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Noble Drew Ali and the Moorish Science Temple: A Study in Race, Gender, and African American Religion, 1913-1930

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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"Noble Drew Ali and The Moorish Science Temple: A Study of Race, Gender, and African American Religion, 1913-1930" examines the historical roots of the 20th century proto-Islamic phenomenon, arguing that the group's seemingly quirky identity formation was not random and in fact is supported by a number of historical contingencies that when explored reveal Moorish Science as a sophisticated response to a violent racial caste system in American society. Through the use of a number of newly unearthed historical documents, photographs, newspapers, and scholarly secondary material, this dissertation presents a portrait of the development of Moorish Science that contends with previous analysis of the group as marginal and explains their theology as a hodge-podge of esoteric religious formations randomly thrown together. Instead, it shows the very deliberate conglomeration of seemingly disparate beliefs as something well intentioned and fashioned according to the cultural material available to Noble Drew Ali in early

twentieth century America. It shows that there was a larger web of cultural connectivity available to Americans during this early period that allowed for a greater rate of syncretism, exchange, and fluidity than has previously been discussed. It takes into account the influence Marcus Mosiah Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) had on Moorish Science, the impact of freemasonry and photography in the success and spread of Moorish Science, and the role of women within the early Temple.

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Introduction

In the 1920s and 1930s the Moorish Science Temple of America (MSTA), under the leadership of Noble Drew Ali, popularized a unique version of Islam among African Americans in the United States. Historians and social scientists have noted the importance of the movement in the development of Islam in African American communities. Anthropologist Arthur Huff Fauset acknowledged that, "The Black Muslims are directly descended from the Moorish Science Temple…. The tenuous thread, woven by Noble Drew Ali in long-ago tiny missions in Detroit, Chicago, and Newark, has penetrated the labyrinthine political maze all the way to the Black Panthers."[1] Moorish Science, therefore, has been an important element in the development of African American Islam in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Historian Aminah Beverly McCloud acknowledged that "Islamic belief in the Moorish community focused on central *Qur'anic* concepts such as justice, a purposeful creation of mankind, freedom of will, and humankind as the generator of personal action (both good and bad)."[2] Historians Yvonne Y. Haddad and Jane Idleman Smith suggested that, "Noble Drew Ali was perhaps the first African-American Islamic sectarian leader to invoke basic Islamic symbols to unite Americans of African descent… He understood that in order for a people to have any sense of its own worth, it was necessary for it to have an identity, a name, a land."[3]

Historian of religion Richard Brent Turner argued that, "The Moorish Science Temple of America was the first mass religious movement in the history of Islam in America."[4] The significance of this group as the progenitor of Islam in the American

religious context generally, and the African American context specifically has been acknowledged by many. Historian Michael Gomez declared, "Noble Drew Ali is necessarily the bridge over which the Muslim legacies of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries crossed over into the Muslim communities of the twentieth and twenty-first."[5] According to the Nation Of Islam's (NOI) history and theology, Wali Fard Muhammad was the founder of the movement, beginning in Detroit in 1930. Fard Muhammad converted many African Americans to the Nation and was the teacher of the NOI leader, Elijah Muhammad. In discussing the relationship between NOI and MSTA, Gomez explained,

> There remains sharp disagreement over the precise nature of the relationship between Moorish Science and Fard Muhammad, if in fact any existed. These disagreements are important as they go to questions of authenticity and claims of divine inspiration, but rather than attempt their resolution, it would more profitable to simply echo an observation shared by all: Fard Muhammad was a principal beneficiary of a theoretical framework and quality of discourse created by Noble Drew Ali.[6]

Gomez identified the theological continuities that flowed from Moorish Science to the Nation of Islam. Nevertheless, it is clear that Noble Drew Ali set the stage for the introduction of Islam into African American religious formations in the twentieth century.

Literature on the Moorish Science Temple of America (MSTA)

The scholarly literature on the Moorish Science Temple has spanned a sixty year period and falls into three main trends: early anthropological studies, Islamo-centric analyses, and the cultural-intellectual approaches. These studies have contributed greatly to our understanding of Moorish Science. However, a thorough examination of the

literature reveals remaining gaps in our knowledge and raises new questions requiring additional analysis.

The touchstone for scholarship on the Moorish Science Temple has been Arthur Huff Fauset's anthropological study in *The Black Gods of the Metropolis: Negro Religious Cults of the Urban North*, first published in 1944. This work featured the Moorish Science Temple, along with four other "Negro religious cults."[7] The chapter on Moorish Science was brief (eleven pages in length) and presented several comments and excerpts from oral interviews with MSTA members. Interviews were conducted with members; and newspaper accounts, and reports from the Works Projects Administration (WPA) were used. Fauset noted his indebtedness to the historian Arna Bontemps, who allowed Fauset access to his files at the WPA Negro History Division in Chicago "where an historical study of this cult has been made."[8] Fauset's work detailed the origins of the Moorish Science Temple, the clandestine nature of the organization, membership qualifications, finance, the sacred text, beliefs, rituals, and practices. In addition, Fauset also addressed some of the members' religious motivations for conversion to Moorish Science.

The testimonies included in *Black Gods of the Metropolis* emphasized the members' disappointment with Christianity, which was one of the main reasons given for their conversion. A "Moorish American" only identified as "H.R.," declared that he lost his faith in Christianity at a young age, and he "hated to see his mother get 'happy' [in church]. He loathed the hypocrisy of the Christians. He joined the Moslems."[9] H.R. alluded to the "frenzy" or getting "the spirit" that occurred at African American religious

services at Pentecostal and Holiness churches. H.R. was raised in the Christian tradition, but discarded it upon joining the MSTA. In the case of "X.Y.Z." his conversion experience occurred while studying for the Christian ministry. He was unable to reconcile Christian faith with the "unchristian practices" he witnessed regularly so he "became a Moslem."[10] Fauset also included the testimony of "A woman who has been floundering in her Christian belief, and became mentally distressed by the paradoxes of American Christian practice, especially where Negroes [were] involved." Fauset noted that when she "suddenly learn[ed] of a group which can teach her her proper name, she joins the Moorish Science Temple." These accounts of conversion experiences revealed that the journey to Moorish Science resulted from the disenchantment with Christian beliefs and institutions.[11]

Arna Bontemps and Jack Conroy first published in 1945 their findings on the Moorish Science Temple in *They Seek a City*, later republished as *Anyplace But Here* (1966). However, they offered only a few paragraphs on MSTA.[12] In this account, the authors pointed out the connections between Noble Drew Ali and Marcus Garvey as contemporaries. According to Bontemps and Conroy, Garveyism was an important component in explaining the success of Moorish Science, but their brief account offered few details.[13]Bontemps and Conroy highlighted the syncretism present in the sacred text of the Moorish Science Temple, insisting that "Drew Ali had written and published his *Circle Seven Koran,* a slim pamphlet consisting of a curious mixture of the Mohammedan holy book of the same name, the Christian Bible, the words of Marcus Garvey, and anecdotes of the life of Jesus the whole bound together with the prophet's own

pronouncements and interpretations."[14] The appeal of Moorish Science was its unique theology tailored to the African American experience. The blending of Christianity and Masonic imagery and practices were elements that had particular resonance with working class African Americans in the early twentieth century. Noble Drew Ali, wrote Bontemps and Conroy, "possessed an eloquent tongue, a persuasive manner, and a native shrewdness that enabled him to sway the poor and unlettered people who listened to him."[15]

The Great Migration extending from 1900 to 1930 is significant in explaining the success of Moorish Science in Chicago, Newark, Detroit, Philadelphia, and other northern cities where African Americans of different backgrounds arrived and created new syncretic cultural practices and religions. Bontemps and Conroy argued that "the migratory impulse" should be viewed "as personal experience," and that "the story of internal migration of Negroes in the United States has perhaps as many threads as the story of the nation's westward expansion."[16] Historian Richard Brent Turner declared, "What is especially significant for us is that the Great Migration of southern blacks to the northern and Midwestern industrial cities from 1915 to 1930 resulted in new religious, political, economic, social, and psychological needs in the African-American community and thereby encouraged the growth of new urban religious and political movements."[17] It is against this background of dynamic movement that we are able to account for the significant religious, social, and political changes in African American communities.

The limited historical research on the Moorish Science Temple before 1970 contributed to its liminal place in the scholarship on African American religious and

social history.[18] The renewed interest in the Moorish Science Temple in the 1970s was fueled by Black Studies and Religious Studies movements in the academy and scholars began to focus on Islam in North America. Edward E. Curtis pointed to the Islamic turn in Religious Studies and researchers such as Richard Brent Turner, Aminah Beverly McCloud, Yvonne Y. Haddad and Jane I. Smith, and Michel A. Gomez contributed to the reinvigorated focus of the Islamic elements in MSTA teachings and practices.[19]

One of the main debates in the Islamocentric research is whether the Moorish Science should be considered an "Islamic" religious group, and if so, whether the movement represented the first African American form of Islamic worship in the United States. One of the main sources of contention is that the sacred text of Moorish Science does not reflect the tenets associated with "orthodox" Islam. Noble Drew Ali's sacred text, *The Circle Seven Koran,* had the number seven in a circle on the cover. Historian Michael A. Gomez concluded that,

> The *Circle Seven Koran* bears no relationship to the Qur'an of old…Noble Drew Ali compiled his book from several non-Islamic sources and influences. Two conclusions, equally disturbing from the view of orthodoxy, flow from these observations: Either Noble Drew Ali was in fact quite ignorant of the substance of the Qur'an and therefore created a 'Koran' out of need for written revelation (given his claim to head a Muslim community); or, having some knowledge of the Qur'an, Noble Drew Ali made the determination that it required supplementation, either because it did not sufficiently address the needs of Moorish Americans, or because of his own need to establish his claims to prophethood, or both.[20]

Through the analysis of the *Circle Seven Koran's* contents, Gomez highlighted the multiple and diverse intellectual and theological influences on the Moorish Science. Gomez emphasized the *Koran's* resonance with the needs of "Moorish Americans,"

which helps to explain why Moorish Science was attractive to some African Americans in the urban North during the early twentieth century. Moreover, he pointed to some African Americans' desire to be associated with Islam and the Middle East. These identities signified an ancient and legitimate descent that contested contemporary claims that "the person of African descent was adrift and without direction."[21] Noble Drew Ali offered African Americans a "corporate nationality" that "was unalterably established in antiquity, so too was the shared religion…African Americans, therefore, were Muslims who could trace their heritage to Morocco and an even earlier Moabitic origin."[22]

Religious scholar Peter Lamborn Wilson has argued that "Noble Drew Ali's 'Islam' had historical roots, of several kinds- first in various secret societies, second in certain surviving groups of Islamic-descended black Americans."[23] Religious historian Aminah Beverly McCloud soberly reminds us, "We may never know how Noble Drew Ali came to Islam. There is no documented story about Ali's introduction to Islam…Whatever the origin of his Islamic expression, Noble Drew Ali's simple assertion that a person must have a nationality led many to his doors."[24] Historian Susan Nance has argued, however, that, "Moorish Science is most accurately described as a black Spiritualist-style religion steeped in the philosophies of mystical Freemasonry."[25] Nance believes that "We must take Ali's use of the word 'Islam' and other things 'Islamic' as symbols which he used not to direct his believers to scriptural Islam, or to the beliefs and practices of Muslims in the United States or elsewhere, but rather as a sign of authenticity and secret wisdom African Americans had come to recognize in other contexts

already."[26] One of these "other contexts" was the fraternal organizations of various Masonic orders prominent among African American men.

Noble Drew Ali apparently decided to fashion his religious movement using the Masonic influences in African American culture. African American leader and author James Weldon Johnson, in the novel *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* described a character who was introduced into "the bourgeois classes" through his induction into the "Freemasonry of the race."[27] With the attainment of the knowledge of black Freemasonry, Johnson was afforded a critical understanding of the black Masonic worldview. Historian Corey B. Walker suggested that "As a result of his contact with the African American bourgeoisie, [Johnson's character] arrives at the realization that the group of colored people who inhabit a cultural world of piano instruction and organized religion possess a degree of racial knowledge of which he was totally unaware."[28] This "secret world" opened the door for a deeper understanding of the race and events taking place in the Jim Crow South. James Weldon Johnson was engaging in demystifying the "seemingly natural order of things."[29] Many practices within Noble Drew Ali's Moorish Science point to the strong Masonic influence.

In addition to the racial knowledge informed by black freemasonry, a number of scholars have indicated that the fraternal organizations were a significant influence on the symbolism and uniforms worn by MSTA members. For example, the fez was worn by members of the Ancient Egyptian Arabic Nobles of the Mystic Shrine (also known as the black Shriners), a Masonic group established in the 1890s. The fezzes worn by black Shriners typically identified which specific temple they were associated with and had an

embroidered image of a sword above a crescent and star. Fezzes worn by members of MSTA were typically red and did not have any embroidery on them. MSTA also used the name "Noble." Michael Gomez noted that Noble "was actually the title conferred upon members of both the Ancient Egyptian Arabic Order and the white Shriners, so that Noble Drew's use of the designation in his name suggests a conscious decision to foreground his Masonic credentials, as does the existence of photographs in which he is shown wearing a Masonic apron and other associated paraphernalia…"[30]

Historian Corey B. Walker argues that "African American Freemasonry establishes the space whereby we are able to interrogate the performance of a montage of critical views on the political form, rhetoric, and substance of American democracy." Walker posits "a dynamic notion of African American freemasonry as a constantly evolving material and discursive formation that directly *and* indirectly engages the ever-changing nexus of political, social, and economic forces of American democratic culture."[31] The influence of freemasonry on Moorish Science is particularly noted in the addition of "El" or "Bey" to members' names. Independent scholar Sayyid Al Imaam Isa pointed out, "Noble Drew Ali accepted many customs and symbols from the Masonic Lodge…Certain parts of Noble Drew Ali's uniform, as well as the names El and Bey, were taken from the Masons."[32] Imaam Isa suggested that many of Ali's gestures and ritual movements were taken from freemasonry; and as Nance suggested, may have been used to garner respectability and legitimacy for Moorish Science. The role of freemasonry is also revealed in the syncretism found in the sacred text, *The Circle Seven Koran*.

