami temple by fifty percent in 1969.¹⁷¹ But, thanks to the NOI's limited growth during this period as well as Muhammad's advanced age and his instructions not to carry guns or initiate violence, the FBI did not consider the NOI a serious threat and its counterintelligence actions against the group were nowhere near as severe as those that were used against more radical organizations.¹⁷²

The NOI's post-Malcolm rebirth began on April 4, 1968, the day of the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. Disillusioned by the ensuing riots across the country and the constant violence associated with the growing BPP, many African Americans began seeing the NOI as a moderate middle ground between revolution and integration, and, soon, a number of ex-Panthers and other Black Power activists started winding up in temples.¹⁷³ It was not until the early 1970s, however, after the Black Power movement had begun turning away from nationalistic efforts to electoral politics and the BPP had thoroughly frightened and angered much of America—but had also been successfully fractured and repressed by the FBI—that the NOI was to finally make a strong resurgence. Being seen as the most successful and stable representative of the Black

170 Evanzz, *Messenger*, 342–44; Kenneth O'Reilly, *"Racial Matters": The FBI's Secret File on Black America, 1960–1972* (New York: Free Press, 1989), 278.

171 Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall, *The COINTELPRO Papers: Documents from the FBI's Secret Wars against Domestic Dissent* (Boston: South End Press, 1990), 149; O'Reilly, *"Racial Matters,"* 224, 278, 300, 411–52; COINTELPRO file, Airtel, SAC, Jackson to Director, FBI, 10/13/1969; Airtel, SAC, Miami to Director, FBI, 10/15/1969; Memorandum, G.C. Moore to W.C. Sullivan, 10/21/1969; Memorandum, SAC, Jackson to Director, FBI, 10/30/1969; Abdul Aleem Seifullah, "FBI Finds Secrets Hard to Keep," *Bilalian News*, June 9, 1978, 5, 7, 25, 31.

172 O'Reilly, *"Racial Matters,"* 277; COINTELPRO file, Airtel, SAC, Chicago to Director, FBI, 4/22/1968.

173 Bashir, *Top of the Clock*, 144–45, 155; *Bilalian News*, January 14, 1977, 13, 14; Taylor, "Elijah Muhammad's Nation," 183–86; Nafeesa H. Muhammad documents the fact that an ex-SNCC member joined the NOI in 1966; see her "Perceptions and Experiences in Elijah Muhammad's Economic Program: Voices from the Pioneers" (MA thesis, Georgia State University, 2010), 48. The NOI poet Sterling X, notably, was the former RNA minister of information; see Sterling X, *We Righteous*, [2].

Power ideals, the Nation's ranks swelled.¹⁷⁴ The rise in official numbered temples speaks for itself: in 1970 there were no new numbered temples; in 1971 there were two; in 1972 there were six; in 1973 there were fourteen; in 1974 there were four.¹⁷⁵ Even if we include 1970, the average annual rate of numbered temple growth during this period was in fact greater than that had by the NOI in any previous five-year period, even those during Malcolm's organizing heyday—and this does not even take into account the growth of baby temples, which jumped from thirty-two in 1958 to over seventy by early 1974.¹⁷⁶ It appears as well that existing temples grew substantially; Temple No. 7, for instance, by 1975 had over 7,900 registered Muslims, nearly double the membership of the early 1960s.¹⁷⁷ Just as it had done in the wake of the Great Schism, the Nation had capitalized on the loss of effective leadership in a previously organized non-mainstream black movement.

Yet the NOI's growth in the early 1970s came from more than simply gaining former or potential Black Power activists. Family and friend networks remained crucial recruitment resources and Muslims were still required to 'fish,' but now, since most large cities already had temples, proselytizers could focus their efforts on virtually untapped regions: medium-sized cities and the towns in their vicinities.¹⁷⁸ Nearly all of the new temples that received official temple numbers during this period were in medium-sized cities like Denver and Nashville, and there were more and more efforts to spread Islam in even smaller communities, such as Texarkana, Texas and Wilson, North Carolina.¹⁷⁹

174 For an in-depth study of a local example of this Black Power-related NOI growth, see Davis, "Rise of Islam," 50–78.

175 See the lists of temples in *Muhammad Speaks* for these years.

176 The 1974 number can be deduced by subtracting the number of numbered temples that year from Muhammad's claim that the NOI had temples in over 150 cities in 1974; see *Muhammad Speaks*, March 19, 1974, 3.

177 Mannan, *A History*, appendix. Unfortunately, I have been unable to find reliable membership data for the NOI for this period. Future scholars should attempt to collect any estimates they can find; Edna Ayub Khan, for instance, estimated that in 1968 the Kansas City temple had 100–150 families; see her "The Black Muslims: A Contemporary Revitalized Movement" (MA thesis, Kansas State University, 1970), 59.

178 On the continued importance of family and friend networks, see Jacqueline C. Pope, "The Status of Women in the Nation of Islam 1965 and 1975: A Case Study of the Nation of Islam" (MA thesis, Queens College, City University of New York, 1976), 21, 50, 55.