Moorish Science's *Koran* included various religious practices borrowed from other traditions, but it should be taken seriously as a sacred text. Its full title, *The Holy Koran of the Moorish Holy Temple of Science 7, Know Yourself and Your Father God-Allah, That You Learn Instead of Hate, Everyman Need to Worship Under His Own Vine and Fig Tree, The Uniting of Asia* clearly reveals the syncretism fundamental to Moorish Science.[33] That the deity was hyphenated, "God-Allah," combining Christianity and Islam is a telling sign of the complexity of the religious beliefs in Moorish Science.[34] Noble Drew Ali and his movement were part of a longer theological and intellectual genealogy that includes elements from Garveyism, Freemasonry, New Thought, Rosicrusianism, and Islam.

The sacred text of Moorish Science is one of the few primary sources available directly from Noble Drew Ali and reveals a great deal about his theology. Michael Gomez declared Noble Drew Ali's "ideas reflect the quintessential convergence of Islam, Islamism, Freemasonry, New Thought, Rosicrucianism, [and] anticolonialism in its critique of European imperialism and nationalism [and] in the rejection of white American racism."[35] Although most scholars recognize that Moorish Science's version of Islam is far from "orthodox" it is a matter of debate the degree to which it represents an organic link between nineteenth century African and African American Islamic communities and those of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In an intriguing interpretation of Ali's title, Michael Gomez highlighted the use of the number seven as representative of the Masonic beliefs, as well as a reference to the apocalyptic signs of the "seven seals" in the "Book of Revelation." Gomez emphasized the intertwining of the

"business of religion" with a "nationalist project," and concluded that the followers of Moorish Science were preoccupied with acquiring a corporate identity derived from an "appropriate religion"-Islam- in order to redefine itself in relation to black-white politics in the United States and highlight its "transnational association" with Morocco.[36]

The early twentieth century was a period of great religious diversity in the United States, and researchers have examined religious movements such as Rosicrucianism and New Thought that arrived on the American cultural scene, and Moorish Science was influenced by these various spiritual movements. In Edward Curtis' view, "the best of this new scholarship utilizes dynamic notions of both black and Muslim identities to depict the human agency and creativity of those pioneering African Americans who called themselves 'Moslems' in the 1920s."[37] This type of syncretic approach indeed offers an approach to the theology, but does not address MSTA as a social institution made up of the people and networks that supported Ali and his leadership of the Moorish Science. Curtis notes that "a comprehensive cultural history of the MSTA has yet to be written…"[38]

The cultural-intellectual approach to Moorish Science has begun to fill the void, although much remains to be done. Susan Nance has contributed to this approach and argued that "for a time the Moors and their prophet, Ali, did become publicly respectable by staging exoticizing, but law-abiding displays of publicity that drew on whatever positive stereotypes of Morocco and Islam existed in black and white American culture." She considered members of Moorish Science as participating in "American Orientalism," constructing a socially acceptable interpretation of "Oriental" culture and religion which

they appropriated.[39] Thus Moorish Science was representative of larger cultural and religious phenomena occurring in the United States in the early twentieth century.

The clandestine nature of Moorish Science has serious attempts to uncover its history. Estimations of MSTA membership are somewhere near 30,000 during the mid-1920s, similar to other contemporary social and religious movements such as the Islamic Ahmadiyya movement.[40] As noted above, most studies of Moorish Science focus on the use (or misuse) of Islamic tenets in the movement, however, this dissertation documents the African American elements by examining Noble Drew Ali's personal background, the influence of Garveyism, the roles of African American women, and the importance of black freemasonry and photography in the movement.[41]

Chapter Outline

The first chapter, "In the Beginning: Origin Stories of Noble Drew Ali" investigates the early narratives of Drew Ali's life, including his time in Newark, New Jersey as "Prof. Drew, Egyptian Adept Student." This includes new research on the possibilities of Drew Ali's identity as "Thomas Drew," rather than "Timothy Drew," as has been suggested. Research on the Canaanite Temple by Patrick D. Bowen suggests that a man by the name of Abdul Hamid Suleiman may have been more closely connected to the creation of the Newark group. These new insights into Ali's background suggest that his missing years may have included more activities than earlier scholars have recognized. This new information reveals a number of religious and social networks that Drew may have encountered during his years in Newark and thus helped him in forming the MSTA in Chicago several years later.

The second chapter "'One God, One Aim, One Destiny': Garveyism and the Formation of African American Islam" investigates the role of Marcus Garvey and his Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) in creating the cultural space necessary for the advance of Moorish Science. Garvey played an instrumental role in shaping Moorish Science, as he served as the symbolic and figurative "John the Baptist" of the Moorish movement. Bontemps and Conroy's observed in *They Seek A City,* "In 1925, as Garvey paced up and down [in] his newly occupied cell in Atlanta, a small Negro wearing a flaming red fez similar to those worn by Turks appeared in empty lots and on street corners of Chicago's South Side to proclaim a startling new doctrine."[42] The relationship between Garveyism and Noble Drew Ali is thoroughly explored in this chapter because it is integral to understanding the success of Moorish Science in attracting African Americans to the new religion.

Chapter three "Women in the Formation and Development of the Moorish Science Temple of America" utilizes newspaper accounts, photographs, and the *Circle Seven Koran* to assess the importance of women within the temples. From the available evidence it is clear that women played a central role. For example, a December 1928 article in the *Chicago Defender* described Mrs. Pearl Ali, Noble Drew Ali's wife, as significant to cultivating participation of the youth. The headline read, "Mrs. Drew Ali Organizes Young Moorish People."[43] The article identified Mrs. Pearl Ali as MSTA's national secretary and treasurer, and described her activities with the young people in the movement. The purpose of the youth group was to "create interest in educational pursuits and to awaken and cultivate an appreciation for the arts," through "a greater attendance at

the literary and trade schools."[44] The article also mentioned Juanita Richardson Bey, who was a graduate of Wendell Phillips High School and the city editor of the *Moorish Guide,* the MSTA's main publication. The documentation unearthed suggests that women played a critical role in shaping the early movement.

Chapter four "Symbolism and Science: African American Freemasonry and Photography in Moorish Science Temple America" examines the use of photography, science, and freemasonry in the Moorish Science movement. It analyzes a number of photographs publicized by MSTA leaders and suggests that the images were used to offer a number of recognizable visual cues from the contemporary culture to help create a unique perspective on the movement. These images were representative of a counter-archive circulated at the time to challenge the ideas of racial scientists who posited views about the innate racial inferiority of African descended peoples. The photographs produced and disseminated by Moorish Science insisted that an African heritage was something to be proud of and worthy of celebration.

The fifth chapter "The Final Days of Noble Drew Ali" analyzes the "general laws" created by Ali during the first annual convention to address the disunity within the ranks of Moorish Science. The group was clearly in trouble and the year following the convention proved to be tumultuous and witnessed the murder of one of its leading members, several divisive legal battles, and eventually the death of its prophet Noble Drew Ali. The movement suffered tremendously after Noble Drew Ali's death and became fragmented due to the competition for recognition among three main factions. The fragmentation continued into the present, however, and in the "conclusion,' some of

the reasons for the success of the movement are assessed and the MSTA's influence on subsequent Islamic movements among African Americans is highlighted, pointing to the historical significance of Noble Drew Ali to twentieth century African American history.

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[1] Arthur Huff Fauset, introduction to the paperback edition of *Black Gods of the Metropolis: Negro religious Cults of the Urban North* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1944), xxiii.
[2] Aminah Beverly McCloud, *African American Islam* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 11-12.
[3] Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad and Jane Idleman Smith, *Mission to America: Five Islamic Sectarian Communities in North America* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1993), 80.
[4] Richard Brent Turner, *Islam in the African American Experience, Second Edition* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 71.
[5] Michael A. Gomez, *Black Crescent: The Experience and Legacy of African Muslims in the Americas* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 203.
[6] Ibid, 276.
[7] See Fauset, *Black Gods of the Metropolis,* 68-75.
[8] Ibid, 41.
[9] Ibid, 85-89.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Arna Bontemps and Jack Conroy, *They Seek a City* (Columbia:University of Missouri Press, 1966), 205.
[13] Ibid, 206.
[14] Bontemps and Conroy, *They Seek a City,* 206.
[15] Ibid, 206.
[16] Ibid, 10.
[17] Turner, *Islam in the African American Experience,* 73.
[18] Edward E. Curtis IV, "Debating the Origins of the Moorish Science Temple: Toward a New Cultural History," 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: Indiana University Press, 2009), 70-90.
[19] Peter Lamborn Wilson, *Sacred Drift: Essays on the Margins of Islam* (San Francisco: City Light Books, 1993), 15-50. Richard Brent Turner, *Islam in the African American Experience* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 71-108. Aminah Beverly McCloud, *African American Islam* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 166-167. Michael A. Gomez, *Black Crescent: The Experience and Legacy of African Muslims in the Americas* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 203-275.
[20] Gomez, *Black Crescent,* 229.
[21] Ibid, 217.
[22] Ibid, 218-219.
[23] Wilson, *Sacred Drift,* 25.
[24] Aminah Beverly McCloud, *African American Islam,* 166-167.
[25] Susan Nance, "Mystery of the Moorish Science Temple: Southern Blacks and American Alternative Spirituality in 1920s Chicago," *Religion and American Culture* 12, no.2 (Summer 2002): 125-126.
[26] Ibid, 146.
[27] Corey D.B. Walker, *A Noble Fight: African American Freemasonry and the Struggle for Democracy in America* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 1-2.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Gomez, *Black Crescent,* 247.
[31] Walker, *A Noble Fight,* 10.

[32] As Sayyid Al Imaam Isa, *Who Was Noble Drew Ali?* (Brooklyn, NY: The Original Tents of Kedar, 1980), 81.
[33] Gomez, *Black Crescent,* pp. 217. The information regarding the full title of the sacred text is dependent upon this secondary source, as my version of the text is from an online copy. My copy only refers to the text as, *The Holy Koran of The Moorish Science Temple of America: Divinely Prepared by the Prophet Noble Drew Ali, By the guiding of his father God, Allah; the great God of the universe. To redeem man from his sinful and fallen stage of humanity back to the highest plane of life with his father God, Allah.* http://hermetic.com/bey/7koran.html.
[34] Despite the cases of plagiarism in the text, it still remains a valid interpretation of the movement's intellectual foundation since these pieces were not chosen at random and have interpretive value.
[35] Gomez, *Black Crescent,* 204.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Curtis, "Debating the Origins," 72.
[38]Ibid, 70-90.
[39] See Susan Nance's discussion of Holly Edwards' work on French trained American painters. She equates these sentiments to members of the Moorish Science in "Respectability and Representation: The Moorish Science Temple, Morocco, and Black Public Culture in 1920s Chicago," *American Quarterly* 54, No. 4(December 2002): 625-626.
[40] Gomez, *Black Crescent,* 252.
[41] Here I am referring to Susan Nance's interpretation in her article, "Mystery of the Moorish Science Temple: Southern Blacks and American Alternative Spirituality in 1920s Chicago," *Religion and American Culture* 12, no. 2 (Summer 2002): 125.
[42] Bontemps and Conroy, *They Seek a City*, 205.
[43] "Mrs. Drew Ali Organizes Young Moorish People," *Chicago Defender,* December 1, 1928.
[44] Ibid.

In the Beginning: Origin Stories of Noble Drew Ali

During the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the United States (U.S.) was in the midst of one of the most significant changes in its history. The closing of the Civil War in 1865 ushered in a period of reconstruction in U.S. southern states, as federal troops occupied the South to oversee the transition from a slave society to a free labor society. Despite the chaos, daily life continued. On January 8, 1886, a future "Prophet," Noble Drew Ali was born into this volatile and heightened racial state. Throughout the course of his lifetime he would learn, grow, and change into a leader among his people, eventually becoming recognized as the first leader in a long tradition of African American Islam in the U.S. While his story is one of significance to the fabric of American life, there is not much documentation about his early years. According to Ali's followers, he was born in "Sampson," North Carolina. Historians such as Michael A. Gomez have contended that there is no such place in North Carolina, and searches for Timothy Drew in census records reveal nothing. This ambiguity has been the subject of speculation, as both followers of the prophet and scholars alike have searched for the roots of Drew's ancestry.

Who Was Noble Drew Ali?

The historiography of Drew's life before 1925 comes mainly from oral tradition.[1] What has been reported about these early years gives us insights not only about who Drew Ali was before becoming a professor and prophet, but it also informs us about early twentieth century American life and culture, and is worth investigating for an understanding of the complicated social reality of this period in U.S. history. For

example, according to Islamic scholar Peter Lamborn Wilson, "Timothy Drew was born (most probably) January 8, 1886, in North Carolina, child of ex-slaves, among the Cherokee Indians-who are said to have adopted him-so that later in life he always wore a feather in his fez, or so they say, for a great deal of this account is pure oral history."[2] Wilson goes on to discuss the historical possibilities recounted along the way, some include the idea of Timothy Drew being orphaned by his mother's death and adopted by an "evil aunt." Others include a narrative of his father and the family's relocation to Newark in the 1880s and early introduction to Islam by a travelling "Master Adept" (a term used for Chinese traveling teachers). Across all of the narratives there is a theme of movement and travel and an exposure to secret knowledge. The variations on the theme span across various cultural frontiers but all offer some type of explanation for the importance of Noble Drew Ali's early experiences in his preparation as prophet and leader.

A man who later in life would be regarded as prophet and understood to have miraculous healing abilities was early distinguished as a special child with many spiritual gifts. After being put through fire and coming out unharmed, much like the biblical story of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, Ali ran away from his aunt and joined the gypsies. He is said to have been employed as a merchant seaman, a magician in the traveling circus, a railway expressman, and somehow ultimately ended up in Egypt where he received the clandestine knowledge of Sultan Abdul al-Sa'ud and received the title "Ali." During his trip to Egypt, Ali's prophecy was revealed to him and upon his return to the United States he began to spread the sacred lessons he learned while away. By 1913

Noble Drew Ali had resurfaced in Newark, New Jersey and is said to have created the first iteration of Moorish Science, the Canaanite Temple. It seems that much of the uncertainty around Noble Drew Ali's personal origins transfer to his movement as well. There are still limited records on this earlier movement, and for the most part, it seems that scholars accept the narrative despite any primary source verification.[3]

According to the story, within a year after establishing the Canaanite Temple, Noble Drew Ali encountered severe challenges to his leadership from Abdul Wali Farad Muhammad Ali, and by 1916 the Temple had been racked by factionalism. This "mysterious character from the East" is rumored to have been none other than W.D. Fard, founder of the Nation of Islam. "Those who remained loyal to Noble Drew Ali reconstituted themselves in Newark as the 'Holy Moabite Temple of the World.'"[4] By 1925 Noble Drew Ali had resurfaced in Chicago and laid claim to a new movement, The Moorish Science Temple. This glaring gap in the historical record has made it difficult to ascertain the actual activities of these groups and their connections to each other. If we are to take seriously the impact Noble Drew Ali's early years may have had on shaping his prophet-hood, then the narrative must be verified.

In attempting to tell the story of the movement, most scholarly accounts focus on the 1920s and end shortly after Noble Drew Ali's death in 1929. This is particularly interesting since most accounts of the Temple cite its founding in 1913 as the Canaanite Temple. Susan Nance emphasizes that "Seventy-five years after it emerged in Chicago, the origin of Moorish Science is still a long-standing puzzle of American religious history."[5] Scholarly accounts of the Moorish Science Temple make this problem clear.

For example, in *Black Gods of the Metropolis* anthropologist Arthur Huff Fauset opens his chapter on the Moorish Science Temple by recounting its origins. "This cult was founded about 1913 by Timothy Drew, who came from North Carolina where he was born in 1886."[6] Michael A. Gomez acknowledges that, "accounts difficult to verify maintain that, in either 1912 or 1913, at the age of 27, Noble Drew Ali established the Canaanite Temple in Newark, New Jersey, preaching 'his doctrine in basements, empty lots, and street corners' with the help of a shadowy Dr. Suliman." Gomez claims that "Newark's was the first in a series of worship centers that would collectively come to be known as Moorish Science."[7] More recently, religious scholar Edward E. Curtis in his chapter "Debating the Origins of the Moorish Science Temple" (MST) argues that "a vexing theoretical problem first encountered by Fauset continued to characterize the analysis of the MST. The problem emerged in attempting to answer questions about the origins of the group."[8] This ambiguity in historical detail seems to be an underlying theme in the record of the Temple. The issue of locating the beginnings of the movement is significant and, in fact, only signals to the beginning of the historical questions that need to be addressed.

In an effort to explain the secrecy behind Noble Drew Ali's past Brother A. Wise-Bey, a member of Moorish Science Temple of America (MSTA), said that the Prophet told him, "I didn't tell anyone where I was born or who my parents were, because I didn't want people to make a shrine out of the place or make over my parents like was done with Joseph and Mary."[9] According to this testimony, Noble Drew Ali intentionally withheld the details of his past from his followers and future historians alike. The

suggestion that he sought to protect his parents and obscure his place of birth is highly questionable.

North Carolina in the late nineteenth century was a place of racial and cultural diversity. Racial fluidity is found especially in certain sections of the state. The mixing of Native Americans, African Americans, and White Americans resulted in the multiple possibilities that could have informed Noble Drew Ali's identity. The part of Drew's personal history that notes ties to Cherokee ancestry makes the mixed racial history of North Carolina that much more interesting and important to the development of the Moorish Science Temple. Whether or not Drew Ali was of Cherokee ancestry is not as important as the fact that this idea has remained a constant thread in the stories of his life before 1913.

Noble Drew Ali's development of Moorish identity was a social construction that integrated the traditions stemming from the syncretic traditions of African American religion and early forms of Islam in the United States. Historian Allen Austin and others made it clear that enslaved Africans brought Islam to the United States and it thus was a part of African American religious practices from the antebellum era. Moorish Science reflected and expanded on that religious tradition. While we may strive to uncover the intimate spiritual strivings of early adherents to Moorish Science as well as the motivations and influences on Noble Drew Ali in shaping that tradition, it is important to remember that we are able to capture only the imprint of their experiences, always imperfectly perceived. W.E.B. Du Bois in his foundational essay, "Of Our Spiritual Strivings," in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) declared that "the spiritual world in which

ten thousand thousand Americans live and strive—is rendered elusive, a 'sketch in vague uncertain outline': a space continually transformed by the impact of history, rather than some fixed, inert phenomenon to be grasped or observed."[10] As we attempt to trace and rediscover the history of Noble Drew Ali and the Moorish Science Temple, we should remember that Ali himself seemed to have been on a personal spiritual journey which may never be fully grasped.

Traces of Islam on the American continent date back to the colonial era. According to Gomez, "the Muslim presence in the American South antedates the arrival of the English."[11] The Muslim influence on the social, political, and religious traditions of the African American community are just beginning to be understood and documented. Historian Richard Brent Turner notes the significance of Muslims presence among African Americans: "Enslaved Muslims continued to practice Islam in their family networks and might have converted other slaves. Their religion significantly influenced African American identity, culture, religion, ethnicity, and class stratification in pre-twentieth-century black America."[12]

One of the earliest examples we have is the narrative of Omar Ibn Said. Omar's story is one of many that illustrates the presence and power of Islamic belief in the early nation. Written in 1836, Said's manuscript was publicized and displayed in 1863. This early narrative and personal autobiography written in Arabic detailed the conversion of an African Muslim to Christianity. More importantly, it documents the African Muslim presence in the United States prior to Noble Drew Ali's Moorish Science Temple. Moreover, the narrative places him in North Carolina. Said was enslaved in Fayetteville,

North Carolina and in 1826 he met a Presbyterian pastor and professor who on 8 January 1883 published an article about Said in the *New York Observer* titled, "Meroh, a Native African."[13] This early acknowledgment of Islam among Africans who had been enslaved in the United States demonstrated the possibility of the presence of Islamic worship during slavery and its spread among African American communities after the end of slavery. While many aspects of Noble Drew Ali's personal biography and early organizing activities before he reached Chicago are unknown, we do know that he directed his followers to Islam as a way to understand themselves. There are early examples of influential enslaved Muslims who received special treatment because of their intellect and command of written and spoken Arabic. These stories of Africans escaping slavery through claiming an Islamic or Moroccan identity contributed to the cultural memory of African Americans and Drew Ali may have been exposed to the ideas about Islam and pan-Africanism as a child. The evidence of an Islamic presence in antebellum America is important and it laid the foundation for the proliferation of African American Islam after the era of slavery.

Richard Brent Turner suggested that re-naming was "an act of European psychology. They gave him a name, then defined it as something inferior to theirs."[14] Naming practices have been a way to claim a cultural identity and in the case of those within the African Diaspora, they have been used to reclaim an African heritage, while negating the names associated with slave masters. The use of "El" or "Bey" in Moorish adherents' names signified their break with their American roots and recognition of another nationality or creed. This naming has been a significant marker of Moorish

influence in American life and culture, and this surname is commonly found among some of the well-respected professionals.

Great Migration and Movement North

By 1863, Abraham Lincoln had signed the Emancipation Proclamation and in 1865 the Thirteenth Amendment made slavery illegal in the United States. As the Civil War came to an end, freedom became a reality for African Americans and many advances were made during the Reconstruction era (1867-1877). The overthrow of Reconstruction era led to the first wave of migration of African Americans out of the rural South to urban centers, the North, West, and the 1879 Exodus. In many ways, the history of African Americans is one of migration. As people moved from spaces of captivity to places that promised liberty, their faith in freedom was renewed. Although these new homes offered improved conditions, they sometimes came with a new set of problems, including poverty, hunger, and juvenile delinquency. African American migrants often found themselves in an unfriendly world, one hampered by white racism, bigotry, and legal restrictions imposed by Jim Crow.[15]

African American migrations contributed to growth of urban centers, the changing of religious expressions and practices, and the restructuring of American society. Their influx into cities across the United States changed not only the demographics, but the culture of the cities they inhabited. Sociologists St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton observed that prior to 1915:

> There was little to encourage plantation laborers to risk life in the city streets. Now there were jobs to attract them…For the first time, southern Negroes were actually being invited [after the outbreak of war in Europe], even urged to come to Chicago. They came in

> droves—50,000 of them between 1910 and 1920…A flood of relatives and friends followed in their wake.[16]

Drake and Cayton noted that, "New Jersey did not have the renown of Chicago or of New York City's Harlem, but many migrants preferred its slower pace and smaller cities…Between 1900 and 1930 black migration to New Jersey was the major factor in tripling the race's population from 69,844 to 208,828."[17] The population explosion in urban areas created great changes that allowed diverse ethnic and religious communities to develop and flourish. Chicago and Newark became critical sites for Noble Drew Ali's unique religious formation of Moorish Science.

During the World War I years, immigration from Europe slowed leaving northern factory owners in need of laborers and southern whites and blacks began moving to the North in unprecedented numbers. Between 1914 and 1920 Noble Drew Ali was among those who migrated to the North. The development of the Moorish Science Temple of America reflected the impact that this period had on Ali's thinking and understanding of social and cultural reality. His solution to the problems facing African Americans in the United States and abroad was to reclaim their lost identity, "to redeem man from his sinful and fallen stage of humanity back to the highest plane of life with his father God, Allah."[18]

Historian Milton Sernett has argued that Newark "became [a] critical arena in which the struggle of African Americans to find the 'Promised Land' took place."[19] This notion of the "Promised Land" and the search for prophetic religious fulfillment had permeated African Americans' consciousness since the era of slavery. This theme of the

"Promised Land," God's promise to Abraham in the Bible, captivated African Americans who used the story to interpret their own future and destiny as God's chosen people. "New Canaan" was the metaphorical designation African Americans used to make sense of the many generations that had suffered through slavery and eventually would be given a place for their descendents to remain and flourish. This idea was often utilized to advertise for African American migration out of the South and to cities in the North such as Chicago, New York, Detroit, and Newark. Once in these new urban centers of the North and West according to Hans A. Baer and Merrill Singer "African-American religion underwent a rapid process of diversification in the early decades of the twentieth century, particularly with the appearance of a wide array of new Holiness, Pentecostal, Spiritual, Islamic, and Judaic sects. To a large extent the baseline for this diversification was the 'Black rural church.'"[20]

The creation of the Moorish Science Temple of America can be understood as part of this larger trend of religious diversification that accompanied the Great Migration. Political scientist Ira Katnelson in his book *Black Men, White Cities,* explained that "Some American blacks reacted to the closed political possibilities of the Southern colonial racial system by seeking to establish new and (they hoped) more viable linkages with the national political system."[21] Noble Drew Ali, a representative of this larger trend of migration, experimented with the ideas he was exposed to in an attempt to redefine African American nationality, religion, and social status within the U.S. cultural and political landscape. His movement out of the South and into northern urban centers resulted in the creation of the Moorish Science Temple and reflects larger themes in

American history such as individual exploration, re-invention, and unending quests for freedom and justice.

As a result of the great migration, many "alternative" religious formations appeared in African American communities, manifesting unique approaches to Christian tenets, but staying within that dominant theological system. Drew Ali's Moorish Science was one of the first to openly reclaim Islam, arguing that it, and not Christianity, was the true faith of African descended people in the Americas and around the world. He argued that the evils of slavery, which had robbed African people of their history, were also responsible for the introduction of Christianity in the community. By going back to Islam and centering that connection on Morocco in North Africa, the followers would come to know their true selves, and would be able to reclaim their nationality, an important political move for his followers, given their conditions in the early twentieth century. While it may seem like a strange choice, and perhaps even somewhat arbitrary, the transition to a faith based in Islam, rather than Christianity was not that difficult for Ali's adherents. Islam derives its origins from the Abrahamic Judeo-Christian tradition. Moreover, members of Moorish Science had a collective memory of the use of Christianity to buttress slave-owners claims of legitimacy; and thus there was enough familiarity while, at the same time, distance to accept Moorish Science. But to understand Moorish Science's success as entirely caused by this anti- or pro- Christian connection is to ignore the complexity and sophistication that underlay the foundations of Moorish beliefs.