179 On the latter two cities, see *Muhammad Speaks* June 11, 1971, 29 and October 29, 1971, 15. This is not to say that prior to the 1970s Islam was not spread in small towns. For example, there were several NOI groups in small Mississippi towns in the late 1960s; see, e.g., Patricia Michelle Buzard-Boyett, "Race and Justice in Mississippi's Central Piney Woods, 1940–

At the same time, the demographic reach of the proselytizers was expanding. Although the converts' average age seems to have remained between twenty and thirty, and they were still often from poor, dysfunctional families, there was a growing contingent of members of the black middle class.¹⁸⁰ One reason for this, as discussed in Chapter 14, was the growing presence of NOI Muslims on college campuses, but there also seems to have also been a concerted effort to win over black professionals; it appears Muhammad had hoped they would help administer his expanding empire.¹⁸¹ In addition, it seems that that the proportion of female Muslims was increasing during this period as well, probably partly as a result of the increased liberties that were being won by women in the movement. Some temples, it has been reported, were much more lenient with regards to women obtaining education and employment and in a few communities women had started programs that had typically been restricted to male Muslims, such as self-defense classes and prison outreach efforts.¹⁸²

Latinos were also making up an important new cohort of recruits. The group had actually had Latino members virtually from the beginning, when in the early 1930s the children of the union of an African American female Muslim and a Mexican American supporter of the movement were allowed to become members of the Allah Temple in Detroit.¹⁸³ Then, starting in the early 1950s, small numbers of Latinos began joining the NOI in New York and southern California, largely a factor of both the tendency for some Latinos to befriend African Americans and the NOI's doctrinal acceptance of Latinos and Native Americans as also being 'Afro-Asians'—it appears that the early

2010" (PhD diss., University of Southern Mississippi, 2011), 569–70; COINTELPRO file, Airtel, SAC, Jackson to Director, FBI, 10/13/1969, 1.

180 *Muhammad Speaks*, June 11, 1971, 18; Clegg, *Original Man*, 251; Mannan, *A History*, 102–03; Audrea Hart Blanding, "Contact with the Nation of Islam as It Relates to Internal-External Control and Subjective Expected Utility of Membership in the Nation" (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 1977), 112–22. Interestingly, Blanding found in her study of Midwestern NOI Muslims that, even when controlling for socioeconomic status, there was a statistically significant difference between NOI members and non-Muslim African Americans in regards to their mothers: Muslims' mothers' socioeconomic status was lower and the Muslims tended to feel that their mothers did not provide adequate nurturing during the individuals' childhood; see Blanding "Contact with," 112–22, 139–40, 155–56. For numerous interviews with Muslims and ex-Muslims from the period concerning their joining and leaving the movement, see Abilla, "A Study," *passim*.

181 Clegg, *Original Man*, 251.

182 Currin, "Portrait of a Woman," 8; *Muslim Journal*, April 26, 1991, 4, 27; *Muslim Journal*, October 9, 1992, 23.

183 Muhammad et al., *Step in the Right*, 15.

prohibition against 'free-born' non-whites joining was lifted during the group's 1940s transformation.¹⁸⁴ By the early 1960s, *Muhammad Speaks* was being distributed and read throughout Latin America, a few US Latinos had been made ministers, and requests were coming in for Spanish-language translations of the Qur'an and *Muhammad Speaks*.¹⁸⁵ At mid-decade, NOI temples were established in Mexico and Belize, and US Latino membership was thriving, especially in New York, California, Florida, and New Mexico.¹⁸⁶

The Latino identification with the NOI was encouraged by various Latino-related pieces published in *Muhammad Speaks*. The newspaper ran, for example, photographs of the famous Olmec colossal heads found in Mexico on no fewer than four occasions between 1962 and 1969, each time stressing the "heavy so-called 'Negro' features" of the faces depicted in the carved stones—a decade before Ivan Van Sertima made the argument famous in his *They Came before Columbus*.¹⁸⁷ A number of other articles emphasized the purported scientific evidence supporting the African roots of Latin American genetics and culture, particularly through the Mayans, the group that Albert Churchward had insisted inherited its culture from the Egyptians. The newspaper's editors, however, also gave a great deal of attention to social justice struggles of Latinos inside and outside of the US, particularly those of the Puerto Rican immigrant community and the Mexican American farm workers. In fact, the Chicago- and New York-based, Puerto Rican-populated Young Lords groups and Cesar Chavez's United Farm Workers were given prominent stories in multiple issues,

184 Patrick D. Bowen, "Early US Latina/o—African American Muslim Connections: Paths to Conversion," *Muslim World* 100, no. 4 (2010): 403–06; *idem.*, "US Latina/o Muslims since 1920: From 'Moors' to 'Latino Muslims,'" *Journal of Religious History* 37, no. 2 (2013): 170–71. Some Latinos were even reading Muhammad's various 1950s newspaper columns; see, e.g., Raymond Sanchez, "Counting on You!" *New York Amsterdam News*, August 10, 1957, 6. On the use of the 'Afro-Asian' term for Native Americans, see *Muhammad Speaks*, October 17, 1969, 7.

185 "Letters to the Editor," *Muhammad Speaks*, March 1962, 21; Bowen, "Early US Latina/o," 403–06; *idem.*, "US Latina/o Muslims," 170–71; Rodolfo Nieves, "Wants Qur-an in Spanish," *Muhammad Speaks*, September 27, 1963, 8; Muhammad, *Dear Holy Apostle*, 62.

186 Mexican and Belizean NOI Muslims were both noted as early as 1965; see *Muhammad Speaks*, July 23, 1965, 8. That Latinos were joining in New York, Florida, and California has been documented in the above-cited studies; we can add here, though, that at least eight men named Jose had joined the New York temple by late 1966 (see Jose 8X Rios, "Bares Facts on Savage Christian," *Muhammad Speaks*, December 16, 1966, 25) and New Mexico converts had started appearing by 1966 (Jose A. Toresta, "Islam Inspires a Mexican-American," *Muhammad Speaks*, May 27, 1966, 25).

187 May 1962, 1; March 27, 1964, 24; November 19, 1965, 14; June 27, 1969, 34.

with Chavez, who was interviewed by *Muhammad Speaks* on three separate occasions, being quoted as saying “We told our people, ‘It’s [the farm workers’ movement] got to be done like the Muslims do it.’”¹⁸⁸ By the early 1970s, Latinos interested in Islam—now also hailing from places like Ohio and Texas—were increasingly present in the newspaper as writers of not only news articles, but also letters to the editor and conversion narratives.¹⁸⁹ This Latino wave reached its peak around 1972 when the New York NOI community opened its satellite Temple No. 7J in Spanish Harlem primarily to serve the many Latino Muslims in the area.¹⁹⁰

Another community the NOI attempted to connect with during this period was that of non-NOI Muslims. In the two years following Malcolm’s assassination, as if to deflect from the orthodox legitimacy Malcolm had obtained, *Muhammad Speaks* ran a handful of articles showing the praises of the group by various foreign Muslims and Islamic organizations, including the World Muslim Congress and the well-known Pakistani publisher Muhammad Ashraf.¹⁹¹ Abdul Basit Naeem, the Pakistani-American who had been helping promote the NOI since the mid-1950s, was also a regular contributor to *Muhammad Speaks* for most of its run, and his articles were generally presented as him being a spokesman for orthodox Muslims in regards to their views of the NOI, further building up the group’s appearance as an orthodox expression of Islam. In 1967, the paper added a new orthodox voice when it began frequently interviewing the Palestinian immigrant Ali M. Baghdadi, the leader of a Chicago Arab student organization. Two years later, Baghdadi was given his own regular column in the newspaper in which he reported on news from the Middle East. Although Baghdadi does not seem to have been any sort of religious authority, in January 1975 he conducted the wedding ceremony for two of Louis Farrakhan’s daughters who were marrying Muhammad’s grandson and nephew.¹⁹²

188 The Chavez pieces ran on October 25, 1968, 5; November 1, 1968, 28; August 4, 1972, 5 (the source of the quote); and August 3, 1973, 19–20.

189 For Ohio, see July 26, 1974, 14; for Texas, see September 13, 1974, 15.

190 Mannan, *A History*, 140–41. Mannan incorrectly asserts that the founders of the Latino Sunni group Alianza Islamica had attended this temple. According to one of those founders, Ramon Ocasio, this is completely inaccurate. The truth, Ocasio informed the author, was that the founders had actually argued and debated with the temple head, Diogenes X Grassal.

191 See the issues for July 30, 1965, 16; October 1, 1965, 12; April 22, 1966, 2; June 24, 1966, 25. On the World Muslim Congress and Ashraf, and their other relationships with American Muslims, see Bowen, *HCTIUS*, 1:299, 310, 343, 324, 345–47, 348, 349, 355.

192 *Muhammad Speaks*, February 14, 1975, S4–S5.

In addition, some attempt appears to have been made by certain temple ministers to form connections with leaders of local black Sunni groups.¹⁹³ But beyond such networking efforts, starting around 1970, Muhammad also sometimes suggested that his followers perform Ramadan during the same time that all other Muslims perform it—the NOI had traditionally held Ramadan during December, coinciding with the Christmas holiday season—probably in an attempt to emphasize the NOI’s closeness to orthodoxy.¹⁹⁴ All of this worked to some extent; the NOI’s growth itself suggests this as does the fact that during the 1960s the Nation received from foreign Muslims multiple scholarships for its followers to study at Muslim universities.¹⁹⁵ However, it appears that Muhammad lost interest in such efforts. In December 1971 he reaffirmed the group’s commitment to holding Ramadan during that month and in the following January he reverted the names of NOI meeting places from ‘mosques’ back to ‘temples.’¹⁹⁶

This willingness to maintain the appearance of independence from orthodox Muslims may have partially grown out of the fact that by this time the NOI’s most effective recruitment and retention tool had almost nothing to do with its appearance as an orthodox religion: developing and promoting numerous businesses and programs.¹⁹⁷ Although *Muhammad Speaks* was still the group’s most successful enterprise, several new businesses had been established and the Nation was gaining a reputation as a powerful center of economic opportunity. During this period, many temples and individual Muslims had begun setting up restaurants and bakeries throughout the country, an accomplishment helped to a large extent by the creation of the popular Muslim-owned Steak and Take franchise as well as the NOI bean pie, which became such a popular dessert in urban centers that in New York it was even packaged and sold in

193 See, e.g., AAUAA FBI file, Report, 4/16/1973, Buffalo file 157-DEAD, 2.

194 Clegg, *Original Man*, 255.

195 *Muhammad Speaks*, January 1, 1965, 7; *Muslim World* (World Muslim Congress), February 8, 1969, 7.