It is commonly acknowledged that the interwar years were a time of religious diversification in the United States. Historian Wilson Jeremiah Moses argued that "the fact that 'messianic' religiosity among the black people of the United States had expressed itself in Jewish and Islamic, as well as in Christian forms, indicates underlying strains of similarity between Pan-Africanism, Pan-Islamism, and Zionism."[22] The uses of Islam and Christianity in Moorish Science demonstrate the complicated relationship these faiths had with one another. Islam had a long, somewhat hidden role in the history of African American political, religious, and social organizations. During the height of white supremacist activities, evidenced by the unending violence of white lynch mobs and racial separation due to Jim Crow legislation, Islam offered African Americans an opportunity "to know themselves." Although Ali was not the first to bring Islam's importance to the attention of African Americans, his combination of religion, history, and culture led to the development of a lasting religious movement which became an indispensable element in the history of Islam in America.

On the significance of Islam in Moorish Science, Historian Susan Nance has argued that "we must take Ali's use of the word Islam and other things 'Islamic' as symbols which he used not to direct his believers to scriptural Islam, or to the beliefs and practices of Muslims in the United States or elsewhere, but rather as a sign of authenticity and secret wisdom African Americans had come to recognize in other contexts already."[23] This was an important aspect of Moorish Science's appeal among African Americans who joined the movement, but it does not include the reasons participants themselves gave for joining the movement. Anthropologist Arthur Huff Fauset was one

of the first to document followers' conversion experiences. According to his research, followers stated that they "could not reconcile the Christian teaching and practice," or had "become mentally distressed by the paradoxes of American Christian practice," or "loathed the hypocrisy of the Christians;" so they joined the "Moslems." So, while Nance may be on to something in her description of the power symbolism had in Ali's teachings, it was not until he embraced an Islamic identity that his movement was able to crystallize.[24]

New thought and Rosicrucianism were also fundamental to the development of Ali's theology and cannot be dismissed in their influence on some of the sect's fundamental tenets. Gomez noted that, "Noble Drew did not appropriate the beliefs of either Christian Science or any other New Thought movement willy-nilly, nor did he borrow indiscriminately from Rosicrucian literature. His selections from these sources were carefully chosen to support his own, unique articulation of faith and political being."[25] Scholars and adherents alike have recognized that Ali borrowed from two texts in the creation of the "bible" of Moorish Science, *Circle Seven Koran.* Ali very likely borrowed from an early twentieth century text by Levi Dowling, the *Aquarian Gospel,* and an ancient Chinese text translated in the late eighteenth century in England, *Unto Thee I Grant*. Crafting of the text, as Gomez mentioned, was deliberate and should be studied closely as a means of communicating some key messages of Moorish Science. Gomez pointed out "more than any specific doctrine, what Noble Drew learned from these movements was the notion that the individual was not a prisoner to her or his circumstances, but that, through a disciplined reordering of the understanding, change

was possible."[26] Given the strong influences of alternative spiritualist movements at the time, Gomez observed that "it is all the more remarkable that Noble Drew Ali embraced Islamism, for he had every incentive to simply follow in non-Islamic paths already laid."[27] While Gomez's observation is right about these alternatives, his conclusion that, "once again it may point to a residual, pre-Rosicrucian extension of belief hailing back to Muslims born in Africa," must be considered in light of Islam's influence on both Garveyism and African American Masonic groups such as the Shriners (to be discussed in chapters two and three). Yet, it also must be pointed out that the roots of Islam in "Garveyism" should also be considered, especially the scholarly works of Edward Wilmot Blyden, with whom Garvey had maintained an enduring interest.

Blyden's legacy among African descended peoples has rarely been examined. His pioneering work in *Christianity, Islam, and the Negro Race* offered a justification for twentieth century all-black religious movements. Richard Turner believes that "It is impossible to understand fully the transition between the old Islam of the original African Muslim slaves and the 'new African-American Islam' of the early twentieth century without giving some attention to nineteenth-century Pan-Africanism. Pan-Africanism formed the ideological bridge between these two phases of Islam in the United States."[28] The rich ideological and intellectual traditions that were planted and propagated through the work of Blyden, Garvey, and Ali laid a firm foundation for the Pan-African thought and rhetoric in the early twentieth century. Although Ali and his movement are sometimes overlooked in determining their impact on the tradition of Islam among African Americans, Noble Drew Ali's maintenance of the tradition of Islamic and Pan-

African solidarity makes the Moorish Science significant in the history of Islam among African Americans and critical to our understanding of twentieth century movements for African liberation.

The Emergence of a Proto-Moorish Science

While most accounts of Noble Drew Ali's activity place him in Newark, New Jersey in 1913 and recount his establishment of the Canaanite Temple, they do not provide further details. According to those same narratives, Noble Drew Ali encountered the mysterious Dr. Hamid Suleiman, an Egyptian adept who was fluent in Egyptian languages. It is with the arrival of this little known personage that the Canaanite Temple was abandoned, but this served as background experience in the creation and development of Moorish Science. There are many theories about what Drew Ali was doing during the twelve year gap in the historical record between the development of the Canaanite Temple in 1913 and the formation of the Moorish Temple in 1925. The oral and printed accounts tell of the challenge to Drew Ali's leadership in the Canaanite Temple. Michael Gomez concluded, "the confrontation with the 'teacher from the East' may have had some lingering effects on Noble Drew Ali's early followers, for by 1916 'factionalism' had divided them. Those who remained loyal to Noble Drew reconstituted themselves in Newark as the 'Holy Moabite Temple of the World,' indicating that Noble Drew chose to maintain his distance from orthodoxy while working out his own philosophical principles."[29] If it was with ease that Ali's followers reconstituted themselves as the Holy Moabite Temple of the World, we know very little about this organization, or even Drew's whereabouts over the next twelve years.

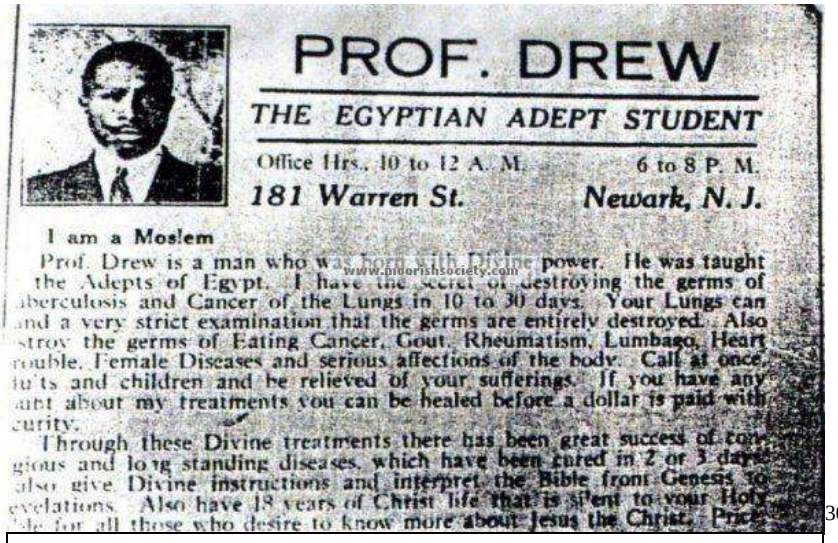

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Figure 1.1: Advertisement for "Prof. Drew, Egyptian Adept Student"

According to the oral testimonies of members of Moorish Science, Noble Drew Ali first began his teachings as "Prof. Drew, Egyptian Adept Student" and continued them through his organizing activities in the Canaanite Temple. Although there is no date or citation available for the advertisement of "Prof. Drew," a World War I draft registration card from 12-Sept-1918 and the 1920 United States census place a "Thomas Drew," at this same address. While the first name "Thomas" conflicts with previous accounts of Drew Ali as "Timothy Drew," the information from the draft card and census record suggest otherwise. The draft card from September 1918 reports that Thomas Drew was born on 8 January 1886, the same date followers and historians cite as his birthday, and also cites him as a "negro" man of medium height and build with black hair. Ultimately, Drew was disqualified for service in the war because the "muscles on [his] forearm [were] badly burned."[31] This physical feature of Drew Ali also parallels the MSTA followers' stories of Drew's childhood, where he was cast into a fire by his aunt. The draft registration card also places Drew as a laborer for the Submarine Boat

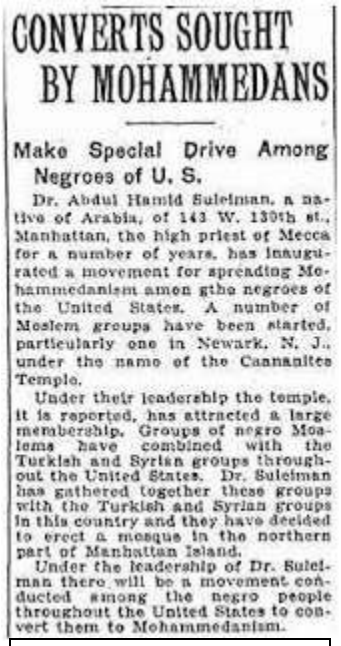
Corporation in the port of New Jersey. As a laborer in the port Drew would have come into contact with workers from different countries, as the corporation at its peak employed 25,000 people.[32]

The census record from January 1920 confirms Thomas Drew's residence at 181 Warren St., New Jersey. The census lists Drew as a "preacher" on "public streets," indicating that between September 1918 and January 1920, Drew had begun formulating some version of his religious movement.[33] It is unclear what specific religious affiliation Drew had at this time, since the only early record that has survived is the advertisement for "Prof. Drew, Egyptian Adept Student." Despite oral testimony that connects Drew to the Canaanite Temple, there is no further evidence that tangibly connects his early religious efforts to the Canaanite Temple. There is evidence on the advertisement for Prof. Drew that he was already combining Islam with Christianity, as he states on the card, "I am Moslem," and also indicates that he has "the divine ability" to interpret the Bible while also offering information about "the lost years of the life of Jesus."[34]

Research on Abdul Hamid Suleiman, an "Egyptian Muslim," reveals his organizing activities associated with the Canaanite Temple and its connections to African American Freemasonry. This information about Suleiman's activities and the Canaanite Temple suggest that Noble Drew Ali and his creation of Moorish Science may have been influenced by the work of Suleiman. Religious Scholar Patrick D. Bowen identified an article, "Negro Free Masons Incorporate," in *The New Brunswick Times* on 4 February 1910, which reported the incorporation of "Mecca Medina Temple of Ancient Free and Operative Masons."[35] In August 1922 Suleiman attended the African American Masonic

convention where he presented himself to Caesar R. Blake, Jr., the leader of the Ancient Egyptian Arabic Order Nobles of the Mystic Shrine (also referred to as the black Shriners) and insisted that the Shriners come under protection of the Mecca Medina Temple, what he referred to as the "true Shrine."[36]

These insights about Suleiman and his connection to the earlier forms of Masonic Islamic organizations further complicate the history of Noble Drew Ali and the creation of the Canaanite Temple in 1913. Both Mecca Medina and the Canaanite Temple may have been, as Bowen suggests, "one of the many African-American Masonic factions that had been springing up since 1894, inspired by the rhetoric of the black Shriner movement."[37] Drew Ali may have been involved in the formation of the Canaanite Temple, but it seems that the previously documented timeline of 1913 is highly unlikely. Moreover, it was not until 1920 that Drew formally associated himself as a preacher (as documented in the 1920 census). Although it is not impossible that Drew had been involved in shaping the Canaanite Temple, his presence has not been documented in any sources related to the organization.



CONVERTS SOUGHT BY MOHAMMEDANS

Make Special Drive Among Negroes of U. S.

Dr. Abdul Hamid Suleiman, a native of Arabia, of 143 W. 130th st., Manhattan, the high priest of Mecca for a number of years, has inaugurated a movement for spreading Mohammedanism amon gthe negroes of the United States. A number of Moslem groups have been started, particularly one in Newark, N. J., under the name of the Cananites Temple.

Under their leadership the temple, it is reported, has attracted a large membership. Groups of negro Moslems have combined with the Turkish and Syrian groups throughout the United States. Dr. Suleiman has gathered together these groups with the Turkish and Syrian groups in this country and they have decided to erect a mosque in the northern part of Manhattan Island.

Under the leadership of Dr. Suleiman there will be a movement conducted among the negro people throughout the United States to convert them to Mohammedanism.

Figure 1.2: Article discussing the early Canaanite Temple.

In an article from *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* on 15 July 1923 the "Cananites Temple" of Newark, New Jersey was attributed to Dr. Suleiman. Drew Ali's involvement with the Temple has been reported only in oral histories. While the spelling in this report does not match other historical documents on the Canaanite Temple, the Associated Press often printed typos, and spelling and punctuation errors. The article does not mention Drew Ali, only "Dr. Suleiman." Bowen cited the activities of the "Mecca Medina Temple" as early as 1910 and posited Suleiman's possible involvement with that group. *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* article states that this Suleiman was the leader of the "Cananites Temple," with other Moslem groups, and he was "the high priest of Mecca for a number of years." It also announced that "he has inaugurated a new movement."