196 *Muhammad Speaks*, December 10, 1971, 16–17. On the meeting place name change, see the changes in how temples were listed in *Muhammad Speaks* in 1971–1972.

197 That such programs were among the NOI’s most significant draws and retention tools for new converts between 1965 and 1975 is an argument made by Taylor in “Elijah Muhammad’s Nation,” 177–98; Davis, “Rise of Islam,” 50–78; and Nafessa H. Muhammad in “Perceptions and Experiences.” For a list of these programs, see Muhammad, “Perceptions and Experiences”; William Jones, “Black Muslims Set Their Sights on the Supremacy of Capitalism,” *Chicago Tribune*, January 26, 1969, 1; Clegg, *Original Man*, 251–55; and *Accomplishments of the Muslims* (Spring 1975).

numerous non-Muslim grocery stores.¹⁹⁸ Building on the economic programs that the group had instituted back in 1964, by the early 1970s the NOI headquarters had also obtained over 100,000 acres of farm land, an apartment complex, a bank, and a deal with the Peruvian fishing industry to sell Whiting H&G, an enterprise that reportedly employed five hundred Muslims. By the beginning of 1973, when the NOI's businesses were valued as high as seventy million dollars, the group may have truly been, as scholar Claude A. Clegg has remarked, "the richest black organization in American history."¹⁹⁹

But the Nation's new programs were not exclusively focused on for-profit activity. Already by 1970, plans were being made to establish a real Muslim university, complete with a hospital and technical college. Soon a 'college division' of the University of Islam was set up to create a full-fledged post-secondary institution. In early 1974 the group's first college was opened in Washington, DC, and in November over 150 Muslims and non-Muslims attended a national conference to formulate plans for expanding the Nation's national college program.²⁰⁰ In addition, social and community programs, such as a Muslim adoption service and free bussing for non-Muslim seniors in Chicago, were started and, after the opening of Temple No. 7's University of Islam in December 1969, the group's primary and secondary schools would continue to multiply as well.²⁰¹ By September 1973, in fact, the Nation was boasting of having fifty-one Universities throughout the country.²⁰² More and more, then, non-Muslims were attending these schools and being indoctrinated in the NOI system. With so many growing and ostensibly successful enterprises, for many African Americans it appeared that the NOI was the only black organization to offer a clear and complete plan and program to help the African American community thrive.

The utilization of media was of course another invaluable recruiting tool, just as it had been in the years prior. After publishing Muhammad's popular dietary book *How to Eat to Live* in 1967, the Nation began putting out several collections of Muhammad and Farrakhan's writings and speeches as well as a Muslim-authored biography of Muhammad.²⁰³ In addition to these were the

198 Bashir, *Top of the Clock*, 158–61, 176–84; Mannan, *A History*, 62–65; Currin, "Portrait of a Woman," *passim*.

199 Paul Delaney, "Black Muslim Group in Trouble from Financial Problems and Some Crime," *New York Times*, December 6, 1973, 37; Clegg, *Original Man*, 252.

200 *Muhammad Speaks*, September 6, 1974, 8; December 20, 1974, 5, 51–59; January 3, 1975, 3.

201 *Muhammad Speaks*, December 12, 1969, 11; January 2, 1970, 8; December 1, 1972, 18.

202 *Muhammad Speaks*, September 28, 1973, 11.

203 Louis Farrakhan, *7 Speeches* ([New York]: Wku and the Final Call Inc., [1974] 1992); Bernard

several small new periodicals that were being printed by individual temples, prison communities, and Muslim programs within the movement.²⁰⁴ The NOI also expanded its efforts to appear on radio stations. Three of the group's most active temples were particularly impressive on this front: Los Angeles's temple had a local radio station air Muslim programs six days a week; Philadelphia's Temple No. 12 started its own radio talk show; and in 1972 Temple No. 7 successfully convinced a radio station to broadcast its Saturday meetings—all firsts for the NOI.²⁰⁵ Now throughout the country, even in Southern rural communities, African Americans could listen to the voice of Muhammad multiple days a week; disc jockeys were even reported to have praised the Messenger live on the air.²⁰⁶ During this time, Muslims were also making more and more television appearances. Usually these involved ministers—and frequently it was the up-and-coming head of Temple No. 7, Louis Farrakhan—who were invited to local black-hosted talk shows.²⁰⁷ But there were also more notable achievements, such as when Temple No. 12 acquired its own local television program and when, in 1974, full speeches by Elijah Muhammad—including that year's Saviour's Day speech—were broadcasted on multiple local television shows.²⁰⁸ On a few occasions, the Nation was also reaching national audiences through televised press conferences and nationally-broadcasted specials.²⁰⁹

One indicator of the Nation's renewed prominence was the support shown the movement by the black middle class. As the 1970s progressed, black churches increasingly invited Muslims to speak and meet with them, and some

Cushmeer, *This is the One: Messenger Elijah Muhammad* (Phoenix: Truth Publications, 1971); Elijah Muhammad, *Our Saviour Has Arrived* (Chicago: Muhammad's Temple of Islam No. 2, 1974); Elijah Muhammad, *The Fall of America* (Chicago: Muhammad's Temple of Islam No. 2, 1973).