While members of MSTA contend that Noble Drew Ali was the leader of the Canaanite Temple as early as 1913, the 1923 newspaper article introduced Dr. Sulieman as the leader and suggested that this was a newly formed movement. Yet, the article also indicates Suleiman was not the only one behind the Temple's organizing activities and makes reference to multiple Moslem groups organizing at the time. It states, "Under their leadership the temple, it is reported, has attracted a large membership." The use of the word "their" instead of "his" suggests that while Dr. Suleiman headed the Canaanite Temple in 1923, there were others involved in its development as well. Given Drew Ali's alleged affiliation with the Canaanite Temple earlier, this suggests that Suleiman may have taken over the group by 1923.

By 1924 Noble Drew Ali had no formal affiliation with the Canaanite Temple in the state of New Jersey. The Moorish Science Temple has made available a document indicating that the Canaanite Temple was established on 24 May 1924 by George Collins, W.J. Brown, Walter Crawford, Joseph A. Grant, Fred Mason, Willie J. Turner, and Samuel J. Dickerson. The document states that the purpose of the organization was "religious worship and teaching of religion, Moslem of Islan [Islam]," "the relief and support of such members thereof and such other persons as shall by reason of sickness, casualty, old age, or other cause be rendered unable to attend their usual occupations or calling to promote the interest of deceased members of said corporation, also to pay a death benefit according to the by-laws and constitution."[38] It also cited the "location of the principal office" as "#102 Morton Street, Newark, N.J., in the county of Essex and state of New Jersey" and named "the agent therein and in charge …is Jacob Friech." The

document also named the trustees for the corporation for the first year, the signers of original document: George Collins, Samuel Dixon, W. J. Brown, Walter Crawford, Joseph A. Grant, Willie J. Turner, and Fred Mason. Noble Drew Ali was not involved in any way. Therefore, the Canaanite Temple became an official corporate enterprise in New Jersey in late May 1924. It also reveals that within the corporation's first year, Drew Ali was not one of the named trustees, but neither was Abdul Hamid Sulieman, thus complicating connections to the Canaanite Temple.

Foundational Documents of MSTA

In the "Moorish Leader's Historical Message to America," Noble Drew Ali recounted the history of the MSTA, stating that "we organized as the Moorish Temple of Science in the year of 1925, and were legally incorporated as a civic organization under the laws of the state of Illinois, November 29, 1926."[39] Later, in May 1928, the name was changed to "Moorish Science Temple of America, in accordance with the legal requirements of the Secretary of the State of Illinois."[40] The initial aim of the organization according to the foundational document was "to uplift fallen humanity and teach those things necessary to make men and women become better citizens."[41] Yet, by 1928 the mission of the movement had decisively changed to place emphasis on its religious mission, "to propagate the faith and extend the learning and truth of the Great Prophet of Alli to America…and consecrate missionaries of the prophet and to establish the faith of Mohamed in America."[42] The second affidavit for the organization filed in Cook County in Illinois has figured prominently in MSTA's leaders' authority and legitimacy. This is evident in the multiple places that the document is cited and reprinted.

The founding documents of the MSTA are mentioned by Noble Drew Ali in the monthly publication, *Moorish Guide*, including the "Moorish Leader's Historical Message to America." More prominently, a version of the 1928 document is printed on the back of the "Koran Questions for Moorish Americans," a small pamphlet given to members of the movement (also referred to as the "101") to instruct them in MSTA beliefs and practices.

The 1928 affidavit of incorporation is central to explaining the dispute among the splinter groups in Moorish Science. In the 1940s these factional groups began filing papers of incorporation in states beyond Illinois, and utilized the MSTA name as well as some of the same language at incorporation.[43] The MSTA's 1928 affidavit has been especially significant in establishing the original authority of Chicago's Temple No. 1, which lost some of its power with the succession of C. Kirkman Bey. He re-established the MSTA as the Moorish Science Temple of America, Inc. and served as the "Supreme Grand Moderator and Advisor" of the group from 1929 to 1959.[44] Most of the information we have about Moorish Science has been produced by the C. Kirkman Bey factions of Moorish Science, including many of the documents deposited in the main MSTA archive at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in New York City. Therefore, the historical documents collected by Edward Mealy El and his descendents in Chicago shed new light on the formation of the MSTA.

MSTA and Home Rule in Cook County

Moorish Science's incorporation in Cook County, Illinois, is especially significant because it is one of the few counties in the state that has established "home rule." Home

rule in the case of Moorish Science grants the organization the right to govern its own affairs as long as these actions are in accordance with the state's constitution and general laws. Home rule adds some level of coordination between the state and local levels, while allowing the local organization to deal with its own affairs without state approval. This has been interpreted by followers of Moorish Science as an effort by Noble Drew Ali to create "a nation within a nation." In Moorish literature this has been interpreted as giving the MSTA a "Free National Standard (something established by the use of authority--our Prophet's authority) and cannot be controlled, influenced or changed by another nation."[45] The MSTA as a legally incorporated religious body in Cook County, therefore, had specific jurisdictional rights and gave the group's founders and those appointed afterward, authority, according to the general laws of the corporation.

Through the political authority granted to the "Grand Body," the organization's central leadership, in the 1928 filing with Cook County, the MSTA members and leaders continued to urge a program of unity under the corporate authority of the original Temple No. 1's leadership. The granting of charters since the time of the prophet has been one of the main ways MSTA leaders have tried to institutionalize the recognition of the main temple (Temple No. 1) and grant validity to the subsequent temples opening in various cities, counties, and states. According to current followers of Moorish Science, this allows them "to function under the jurisdiction of the Grand Major Temple in various states…with the granted authority of what was established by the Prophet Noble Drew Ali on 8/1/1928…as a religious corporation with branches throughout this nation."[46] The call for unity has been a consistent theme in Moorish Science from its inception. The

founding documents, including the constitution and by-laws, subsequent general laws and supreme laws, and supreme grand council, were created under the authority of the MSTA in Chicago and assisted in maintaining its political and religious authority. By 18 October 1928 Noble Drew Ali solidified his leadership by assigning members to the Supreme Grand Council and creating the supreme laws.

The Divine Constitution and By-Laws

On 31 August 1927, MSTA members travelled to the future site of their temple on the corner of 37th and Federal Street in Chicago. They congregated together to celebrate the success of their movement which nine months earlier and been officially incorporated in the state of Illinois. Over one hundred self-proclaimed "Moorish American citizens" of the United States posed for a photograph that documented their allegiance to the "Holy Temple" which sought to "uplift fallen humanity" by teaching their people "their nationality and the Divine creed that they may know that they are a part and a partial of this said government, and know that they are not Negroes, Colored Folks, Black People or Ethiopians."[47] A few months following their pilgrimage to the corner of 37th and Federal Street, the temple's "Divine Constitution and Laws" were drafted. The constitution listed the home office, three blocks east of the future site of the temple, at 3140 Indiana Ave, and named Noble Drew Ali as the founder of the group. In the constitution there were seven articles which provided followers with the basic guidelines and goals of the movement. In addition, there was the "Moorish American Prayer." The prayer called out to Allah and Noble Drew Ali for divine guidance. "Allah the Father of the universe, the Father of Love, Truth, Peace, Freedom and Justice. Allah is my

protector, my guide and my salvation by night and by day thru his Holy Prophet Drew Ali. Amen."

The Moorish American prayer provided its followers with a revised version of the well known Bible verse, Psalm 27:1, which stated, "The Lord is my light and my salvation-so why should I fear? The Lord is my fortress, protecting me from danger, so why should I tremble?"[48] Through this prayer adherents to Moorish Science could worship the divine in a way that was both familiar and new. By using the Arabic name of God, Allah, and affirming that he was the same father of the universe, MSTA initiates were able to convert their Christian religious ideas into the new Islamic belief system. Through this conversion Noble Drew Ali and the Moorish Science movement sought to free the followers from the history of U.S. slavery and racial discrimination. By affirming their "free national name," Moorish American, the members made themselves anew. Drew Ali assured his followers that the adoption of this new nationality would enable them to be fully accepted as American citizens.

The laws included in the constitution ranged from general instructions to the leadership and members, to specific details about the purpose of Moorish Science. "Act one" described the power of the Grand Sheik and the chairman of the Temple "to make law and enforce laws with the assistance of the Prophet and the Grand Body." The leaders needed to live according to the five principles: "Love, Truth, Peace, Freedom, and Justice." The second act discussed the religious services in the Temple, stating that Friday is the Holy Day of Moorish Science and that all of the meetings are to be opened and closed "according to the circle seven and Love, Truth, Peace, Freedom, and Justice."

Act three reaffirmed the five principles, insisting that all members proclaim and practice them. In this third act there was also a provision that no member should falsely accuse or put in danger their brother or sister. Act four told members to abide by the divine laws and the laws of the government, "because by being a Moorish American you are a part and a partial of the government, and must live life accordingly." The emphasis on upright citizenship was reinforced in the fifth act which stated: "This organization of the Moorish Holy Temple of Science is not to cause any confusion or to overthrow the laws and constitution of the said government, but to obey hereby."[49] It is clear from the first five acts of the divine constitution that Moorish Science was developed in accordance with the laws of the United States and was not intended to challenge them.

The last two laws were to instruct members of Moorish Science in the obligations, responsibilities, and duties of their new nationality. The members' identity as "Moorish Americans" was emphasized in act six. The document explained the need to teach people their nationality because:

> They are not Negroes, Colored Folks, Black People, or Ethiopians, because these names were given to slaves by slave holders in 1779 and lasted until 1865 during the time of slavery, but this is a new era of time now, and all men now must proclaim their free national name to be recognized by the government in which they live…[50]

Through the acknowledgement of Moorish nationality, the members were able to distance themselves from the institution of U.S. slavery. One of the ways members of Moorish Science were able to reclaim their African heritage was by discarding the slave past. Noble Drew Ali was sent by Allah to teach his people their true nationality and to redeem them from their sinful ways. This was only possible by teaching them their true history

and connection to Allah. The last line of the act taught followers that they were descendants of the ancient Moabites who, according to Ali, "inhabited the North Western and South Western shores of Africa."[51] The connection to the past as Moabites who settled on African shores placed the followers in Africa, free from U.S. slavery, and one that included a biblical reference.

The seventh and final act of the "Divine Constitution and Laws" declared that all members must perform the prescribed duties of Moorish Science. The religious services of MSTA were called "meetings." All members were required to arrive at their meetings promptly, pay their dues, and engage in all of the necessary actions required of "faithful" Moors. For men and women, their roles were described through their duties as husbands and wives. Husbands must provide for their wives and children, while women must care for their children and homes and obey their husbands. Sons and daughters were also specifically addressed and told to be obedient to their parents, "be industrious and become a part of the uplifting of fallen humanity."[52] This most likely meant that they were also to join the MSTA and adhere to its laws. All Moorish Americans were instructed to maintain pure hearts and minds filled with love and to keep their bodies clean. These acts were referred to as the "Divine Covenant" from the "Holy Prophet Noble Drew Ali, thru guidance of his Father God Allah."[53] The divine constitution not only acted as a covenant with the prophet and Allah, but also foreshadowed the teachings in the *Circle Seven Koran*, the sacred text of the movement.

Through these documents, members of MSTA were given clear guidelines and expectations of their obligations and responsibilities as members. The divine constitution

along with the *Circle Seven Koran* provided the followers with information they could take home and use in study groups to better understand MSTA theology. As followers of Moorish Science, there was a strong emphasis on personal behavior and adherence to MSTA laws and principles. Once MSTA members understood their true history and the divine creed, it was their obligation not only to themselves, but to others in their communities, to conduct themselves with the utmost integrity and respect. Indeed, the subsequent creation of the Supreme Grand Council and new supreme laws functioned to push forward the MSTA agenda to "uplift fallen humanity" and ensure that members were acting in accordance with the divine plan put into place by Noble Drew Ali. "Love for humanity" was the solution that would help to "uplift fallen humanity." Drew Ali declared that "humanity must be lifted from the unwholesome depths of poverty, misery and suffering and placed on the solid rock of salvation."[54] The MSTA was Drew Ali's way of helping his people out of these conditions and bringing them to a higher state of being.

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[1] Gomez, *Black Crescent: The Experience and Legacy of African Muslims in the Americas* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 204-204; Peter Lamborn Wilson, *Sacred Drift: Essays on the Margins of Islam* (San Francisco: City Light Books, 1993), 15-16; Richard Brent Turner, *Islam in the African American Experience* (1997; repr., Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 90-91.
[2] Wilson, *Sacred Drift,* 15.
[3] Gomez, *Black Crescent,* 204-204; Wilson, *Sacred Drift,* 15-16; Turner, *Islam in the African American Experience*, 90-91.
[4] Gomez, *Black Crescent,* 215.
[5] Susan Nance, "Mystery of the Moorish Science Temple: Southern Blacks and American Alternative Spirituality in 1920s Chicago," *Religion and American Culture,* Vol. 12, No. 2 (Summer, 2002): 125.
[6] Arthur Huff Fauset, *Black Gods of the Metropolis: Negro Religious Cults of the Urban North* (1944; repr., Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 41.
[7] Gomez, *Black Crescent,* 206.
[8]Edward E. Curtis, "Debating the Origins of the Moorish Science Temple," in *The New Black Gods: Arthur Huff Fauset and the Study of African American Religions* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2009), 71.
[9] Bro. R. Love El, compiler, *Oral Statements and Prophesies of Prophet Noble Drew Ali, Founder of The Moorish Science Temple of America* (Moorish Science Temple of America, 1987, registered 1988), 3.

[10] W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Dover Thrift Editions, 1994), 3.
[11] Gomez, *Black Crescent,* 144.
[12] Richard Brent Turner, *Islam and African Americans*, (New York Public Library and Proquest Information and Learning Company: electronic volume, 2006), 1.
[13] Ala Alryyes, ed., translated with an introduction, *A Muslim American Slave: The Life of Omar Ibn Said* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2011), 85.
[14] Richard Brent Turner, "What Shall We Call Him? Islam and African American Identity," in *The Journal of Religious Thought* (Summer/Fall, Vol. 51, No. 1): 25.
[15] Milton C. Sernett, *Bound for the Promised Land: African American Religion and the Great Migration* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997).
[16] St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton, *Black Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life in a Northern City* (1945; repr., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 58.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Noble Drew Ali, *The Holy Koran of the Moorish Science Temple of America: Circle Seven* (MSTA, 1928), front cover.
[19] Sernett, *Bound for the Promised Land*, 3.
[20] Hans A Baer and Merrill Singer, "Religious Diversification during the Era of Advanced Industrial Capitalism," in *African American Religious Thought: An Anthology*, ed. Cornel West and Eddie S. Glaude (Westminster: John Knox Press, 2003), 495.
[21] Ira Katznelson, *Black Men, White Cities: race, Politics, and Migration in the United States, 1900-1930 and Britain, 1948-68* (London: Institute of Race Relations by Oxford University Press, 1973), 45.
[22] Wilson Jeremiah Moses, "Chosen People of the Metropolis: Black Muslims, Black Jews, and Others," in *African American Religious Anthology*, ed. Cornel West and Eddie S. Glaude (Westminster: John Knox Press, 2003), 534-535.
[23] Nance, "Mystery of the Moorish Science Temple," 146.
[24] Fauset, *Black Gods of the Metropolis*, 41.
[25] Gomez, *Black Crescent,* 236.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Richard Brent Turner, "Edward Wilmot Blyden and Pan-Africanism: The Ideological Roots of Islam and Black Nationalism in the United States," in *Muslim World*, Vol. 87 (No. 2, April 1997): 169.
[29] Gomez, *Black Crescent,* 215. Gomez in this citation depends on the scholarship of Wilson's *Sacred Drift.*
[30] "Prof. Drew, Egyptian Adept Student," advertisement, unknown source and date. This image was made available by David Bailey El, Supreme Grand Sheik of the MSTA, Chicago Temple No. 1, but can also be found online through an internet search: moorishsociety.com.
[31] Thomas Drew, Draft Registration Card, September 12, 1918. Accessed through ancestry.com; December 12, 2013.
[32] For information about the Submarine Boat Company see: http://www.shipbuildinghistory.com/history/shipyards/4emergencylarge/wwone/submarine.htm; accessed August 5, 2014.
[33] Thomas Drew, *Fourteenth Census of the United States: 1920 Population*, line 35, State of New Jersey, Essex County, Newark, enumerated on January 6, 1920; accessed through ancestry.com; December 12, 2013.
[34] "Prof. Drew, Egyptian Adept Student," advertisement, unknown source and date. This image was made available by David Bailey El, Supreme Grand Sheik of the MSTA, Chicago Temple No. 1, but can also be found online through an internet search: moorishsociety.com.
[35] See Patrick D. Bowen, "Abdul Hamid Suleiman and the Origins of the Moorish Science Temple," *Journal of Race, Ethnicity, and Religion,* Vol. 2, Issue 13, (September 2011): 7-11.
[36] Ibid, 5.
[37] Ibid, 10.

[38] See incorporation document of Canaanite Temple, 24 May 1924; this document was made available by David Bailey El through a link on a Facebook page from the MSTA. The image is imprinted with MSTA-New Orleans.
[39] Noble Drew Ali, "Moorish Leader's Historical Message to America," *Moorish Literature* (Chicago: Moorish Science Temple of America, Inc., no date), 18.
[40] Ibid.
[41] "Affidavit of legal incorporation of the Moorish Holy Temple of Science," November 29, 1926; made available by David Bailey El, Supreme Grand Sheik of the MSTA, Chicago Temple No. 1.
[42] Cited from the "Affidavit of legal incorporation of the Moorish Science Temple of America"; July 20, 1928. The spelling of Drew Ali's name in the affidavit may seem like a misspelling, but given the changing nature of Drew Ali from Professor Drew during his time in Newark, NJ to Drew Alin on the first affidavit of incorporation filed in 1926, to Drew Alli on the 1928 version, it seems that Drew Ali's identity was in constant flux.
[43] An example of this is found in the FBI files for the Moorish Science Temple of America, part 3 of 31, http://vault.fbi.gov/Moorish%20Science%20Temple%20of%20America/Moorish%20Science%20Temple%20of%20America%20Part%203%20of%2031/view (accessed December 12, 2013). This document states that "On September 9, 1942, Informant ___ advised that this organization was incorporated on March 17, 1940, at which time they set forth the following purposes: 1. To teach the 'Koran' of Mohammed. 2. To teach, preach, and live the religion of Islam; to propagate the faith of Islam and extend its learnings and also the learnings of the prophet NOBLE DREW ALI. 3. To appoint and consecrate missionaries to the prophet and to establish the faith of Mohammed in American and to confor m to the Moslem faith by annexing the descendents names of ALI, El, BEY."
[44] The Moorish Science Temple of America, Inc., is the one that dates his authority to 1929, while other sources make it clear that this authority was not as simple as a direct transfer of power to C. Kirkman Bey upon the death of Noble Drew Ali in July of 1929. See their website: http://www.moorishsciencetempleofamericainc.com/PastOfficials.html for more information from the group about their leader. The *Chicago Defender* in 1930 cited Edward Mealy El, Drew Ali's Grand Shiek, as the one who was running operations of the temple after Ali's death; see, "Moors' Trial 'Blows Up': Sick Juror and Allah Cause the Three Moors to Get New Hearing; Sick Juror Causes Mistrial," *Chicago Defender,* February 15, 1930.
[45] David Bailey El, "You Are Now Watching: The Moorish Science Temple of America is not a 501(c)3," from internal literature of MSTA.
[46] Quote is from an internal email communication between contemporary members of the Moorish Science Temple of America, February 12, 2013.
[47] Act 6, "Divine Constitution and Laws," first printed sometime in October or November of 1927.
[48] Psalm 27:1, New Living Translation.
[49] Noble Drew Ali, "Divine Constitution and Laws," private collection.
[50] Act 6, "Divine Constitution and Laws."
[51] Ibid; Noble Drew Ali, *The Holy Koran of the Moorish Science Temple of America: Circle Seven Koran* expanded on this historical connection. Chapter XLV: "The Divine Origin of the Asiatic Nations," explained that the Moorish were the ancient Moabites and founders of Mecca. Chapter XLVII: "Egypt, the Capital Empire of the Dominion of Africa," stated "the inhabitants of Africa are the descendants of the ancient Canaanites from the land of Canaan. Old man Cush and his family are the first inhabitants of Africa who came from the land of Canaan. His father Ham and his family were second. Then came the word Ethiopia, which means the demarcation line of the dominion of Amexem, the first true and divine name o-f Africa. The dividing of the land between the father and the son…The Moabites from the land of Moab who received permission from the Pharoahs of Egypt to settle and inhabit North-West Africa; they were the founders and are the true possessors of the present Moroccan Empire. With their Canaanite, Hittite, and Amorite brethren who sojourned from the land of Canaan seeking new homes."
[52] Noble Drew Ali, "Divine Constitutions and Laws, Act 7"
[53] Ibid.

[54] Noble Drew Ali, "Savior of Humanity," *Moorish Literature* (Chicago: Moorish Science Temple of America, Inc., no date), 9.

"One God, One Aim, One Destiny": Garveyism and the Formation of African American Islam

In 1909 after completing two years of education at Alcorn College, in Mississippi, Edward Mealy, future Supreme Grand Sheik of the Moorish Science Temple of America (MSTA), made his way north to Chicago, Illinois. Once in the city Mealy joined the famous Olivet Baptist Church, pursuing his desire for church service as an active participant in the congregation and sparking his interest in the plight of his fellow African American migrants in the city. The black advancement sermons of Rev. Lacey Cook Williams undoubtedly influenced Mealy's "race consciousness" because Rev. Williams famously advocated the responsibility of the church in assimilating rural migrants into "modern city life."[1] By the end of World War I, Mealy had expressed his interest in the "Cause Afric," by joining Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) in Chicago.[2] The training he had received at Alcorn College and through his experiences at Olivet made Mealy ripe for Garveyism. It was in the UNIA that Mealy, like many other future Moslems, was exposed to the transformative power of Islam and a political doctrine firmly committed to the redemption of Africa from European colonialism.[3]

Marcus Garvey's UNIA planted itself on American soil in 1917 in the center of Harlem in New York City and served as the seedbed for a number of African American movements for self-determination in the first half of the twentieth century. Among these various movements were a number of religious organizations, including the Moorish Science Temple of America, founded by Noble Drew Ali in 1925. The UNIA itself was

imbued with rich religious symbolism and language, yet beyond its endorsement of the African Orthodox Church, headed by George Alexander McGuire, Garvey did not advocate for any specific religion. Instead, the UNIA was a fertile ground for flexible interpretations of race, history, and religion, resulting in a multitude of black social organizations inspired by Garveyism. Indeed, the diversity of religious movements that flowed out of Garveyism demonstrates the fluidity of religious exchange present in the movement. Despite this rich and diverse cultural landscape, we know very little about the Islamic presence among the rank-and-file Garveyites. In an attempt to reconstruct the history of early Islamic organizing activities among African Americans, I argue that Garveyism served as a significant conduit in the organization of African American Islamic movements of the early twentieth century. The Islamic organizations that were ultimately inspired by Garveyism, such as the Moorish Science Temple of America in the 1920s, were inherently imbued with race consciousness, and in the case of Moorish Science, the leadership sought to re-create racial meaning through a link to both Islam and Garveyism.

God and Garveyism

Garvey was influenced greatly in his youth by Christianity which undeniably affected his personal religious beliefs throughout his lifetime.[4] Garvey's introduction to Methodism as boy was tainted by his experience with white racism while in his teens when a close friend of Garvey's and the daughter of a white Methodist preacher was sent away to Europe and instructed to sever all contacts with Garvey. This experience taught Garvey an early lesson about the way the world worked, even among those of the cloth.

Despite this exposure to the hypocrisy in the racial distinctions practiced by many white some Christians, Garvey remained a steadfast believer in Christianity and continued to establish friendships with whites. As a young man Garvey converted to Roman Catholicism, yet he maintained political relations with a number of religious leaders of all denominations and faiths. Perhaps because of Garvey's own conversion to Catholicism and experiences with Methodism, his interpretation of faith and spirituality was fluid and had a discernible impact on his political thought and ideologies. Indeed, one of the most successful aspects of Garvey's vision for a united Africa was his reliance on biblical language, symbolism, and the establishment of religiously-styled UNIA meetings and programs. Garvey's experiences with politically-oriented publishing and periodicals, including the development of a number of his own newspapers, coupled with his religious background, prepared Garvey to access what historian Richard Brent Turner referred to as, "the tremendous religiosity of the black masses and thus he connected the redemption of Africa with the mystical rebirth of the human race."[5] This focus on the need for the unification not only of scattered bodies, but also the mind and spirit of people of African descent, and this allowed Garvey to utilize familiar religious language to convey a new faith. Garveyism looked beyond the religious denominations or variations in faith, and spoke to Christian, Muslim, and Jew alike, especially faith in the universal brotherhood of man. At the same time, it was Garvey's time spent in Europe that helped him sharpen his vision and gave him the language needed to unite those of African descent scattered across the globe.

In 1912, soon after returning to Jamaica from working and travelling throughout Central America, one thing became clear to Garvey: the need for unification and the improvement in the conditions for people of African descent. Garvey then decided to travel in late June and early July 1913 to London, the imperial metropolis, where his younger sister Indiana was employed as a governess for the daughters of an influential Roman Catholic family.[6] While in London, Garvey met and worked for Dúse Mohammad Ali, an Egyptian native and editor of *The African Times and Orient Review*, a Pan-African journal. Their acquaintance lasted for over two decades.

While working on *The African Times and Orient Review*, Garvey published an article in the October 1913 issue entitled, "The British West Indies in the Mirror of Civilization: History Making by Colonial Negroes." In this article Garvey foreshadowed his future place as the "Black Moses" of his people by predicting the liberation of Jamaica from the British crown:

> As one who knows the people well, I make no apology for prophesying that there will soon be a turning point in the history of the West Indies; and that the people who inhabit that portion of the Western Hemisphere will be the instruments of uniting a scattered race who, before the close of many centuries, will found an Empire on which the sun shall shine as ceaselessly as it shines on the Empire of the North to-day.[7]

Garvey would eventually gain a great number of followers and would see himself as the rightful ruler of a "United Africa." In the final paragraph of this essay Garvey revealed an inchoate version of his developing ideology and predicted "as surely as there is an evolution in the natural growth of man and nations, so surely will there be a change in the history of these subjected regions."[8] Subsequently Garvey travelled throughout Europe

making the connections that would be needed to forge unity among the people of African descent.