204 See, e.g., *Black Nation Information Bulletin* (issue 2 is available in MPSRC, reel 5 and issue 6 is available from the "Nation of Islam Collection," Rubenstein Library, Special Collections, Duke University); *The Great Message* (several issues are in the "Nation of Islam Collection," Rubenstein Library, Special Collections, Duke University); and *Accomplishments of the Muslims*.

205 Evanzz, *Messenger*, 346; Bashir, *Top of the Clock*, 201; *Muhammad Speaks*, October 27, 1972, 15; Mannan, *A History*, 90.

206 *Muhammad Speaks*, August 2, 1974, 5; September 3, 1971, 27.

207 *Muhammad Speaks*, September 24, 1971, 15; December 3, 1971, 21; May 24, 1972, 30.

208 Bashir, *Top of the Clock*, 201; Davis, "Rise of Islam," 71–72; *Muhammad Speaks*, November 1, 1974, 9 and November 29, 1974, 7.

209 *Muhammad Speaks*, February 4, 1972, 3; December 20, 1974, 6; October 27, 1972, 15.

even donated money to help support NOI programs.²¹⁰ At black colleges and universities, meanwhile, starting in 1973, multiple school awards were either named after Muhammad or given to him and other Muslims for their various efforts to help the African American community.²¹¹ There was, in addition, a slew of academic books, articles, and dissertations about the group being written by the new generation of black scholars during this period. Middle class fascination with the NOI was becoming so widespread that in early 1975, following a 1974 Muslim rally in New York that attracted 70,000 people, Temple No. 7's Minister Farrakhan was given the opportunity to speak at the famed Apollo Theater; another first for the Nation.²¹² All of this attention was certainly helped by the fact that, after Muhammad backed off from his proscription against musical performance, in addition to a wave of smaller Muslim bands and soloists that emerged,²¹³ many popular black musicians and singers appeared at NOI events, publicly praising the Nation, and showing a significant Muslim influence in their music. Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Billy Paul, Joe Tex, the Delfonics, and Kool and the Gang all performed at Muslim bazaars and fundraisers, while Joe Tex and some of the members of the two latter groups went so far as converting; Kool and the Gang's 1974 album *Light of Worlds* was in fact significantly influenced by NOI themes.²¹⁴ James Brown—who also came out in strong support of the movement—revealed a Muslim influence in his own music with his famous “Say it Loud (I’m Black and I’m Proud),”²¹⁵ and the Temptations were reflecting Muhammad's widening impact with their 1969 song “Message from a Black Man”—an obvious nod to Muhammad's 1965 book.²¹⁶

A rising wave of white American support for the NOI during this period was perhaps an even more impressive development given the Nation's long-held, deep-seated views on that population. There was, first of all, a growing contingent of regular, non-elite white people who were praising Muhammad and his movement. Starting in the late 1960s, *Muhammad Speaks* was occasionally receiving letters from and reports about whites—including at least

210 Bashir, *Top of the Clock*, 54; Davis, “Rise of Islam,” 92–93; *Muhammad Speaks*, September 27, 1974, 6; November 1, 1974, 16; January 3, 1975, 5, 6, 7.

211 *Muhammad Speaks*, June 1, 1973, 5; June 23, 1973, 5; April 5, 1974, 4; March 7, 1975, 18.

212 *Muhammad Speaks*, June 14, 1974, 4–7; January 24, 1975, 7.

213 See, e.g., *Muslim Journal*, April 3, 1992, 4 and October 9, 1992, 23, 26.

214 Brandon A. Perry, “Faith Important to Music Stars,” *Indianapolis Recorder*, March 1, 2012.

215 “James Brown: Messenger Muhammad's Truth Will Stand,” *Muhammad Speaks*, October 4, 1968, 7.

216 Evanzz, *Messenger*, 346–47.

two white Christian ministers—who openly supported the NOI's programs and sometimes agreed that white people were in fact devils.²¹⁷ In 1970, the paper even received a letter from an individual, one Geraldine Britton, who had been raised as a white person, but had joined the NOI due to her family's harsh treatment of her and her belief that her real father may have been black.²¹⁸ As will be recalled, this was not the first time such an event had occurred—in the 1940s, Pauline Williams, the former brothel madam and wife of the founder of Temple No. 5, had been raised and seen as a white woman but believed her family was secretly Native American, and that this non-white blood allowed her to become a NOI Muslim—but this was the first time something like this was broadcasted publicly. The Nation, it therefore seems, was slowly shaking up white racial identities; and it may have therefore been contributing to the other white conversions to Islam that were growing in number in the decade leading up to 1975.²¹⁹ Another reason for this new interest from white Americans was that, despite Muhammad's late 1963 ban of whites attending NOI meetings and *Muhammad Speaks* salesmen being told not to vend the paper in white neighborhoods, there were still numerous incidents of Muslims selling their newspaper to whites (especially, apparently, on college campuses) and even telling them that the Nation's philosophy towards whites had changed.²²⁰