While in Europe, Garvey came in contact with the Brotherhood Movement, also known as Pleasant Sunday Afternoon, an organization that emerged in Great Britain in 1875 among Anglican and Non-Conformist men. It quickly spread to Ireland, Scotland, and Wales and within forty years had amassed a membership of approximately 750,000. Through this organization, men of all social classes applied Christian precepts to the problems of child labor, pensions, labor conditions, housing, and other social issues. The sense of fraternity found in the Brotherhood Movement undoubtedly had an impact on Garvey who was in Europe at its height. Historian Robert Hill argued that, "From the inception of the UNIA Garvey conscripted the concept of universal brotherhood at the same time that he rescripted it to provide the rationale behind the goal of black self-organization and ultimately, the rationale of black self-determination."[9] It seems that in addition to Garvey's relationship with religion in his early years, his time in Europe reinforced his faith in the idea of brotherhood and the possibility of the "social gospel" uniting men across religious and class divisions. Garvey would use the lessons he learned while in Europe to his advantage. Robert Hill observed,

> It was under the banner of universal brotherhood that the UNIA entered the Jamaican public sphere in 1914. In preaching the doctrine of brotherhood, Garvey was able to demonstrate that he adhered to the civic virtues essential to the preservation of the colonial regime, namely, the gospel of imperial benevolence and social cohesion and control within the colony. Further, the doctrine of brotherhood confirmed Garvey's claim to Christian piety.

Through the use of Christian symbolism and notions of respectability Garvey was able to promote his new organization. It was important within the colonial context and for the success of Garvey's venture, that he act according to the appropriate social and religious norms. This was especially true in his adherence to a Christian ethos. Moreover, the use of Christian concepts and language in the UNIA facilitated the growth of Garveyism among people of African descent.

Garvey also developed relationships with politically influential people who were essential to his success. Among many of Garvey's early supporters were a host of religious leaders and politicians. In his autobiography Garvey attested to the powerful connections he made, noting that he "succeeded to a great extent in establishing the association in Jamaica with the assistance of a Catholic Bishop, the Governor, Sir John Pringle, the Rev. William Graham, a Scottish clergyman, and several other white friends."[10] His time in Europe at the advent of World War I and especially his exposure to the Brotherhood Movement, taught Garvey that to be successful he would need to promote collaboration and fraternity among men and women. This flexibility and open-mindedness on the part of Garvey is especially apparent in the theological perspective. The reliance on Christian symbolism, traditions, and biblical narrative gave Garvey the aura of a religious prophet. At the same time, Garvey refused to allow the religious diversity among his followers stand in the way of his vision of a united Africa. Indeed, some scholars have argued that Garvey could be considered as a theologian, and through the UNIA he created a "civil religion." After all, Garvey's desire to "draw into one united

whole the four hundred million Negroes of the world" relied heavily on his understanding of his people's spirituality. [11]

Garveyism: Universal Religion for the African Diaspora

Garveyism became the religious ethos promoted through the UNIA. A speech by Rev. James David Brooks in the summer of 1920 captured this understanding. Before an excited group that sat eagerly in anticipation of the "great convention" planned for the following Sunday in New York City, Rev. Brooks, interpreted the meaning of Garveyism. He told the crowd, "Garveyism is the spirit of self-reliance…depending upon the power that God has given you, not the power of somebody else…Garveyism, further, is for the freedom of Africa."[12] A direct connection was made between self-reliance and the redemption of Africa. Moreover, this emphasis on the authority of the divine in Garveyism was a powerful force facilitating the conversion of millions to Garvey's cause. Garvey's reliance on religious zeal in advancing his movement resulted in frequent reference to him by both friends and enemies as the "Black Moses."[13]

The Old Testament story of Moses' great victory for God's "Chosen People" over oppression and enslavement in Egypt and their settlement in Canaan became a powerful story for creating a sense of nationhood among African Americans beginning in the nineteenth century.[14] The renewed emphasis on this biblical event, with Garvey serving as the prophetic leader, the Black Moses, expressed the hopes and aims of African Americans in the early twentieth century. The emphasis on the redemption of Africa placed Garvey as the leader sent by God to end European colonialism and to establish a new nation for people of African descent scattered across the globe.

On a Sunday evening in August 1920, UNIA member from California, Rev. Dr. John Dawson Gordon, offered a new interpretation of Jesus Christ at a meeting of Garveyites at Liberty Hall in New York City. Rev. Gordon defended their deliverer from oppression, Marcus Garvey, the Black Moses. "Don't go back on Jesus Christ, but the present kind of Christianity should be rejected," he argued, "so I want all of us to be imbued with such sentiments as we have had to-night from this Moses of our race, who is going to inspire us with true manhood through his entire exertion and help this race to go on to success."[15] Rev. Gordon called for a new understanding of Jesus, one that still honored the savior but was divorced from the white racist religious beliefs and practices in the United States. As will be discussed in this essay in the mid-1920s Noble Drew Ali preached that Garvey was more than the Black Moses, he was "John the Baptist" whose divine mission was not to lead his people out of captivity and into the "Promised Land," but rather to prepare them to become followers of the new messiah, Prophet Noble Drew Ali.

This religiously symbolic statement by Ali may have been more important than previously recognized. As Garveyism began to spread, it transformed the way that some colonized people understood their position in the world. East Indian, Ganesh Rao, in a February 1922 letter to the editor of *The Negro World*, observed that "Garveyism is a passion—a new religion that is filling the souls, and spreading faster and winning new converts. The tenet, though simple, is fervently voiced and re-echoed, 'One God, One Aim, One Destiny.'"[16] The high level of spiritual fervor associated with Garveyism attracted many religious leaders, such as Revs. Brooks and Gordon, because of the

combination of the sacred and secular appeal of the UNIA, which were shaped by Garvey's personal experiences and travels in Central America, the Caribbean, and Europe. If anything, Garvey acted as a master craftsman tailoring his visions of the redemption of Africa to the cultural traditions and customs of communities throughout the African Diaspora. Historian Randall Burkett pointed out,

> The symbols, rituals, and beliefs which constituted the inchoate Black civil religion were, of course, not new to Garvey's audience; indeed, had they been new they would not have found a responsive hearing. They rather grew out of and built upon a shared experience that was interpreted in the light of a transcendent goal: the uplift of the Negro race and the Redemption of Africa.[17]

Burkett's research revealed that up to 250 clergymen were active at some point in the UNIA. These included clergy men from in two of the most powerful black denominations, the National Baptist Convention and the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church. But there were others from the AME Zion, Christian Methodist Episcopal, Protestant Episcopal, Black Jews, Congregational, and Presbyterian churches; and some Holiness and Pentecostal congregations.[18]The religious diversity among Garveyites demonstrated that the UNIA was an organization that welcomed black people of all religious backgrounds.

For many Garveyites, especially those in the South, the religious overtones of Garveyism and the focus on the redemption of Africa were extremely important, even though most never intended to emigrate to Africa. Rather, they saw the redemption of Africa as something they were responsible for through the use of their "God-given talents." For most Garveyites this meant advancing themselves to the best economic position possible and remaining a respectable member of the UNIA. Interpretations of

Garveyism remained flexible and adaptable for the people who took them up and breathed life into them. This was especially true of the emerging of Islamic groups associated with Garveyism.[19]

Mohammedanism: The True Faith for Garveyites

The concern over the spiritual well-being of Garveyites was discussed at the UNIA's 1922 convention. An entire session was dedicated to the "Future Religious Faith and Belief of the Negro." According to the accounts, the discussion was "lively and spirited," and at one point, "several suggested that…the Mohammedan religion was the religion of three-fourths of the people of the Negro race of the world," and therefore should be considered an important religious alternative to Christianity, declaring that there were more righteous people found among "Mohammedans than among professed Christians."[20] The suggestion that Islam was the "true faith" of the majority of black people around the world helps to explain the expansion of Islamic organizations tangentially related to the UNIA. This meant that for the sake of unity it was "very unwise to legislate in the matter of religion…."[21] The delegates were instructed to use as they wished the information they obtained at this session.

At the same time, Garveyites may have had exposure to Islam from the works by Pan-Africanists such as Edward Wilmot Blyden and Duse Mohamed Ali who were sympathetic to Islam and influential on Garvey. In 1887 Blyden published *Christianity, Islam, and the Negro Race*, a compilation of speeches, articles, and reviews. The first chapter, "Mohammedanism and the Negro Race," declared that Islam among Africans was quite dignified and respectable. Blyden was also an advocate of Pan-Africanism,

arguing that Africans on both sides of the Atlantic needed to unify.[22] These ideas were later echoed in the ideologies of Garvey and Noble Drew Ali. Duse Mohamed Ali was influential in disseminating ideas about Pan-Africanism and Islam. Through *The African Times and Orient Review* (ATOR), African Americans learned about events in Africa, Europe, and Asia. The journal began circulation in 1912 and by 1917 had established offices in New York and Chicago through *The Chicago Gazette* and *The Champion Magazine* respectively. ATOR also had agents in Yonkers, New York; Wilmington, North Carolina; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; and Los Angeles, California.[23] This allowed to the dissemination of Islamic and Pan-African ideas in African American communities across the United States.

Duse Ali remained an important figure whose ideas about Islam and Africa remained influential well into the twentieth century. As early as 1912 Duse Ali advocated the unification of Africa and Asia, a theme that would get picked up by Noble Drew Ali. Duse Mohamed Ali warned,

> Europe stretches out her hands on every side to squeeze the darker races to her advantage, because she knows the people of Africa and the people of Asia to be divided. Her aim has been to promote division. It therefore [behooves] you, men of Asia, men of Africa, to join yourselves in one common bond of lasting friendship.[24]

After ATOR ceased publication in 1918, Duse Ali used his connections to African American journalist John Edward Bruce and Marcus Garvey to work as the international affairs guest editor of *The Negro World.* While we know little about Duse Ali's other activities during his time in the United States, we do know that by 1926 he had set up the

Universal Islamic Society in Detroit, Michigan, followed by the America-Asia Society in 1927.[25]

Possibly inspired by Duse Ali, Noble Drew Ali's program for MSTA included a revising of the historical identity of African Americans. According to Drew Ali, African Americans were not simply descendants of Africa, but were also members of one large "Asiatic" family that had historical roots dating back to the creation of mankind. In the *Koran Questions for Moorish Americans*, a study guide of Moorish Science doctrine, Drew Ali asserted that Adam and Eve were "the mothers and fathers of the human family, Asiatics and Moslems."[26] The couple went into Asia and the modern name given to their children was indeed, Asiatics. In addition to the link between Asiatic identities that were traced back to the dawn of humankind, Drew Ali asserted that those who guarded the "Holy City of Mecca today" were "Angels" named Asiatics.[27] Drew Ali's creation of a new racial designation for his followers as "Moorish Americans" meant that his believers were not Negroes, but were part of a "holy family" connected to Adam and Eve as well as modern Islam. Moorish Americans were thus members of a world-wide Asiatic group and instead of insisting that the peoples of Asia and Africa unite, Drew Ali argued that they were one in the same. In his "Plea to the Nation," Drew Ali insisted that "all loyal, faithful Moors, members and the American citizens to help… [in] uplifting fallen humanity among the Asiatic race and nation."[28] It is clear that Drew Ali, in attempt to better the conditions of African Americans in the United States, used a combination of ideas about race, nation, and religion to construct a viable identity to offset the disparaging images prevalent in American society.

Marcus Garvey also created the UNIA as a response to what he saw as global racial discrimination against people of African descent. Within this organization the members created their own unique responses to white racism and this included syncretizing a number of religious and cultural identities. Arnold J. Ford, a prominent Garveyite, exhibited some of this creative fusion in his religious and musical productions. As the musical director of the UNIA and later as a leader in the "Black Israelite" movement in Harlem, Ford was responsible for synthesizing various religious traditions in an attempt to fortify racial harmony. One way he did this was by using Islamic language in his musical productions. According to Richard Brent Turner, "Arnold Josiah Ford…utilized the symbols of Islam in several of his musical compositions for the organization. 'Allah-Hu-Akbar' was the title of one of his hymns."[29] In other hymns Ford made references to the divine as Allah. For example, in one line he connected Allah to the mission of the UNIA stating, "in that most sacred Name Allah—one God, one Aim, one Destiny"; he is "Father of all creation, *Allah* Omnipotent, Supreme o'er every Nation, God Bless our President."[30] The simultaneous reference to Allah and God in the titles and lyrics of the hymns demonstrates the Islamic representations in Garveyism. This is significant, especially when we consider the possible effects this religious language had on Garveyites singing Ford's lyrics.

The presentation of God through the Arabic language is one of the important threads that connected Garveyism to the development of African American Islamic organizations. Ford's biblical stories contained Islamic references to the divine creating a new message for Garveyites. For example one of the lines in a hymn referred to the Old

Testament story of Cain and Abel. "From murd'rous Cain whose vengeful mood, A doctrine curs'd preferr'ed, to spill or drink his brother's blood, When Love is in *Allah's* word."[31] Religious syncretism in Ford's hymns for the UNIA signals that the membership was receptive to these ideas. UNIA members chose various hymns to open and close their meetings, therefore, it is not difficult to understand why future leaders such as Noble Drew Ali would replicate these hybrid representations of the divine and why some of their followers would be receptive to it.