But beyond this grassroots-level transformation, white reporters and politicians were putting more and more effort into showing goodwill towards the Muslims. In the early 1970s, for instance, white magazine coverage of the Nation not only jumped back up to its pre-1965 levels, but also showed a much more favorable view of the movement.²²¹ During this same period mayors of Newark and Los Angeles both attended NOI functions in their respective cities.²²² In 1974, the governor of Illinois established—at a dinner with numerous Chicago

217 See June 21, 1968, 3; December 5, 1969, 14; October 9, 1970, 14; May 7, 1971, 19; November 19, 1971, 5.

218 November 13, 1970, 14.

219 On white converts from World War II through 1974, see Bowen, *HCTIUS*, 1:290–360.

220 *Muhammad Speaks*, July 28, 1972, 3; COINTELPRO file, Memorandum, SAC, Portland to Acting Director, FBI, 7/26/1972. When COINTELPRO agents learned about this and about how angry the NOI heads were over it, they proposed sending a letter to *Muhammad Speaks* claiming that this was continuing to happen, with the hopes that this would further anger the heads towards the Muslims supposedly responsible, thus creating more “dissent and upheaval” in the NOI.

221 Washington, “Magazine Coverage,” 58, 61–62.

222 *Muhammad Speaks*, October 13, 1972, 5; August 17, 1973, 15.

white and black elites—an ‘Honorable Elijah Muhammad Day,’ and later that year a ‘Muhammad Week’ was proclaimed in Gary, Indiana, accompanied by an event at which civic leaders paid tribute to the Messenger.²²³ In early 1975, more Honorable Elijah Muhammad Days were declared in Atlanta, Oakland, Compton, and Berkeley; Los Angeles created a Muhammad Appreciation Day; Chicago announced a Nation of Islam Day; and Newark established an Honorable Elijah Muhammad Week.²²⁴ It is not entirely clear what brought about this wave of praise. It is almost certain, though, that the NOI was increasingly recognized by whites as the lesser of two evils. Many who surely did not like the Nation believed that, because of its quietist perspective, its prohibition of weapons, and its focus on making successful business enterprises, the organization was less of a threat to American culture than the radical Black Power movement, and supporting it would help reduce the numbers drawn to such groups. But, to a certain extent, Muhammad himself had also been facilitating this embrace by the American mainstream. In his 1974 Saviour’s Day speech Muhammad, perhaps encouraged by the recent membership boom and business expansion, began admonishing his followers to

remember that the fault is not in the slave-master anymore; since he says you can go free and we say today he is not hindering us—it is we who are hindering ourselves. Give justice to whom it is due. We glorify in making fun and charging the slave-master with keeping us a slave. He can’t hold you a slave now; you are holding yourself a slave. [...] The white man [...] is not to blame today; you are the one to be blamed. [...] We cannot put all the fault on the white people [...] because you are free [...].²²⁵

It was an amazing, even shocking, change of tune that undoubtedly assuaged the fears of many whites.²²⁶

But despite all of these changes in the post-Malcolm NOI, many things were staying the same. Although voices of support for Muhammad were now louder than they had ever been before, there were still numerous critics in both the white and black press.²²⁷ The police, too, often remained the Muslims’ opponents. From 1972 through 1974, reports of police-Muslim brawls, shootouts, and

²²³ *Muhammad Speaks*, April 12, 1974; December 27, 1974, 4, 5.

²²⁴ *Muhammad Speaks*, February 7, 1975, 5; February 14, 1975, 6, 7; February 28, 1975, 6.

²²⁵ *Muhammad Speaks*, March 28, 1975, 11, 14.

²²⁶ See also Evanzz, *Messenger*, 420–21.

²²⁷ Washington, “Magazine Coverage,” 53–62.

murders were abundant. As a result, although fewer temples were invaded than they had been in the past, more Muslims than ever were being shot by police. Violent conflicts, however, were not limited to those with law enforcement. During this period a number of crimes were committed by Muslims, particularly in Philadelphia where the so-called 'Black Mafia' had several members join the local temple while the minister turned a blind eye to their doings.²²⁸ Muslim rivalries were also contributing to violence. In 1971, multiple attempts were made on the life of Raymond Sharrieff, the Supreme Captain of the FOI and son-in-law of Muhammad. During the following year, the Qadiani Midwest Director of Missionaries, Shukar Ilahi Husain, was threatened with violence on several occasions after criticizing the NOI in the press.²²⁹

The year of 1973, however, was undoubtedly the bloodiest in NOI history. On January 18, seven people—including women and children—were slaughtered in the home of famous basketball player Kareem Abdul-Jabbar. Those murdered were all connected to Hamaas Abdul Khaalis, the former Ernest x McGhee, who had broken from the NOI and formed his own Sunni group in the 1960s, which Abdul-Jabbar joined in 1971. The killings were apparently retaliation for a letter Khaalis sent to Muhammad earlier that month in which he claimed Fard was a Greek who also used the name John Walker and had gone to prison in Indiana for theft and rape before dying in Chicago at the age of seventy-eight.²³⁰ (As will be recalled, Fred Dodd was also known as a Greek and had been charged with rape.) The assassins, who came from the Philadelphia temple, were apparently hoping to kill Khaalis, but he was not home when they entered the house, and thus avoided being murdered. Multiple Muslims in the tri-state area, including Newark's Minister James 3x McGregor Shabazz, were also murdered that year, some possibly by a break-off Muslim faction known as the New World of Islam. In San Francisco, a number of NOI Muslims—most of whom were ex-convicts—began the random killing of perhaps over a dozen whites, apparently partly because they were being led by a Muslim named J.C. Simon who claimed 'Allah' had told him to do this.²³¹ In Baton Rouge, the

228 Bashir, *Top of the Clock*, 199–200 and Sean Patrick Griffin's two books on the topic: *Philadelphia's 'Black Mafia'* and *Black Brothers, Inc.: The Violent Rise and Fall of Philadelphia's Black Mafia* (Wrea Green, UK: Milo Books, 2005).

229 NOI FBI file, Memorandum, SAC, Chicago to Director, FBI, 1/10/1972. Husain would not be intimidated, however, and he would continue to publicly denounce the Nation, for which he received written attacks in *Muhammad Speaks*; see the newspaper's issues for April 28, 1972, 15 and May 5, 1972, 2.

230 The letter is reprinted in Evanzz, *Messenger*, 448–49.

231 One of the Muslim participants claimed that the killings were done in order for the

site of the FBI murder of a misidentified Muslim,²³² critics of the NOI leadership tried to commence a national killing spree of Nation heads but were stopped by police before they made it out of the first city.

The Nation was also facing financial and organizational problems. The planned university and hospital were never completed, and, as it turns out, the NOI, despite receiving several millions of dollars in loans from North African and Middle Eastern countries, was operating at a loss,²³³ largely due to lavish expenditures, such as multi-million dollar temples, an executive jet that had cost over one million dollars, and multiple expensive houses for Muhammad's family members. When the FBI's COINTELPRO broadcasted the corruption of NOI ministers, there was, it seems, a great deal of truth behind the claims. Although the Chicago headquarters denied that there had been any graft or financial trouble and continued to spend on both luxuries and programs, rumors about the leadership's misappropriations were circulating broadly.

Yet in spite of all of this, Muslims still had great love for Muhammad and his 'Royal Family.' In fact, by the early 1970s, Muhammad had been effectively deified. For many, the Messenger was a divine magician who had the power to predict the weather, read minds, heal the sick, and deliver the black community from its death.²³⁴ His *How to Eat to Live* asserted that anyone could prolong his or her life well past one hundred years, and rumors had spread that he would

Muslims to enter a secret society within the NOI known as the 'Death Angels.' However, there has never been any evidence other than this Muslim's statements that such a society existed. On these 'Zebra Murders' (named after the San Francisco police radio station 'z' that was dedicated to solving the crimes), see Howard Clark, *Zebra: The True Account of the 179 Days of Terror in San Francisco* (New York: Richard Marek, 1979); Prentice Earl Sanders and Bennett Cohen, *The Zebra Murders: A Season of Killing, Racial Madness, and Civil Rights* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 2006). As a side note, the following is Tynnetta Muhammad's summary of Elijah Muhammad's views on angels. Muhammad taught that there were "two major groups of angelic hosts that are working with God in the Judgment. He identified One group of the angelic hosts as being seven in number who perform a particular function in relationship to the elements of our earth and its atmosphere. The Second Group's number is 12. They are identified as the Twelve Major Scientists, who know the Secret of God's Divine Being. He further stated that he was in the circle of the twelve and of the seven." See Tynnetta Muhammad, *The Comer by Night 1986* (Chicago: Honorable Elijah Muhammad Educational Foundation, Inc., 1994), 117.

232 "FBI Kills Muslim ... Was 'Wrong Man!'" *Black Newark*, August 1973, 1, 2.

233 Delaney, "Black Muslim Group"; Clegg, *Original Man*, 253–54.

234 *Muhammad Speaks*, May 28, 1965, 10; Curtis, *Black Muslim*, 168–69; Muhammad, *Dear Holy Apostle*, 29, 35–37.

either live much longer than that or not die at all.²³⁵ Some were even saying that Fard—despite Muhammad’s 1971 claim that he had recently been in contact with “Allah in person”—was no longer God, and that he had been replaced by Muhammad.²³⁶ But the truth was that the Messenger, having for a long time suffered from various health issues, was on the verge of death. In 1974 his sons began traveling the country making speeches at temples, each clearly trying to position himself as his father’s successor—Muhammad had not named one, probably to avoid fomenting a Muslim civil war.²³⁷ Surprisingly, it was Wallace, the chronic rejecter of NOI doctrines, who was the most assertive in the fraternal competition.²³⁸ In January 1975, he met with Farrakhan and Temple No. 7’s FOI to inform them that he would be taking over when his father finally passed.²³⁹

Wallace would not have to wait long. One month later, on February 25, the day before the yearly Saviour’s Day, the seventy-seven-year-old Muhammad died from arteriosclerosis. As tens of thousands of Muslims and non-Muslims mourned across the country, several cities announced more Nation of Islam Days and Muhammad Appreciation Days in the Messenger’s honor.²⁴⁰ Then, on February 26, a man who had long abandoned faith in Fard’s divinity, black supremacy, and whites’ natural evilness; who had rejected the revolutionary rhetoric of Malcolm X; and who had strongly embraced internationally-based orthodox Islam took the stage at Saviour’s Day and claimed leadership over the Nation. It was at this very moment that, suddenly, the AAIR—the religious current that had emerged out of black nationalism and protest-oriented slave folk traditions—came to an end. With a person of Wallace Muhammad’s philosophical leanings at the helm of the single most influential AAIR organization, African American Islam could never be the same.

235 Muhammad, *How to*, 20, 27–20, 57–60, 83–84, 87–89; Bashir, *Top of the Clock*, 163, 192–93, 199.

236 Clegg, *Original Man*, 255; Bakeer, “I, Too,” 43.

237 Back in the 1950s, Elijah was not shy about the fact that his son Wallace was his favorite and that he expected him to become his successor, but Wallace’s subsequent actions had severely hurt this belief; see Wallace Muhammad FBI file, Summary Report, 3/21/1957, Chicago file, 100–32090, 10.

238 I have been told by an individual who was a prominent early member of the Muslim Students’ Association, a Sunni group, that Wallace secretly attended an MSA annual conference in either 1971 or 1972, at which time he privately met with the group’s leaders and informed them of his plan to become the head of the NOI and convert it to Sunni Islam.

239 Clegg, *Original Man*, 273; Mannan, *A History*, 107–08.

240 See *Muhammad Speaks*, March 14, 1975, 4; May 2, 1975, 41; May 9, 1975, 20; June 13, 1975, 3.

Conclusion

In his classic study of the religious lives of the enslaved Africans in the Americas, Albert Raboteau describes the bondspersons' loss of traditional African religions as the "Death of the Gods."¹ Over twenty years later, the historian of American religions Jon Butler referred to the same event as the "African Spiritual Holocaust."² Such language—although perhaps overstated from a technical historical perspective—was truly fitting, for the forced deterritorialization from a familiar religious culture was akin to death for so many of the enslaved; it was largely for this reason that their new pastiched, reterritorialized folk tradition was filled with numerous stories about resurrections and Dry Bones. But the black folk's despondency was not to end upon the advent of Emancipation. With the onset of the burdens and horrors of Jim Crow, by the early twentieth century many black folk felt more 'dead' than ever before; even some of their own traditions had taught them that they were cursed to suffer and that they were too inherently ignorant to rise in the white man's world. Their only hope, many felt, was either a spiritual suicide at the hands of the 'little man' or that someone—be it God or a human—would murder the Devil himself and redeem the 'underground nation.'

The leaders of the early African American Islamic movements looked at the black folk's spiritual and emotional condition and determined that their leaders had been guiding the community the wrong way. The best approach for building up the confidence and abilities of a people so poor in spirit was not by condescendingly telling them that they simply had to work harder to adapt to the racist world in which they found themselves with the hope that someday, perhaps after several generations, they might effect enough small changes that they would achieve true equality. Instead, these Muslim leaders pieced together some of the most comforting and inspiring elements of the black folk's mixed culture and used these to teach that black people were a holy people who possessed divine knowledge and abilities, that they had a great history in which they could take pride, and that they could find the solution to their problems not outside, but within. African Americans, they insisted, had the power to change their own lives in the here and the now.

1 Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, 43.

2 *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), 129.

At first, Islam was mainly a veneer for many of these leaders' teachings. What they called 'Islam' was primarily a concoction of black folk traditions, black nationalism, Christianity, and white esotericism. Even when the Arabic language, Middle Eastern dress, and the Qur'an were held up as important elements of the religion they were spreading, these were at best superficial components; the true core of their teachings was a religious culture to which black folk were already attuned. On the rare occasions that orthodox Islam was actually taught, even then it was often understood through folk lenses. The reason the idea of Islam was being used was because the religion and its followers across the world—but particularly the North African Moors—had gained the widespread respect and admiration of African Americans in the early 1920s through being endorsed by members of the incredibly influential UNIA. When Marcus Garvey created the major institutional and market changes that he did after the First World War, several African American Muslim leaders realized that if they could successfully reterritorialize certain inspiring elements of the black nationalist movement with their other teachings, they would have an unprecedented opportunity to transform and uplift black America. It was at this point that the African American Islamic Renaissance was truly born.

After the Second World War, the Nation of Islam adopted some of the very programs and practices that Garvey's movement had used so effectively to unleash a new institutional change, this time giving Islam even more prominence and cultural power than it had had during the era shaped by Garvey. But what occurred in this second period was unexpected: the Muslim movement reached a height of fame and influence that brought it into the world of international politics, and by 1964, Islam had become for many African Americans the primary symbol of the liberation of the oppressed. Then, over the next ten years, as thousands embraced orthodox Islam, the non-orthodox Nation of Islam firmly established its place as one of the richest and most influential religious organizations in the United States. By the end of the AAIR, political leaders across the country and throughout the world were honoring the movement that had, only a few years earlier, been the object of government persecution. In this final transformation, African American Islam had firmly and permanently planted itself as a fixture in the American religious and cultural landscape—and in doing so the underground black folk religious currents had finally been resurrected.

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