In the post-World War I era the UNIA was expanding and becoming a global movement. By 27 June 1919 Garvey had officially incorporated the Black Star Line (BSL) as a commercial shipping venture to develop trade between African Americans and Africans. However, this great feat would eventually lead to Garvey's downfall and greatly weaken the UNIA in the United States. From 1919 to 1922 Garvey focused significant UNIA resources on the development of the shipping operation; but this unfortunately put Garvey in an increasingly vulnerable position. On 12 January 1922 Garvey was indicted on trumped up charges of mail fraud related to solicitations on behalf of the BSL among the UNIA membership. The political, financial, and legal trouble Garvey encountered from federal officials had a detrimental effect on his ability to lead the UNIA in the United States.[32]

With the great success of Garvey among African Americans and the expansion of the UNIA globally, Garvey soon came under attack not just from the U.S. government, but also from other African American leaders in the United States. In an attempt to undermine Marcus Garvey and his all-black campaigns for black advancement, several

integrationist leaders unified in a "Marcus Garvey Must Go" campaign. According to historian Tony Martin, the campaign was "a temporary alliance of convenience between black socialists, represented principally by A. Philip Randolph and Chandler Owen, some black Urban League officials, the NAACP, and miscellaneous black integrationists."[33] Many of the leaders of the campaign had previously disagreed with Garvey on a number of issues. For example, the editor of the *Chicago Defender,* Robert S. Abbott as early as 1919 published a series of articles criticizing Garvey and his activities. The series of articles led to a libel suit filed by Garvey against Abbott. The African American leaders' campaign against Garvey helped to weaken Garvey's reputation in the United States. In a trial notable for its bias against the black defendant, Garvey was found guilty of mail fraud, was imprisoned, and eventually deported in November 1927. Once imprisoned and then deported, the political vacuum created space for a number of other leaders such as Noble Drew Ali to step in.[34]

It is important to note that by the mid-1920s while Garvey's influence in the United States was diminished, his ideas, ideology, and movement continued to live on through UNIA members. There is little doubt that Noble Drew Ali was attuned to the teachings of Garvey and very likely read *The Negro World,* the UNIA's weekly newspaper. The paper, first published in 1918, rose to prominence and eventually gained a weekly readership of 200,000. Between 1920 and 1927 the editorial staff and contributors were some of the most renowned writers and intellectuals of the era, including historian William H. Ferris, Harlem intellectual Hubert H. Harrsion, journalist Thomas T. Fortune, and many others. As was common in that period, *The Negro World*

routinely re-printed articles of interest to the African American community first published in other newspapers such as *The New York Herald* and the *New York Times.* This talented staff and material printed from diverse news sources informed readers about a wide range of topics.[35]

Garveyite Austin Evan Bridgman dedicated a poem to Marcus Garvey and it was published in the *The Negro World,* on 13 January 1923. The poem not only addressed the significance of Garvey's recent legal troubles, it also emphasized the presence of Islam among his followers. The poem offered a good will message to Garvey through a prayer to Allah.

I pray the prayer that the Easterners do,
May the peace of Allah abide with you;
Wherever you stay, wherever you go,
May the beautiful palms of Allah grow.
Through days of labor and nights of rest,
The love of Allah make you blest;
So I touch my heart as the Easterners do,
May the peace of Allah abide with you.
May the giver of Gifts give unto you,
That which is good and that which is true;
The will to help and the courage to do,
A heart that can sing the whole day through;
Whether the sky be clear or blue,
May the Giver of Gifts give these to you.[36]

Bridgman's poem, "Words of Condolence to Marcus Garvey," is just another indication of how Islam resonated with Garveyites. Islamic references in Garveyism are significant in helping to explain the eventual success of Noble Drew Ali's Moorish Science among former UNIA members in the second half of the 1920s.

Although Garvey never openly supported Islam in the UNIA, he was aware of its presence among his many followers. The connection between Islam and Garveyism was

clear in a number of African American Islamic organizations created by former UNIA leaders between 1926 and 1939 when nine of the eleven early communities were formed.[37] The UNIA proved to be fertile ground for the conversion of many Garveyites to Islam. Indeed, Richard Brent Turner's work on African American Islam points to a number of explanations for what he called, "the appropriation of Islamic referents by Garveyism."[38]

> Noble Drew Ali, Mufti Muhammad Sadiq, and Elijah Muhammad were all politically connected to Garveyism in different ways and mentioned Garvey frequently in their speeches and writings. At the same time, Garvey appropriated ideas from black Muslim leaders in Europe and the United States [such as Duse Mohammed Ali]. These connections were part of a global Pan-Islamic movement that brought together Pan-Africanists from Asia, Africa, the United States, Europe, and the West Indies as they creatively reformulated black cultural and political identities around the issue of self-determination.[39]

Moreover, the influence and spread of Garveyism ensured that the distinctive version of Islam developed by Moslems in the United States was inherently imbued with ideas of race-pride and self-determination. This unique formulation of Islam in the African American context has been criticized by some as not being authentically "Islamic." Of course, this type of essentialist reading of Islamic faith does not allow space to understand religion through the followers' interpretation and practice of their faith. However, Turner's scholarship in particular shows us that there were complicated Pan-African networks developing over the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth century giving rise to a number of Islamic organizations espousing the Garveyite mission of the redemption of Africa.[40]

By 1923 many of Garvey's followers were very likely already familiar with Islam. For example, members of the UNIA's Chicago branches could have encountered the Indian Muslim missionary Mulfi Muhammad Sadiq in the early 1920s as he established close contact with the UNIA and utilized Garveyism to facilitate the spread of Islam among African Americans in the city. In 1920 Sadiq set up a mosque on 4448 South Wabash Avenue in Chicago, Illinois. By 1923 Sadiq was a participating member in the UNIA, while simultaneously working to gain converts to the Islamic Ahmadiyya movement.[41] He published the Ahmadiyya movement's newspaper, *The Moslem Sunrise,* out of his Chicago home and distributed it in the local African American community. Indeed, by 1935 the Ahmadis had successfully converted over a thousand Americans, many in Chicago and Detroit, two cities that also became centers of Moorish Science activity. It was more than a coincidence that Noble Drew Ali later set up his temple, on Chicago's Southside, just a few blocks away. [42]

The Blending of Islam and Science

In addition to the presence of Islamic symbolism in the UNIA, the value of understanding religion "scientifically" was another important theme in Garveyism. During the afternoon session on 25 August 1922, the twenty-fifth day of the UNIA's convention, Arnold J. Ford insisted that the previous discussion of the "Future Religious Faith and Belief of the Negro" be reconvened, "so that some definite action may be taken in regard to it."[43] The President-General, Marcus Garvey, (who was not present during the morning session) explained that the UNIA would not "dictate anyone's religious faith or religious belief," rather "the idea was to bring to the Negro a scientific understanding

of religion." He explained that "what was desired was one great Christian confraternity without regard to any particular denomination, believing ourselves to be religious Christians."[44] Garvey then suggested the creation of a committee that would consult religious leaders from the different denominations and hold a "great religious conference" with the aim of bringing them all together in "one great religious institution." Garvey believed that the committee should "study the matter from a scientific viewpoint" and return to the next convention with a plan that could successfully address the issue.[45]

In this meeting Garvey's main concern seemed to be finding a scientific way to deal with the great religious diversity in the UNIA's membership. Garvey's insistence on viewing religion through a scientific lens may help to explain the development of Moorish Science and its success among former Garveyites. Noble Drew Ali through his formation of the Moorish Science Temple of America (MSTA) would take advantage of the religious fluidity available to Garveyites and offer "a scientific understanding of religion" that taught "to love instead of hate."[46]

Before Drew Ali became the leader and prophet of the successful Chicago based Moorish Science, he went by the name and title of "Professor Drew, Egyptian Adept Student." As a "professor" he based his activities out of his Newark, NJ home on 181 Warren St. and professed to have a "Divine power" that allowed him to heal the sick.[47] Drew Ali's move toward Islam and the specific concept of Moorish Science may have been influenced more by what he read and was exposed to in Garveyism than has been previously suggested by scholars. The pages of *The Negro World* in 1926 and 1927 had a number of advertisements for "Mohammedan Scientists." The number and frequency of

ads, along with the diversity of their images, suggests that there were several men calling themselves Mohammedan Scientists. Perhaps, this was one of the sources of inspiration for Noble Drew Ali in his creation of Moorish Science since he too blended Islam and science to provide a solution to "life's problems." These advertisements featured men who claimed they possessed special powers derived from secret knowledge obtained from the East able to help heal people.

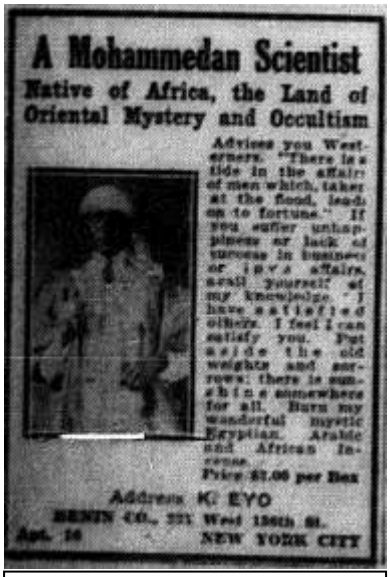

Figure 2.1: This is one example of the many images of "Mohammedan Scientists" featured in the *Negro World.* 3-July-1926.

One of these advertisements for a Mohammedan Scientist appeared in the *Negro World* on 24 July 1926, four months before Noble Drew Ali incorporated Moorish Science in Chicago. The advertisement claimed that the "scientist" was an expert in "Occultism of African and Egyptian Physiology, Mystic, and Psychic Sciences" and was a "Crystal Scientific Master Adept Business Counsellor." According to the ad, he had the

ability to help people in trouble, especially with matters in their everyday lives. The ad went on to state that,

> The ancient occult mysteries of Africa and India are being examined and accepted...The magic of Egypt, Chaldea, India, and other places, well known to disciples, are today being assimilated by the western man. We invite all those who are interested in things occult to see us. To the uninitiated, all things are impossible, but to the initiated, IT IS SO. He that can understand, let him understand. ALLAH BE PRAISED![48]

The rhetoric in these advertisements was similar to many of Noble Drew Ali's own writings. Before his creation of MSTA, Prof. Drew, Egyptian Adept student in Newark, claimed to possess spiritual abilities and could "give Divine instructions and interpret the Bible from Genesis to Revelations." He also claimed to "have 18 years of Christ's life that is silent to your Holy Bible for all those who desire to know more about Jesus the Christ."[49] This early reference to his ideological constructions shows that Drew was concerned with crafting a unique perspective that would appeal to African American.

While there has been some suggestion that Noble Drew Ali received his interest in the Occult and mysticism from branches of Freemasonry, such as the Ancient Egyptian Arabic Order Nobles of the Mystic Shrine (Shriners), it is possible that these Mohammedan Scientists influienced Ali's thinking and actions. Islamic scholar Peter Lamborn Wilson for example, argued, "The first deep source of Moorish Science is Freemasonry."[50] Yet, when we take into consideration the advertisements by Mohammedan Scientists in the *Negro World,* these other figures and their organizations should be taken into account. By 1928 Noble Drew Ali had established himself as the "supreme" Mohammedan Scientist as leader and prophet of the Moorish Science Temple,

which touted a membership of 30,000 in twelve cities. In that same year Ali also published the sacred text of the movement, *The Circle Seven Koran* and successfully started newspaper for the movement, the *Moorish Guide.*[51]

Indeed, Noble Drew Ali was aware of the value of titles and understood the power that "scientific" validity could add to one's cause. This was quite apparent especially given the work of social scientists such as Herbert Spencer, who applied Charles Darwin's work on evolution and theory of survival of the fittest to human societies. The impact of these epistemological claims was often a matter of life or death for African Americans, since "science" had been used to reinforce racial hierarchies and justify lynching campaigns and Jim Crow legislation. Noble Drew Ali understood this well and in 1926 made use of science's discursive power in modern American culture. By including it in the title of his religious organization, "The Moorish Holy Temple of Science," Drew Ali sought to teach black men and women "their nationality and Divine Creed." He argued that "they are not Negroes, Colored Folk, Black People, or Ethiopians, because these names were given to slaves by slave holders in 1779."[52] Drew Ali saw himself as the next "prophet" in a long history and argued that "The name means everything."[53] By renaming of his members "Moorish Americans" and the adding "Bey" or "El" to their given names, Ali sought to distance them from racial injustices and make them anew. With the power of science and religion backing his movement, there was a possibility of success. With the authority of Garvey, the validity of science, and a genealogy built from African ancestry, Drew Ali had found what he needed to develop a following.

From Garveyism to Moorish Science in Chicago

Noble Drew Ali did not begin his organizing activities in Chicago, but in Newark, New Jersey, as Prof. Drew as early as 1920. Ali had problems attracting and sustaining membership in the earlier movement. It was not until after December 1925 that Ali's evangelization began to bear fruit. This was directly related to Garvey's decline. Historian Robert Dannin in *Black Pilgrimage to Islam* described the transition in Drew Ali's teachings as he moved west from Newark:

> In Chicago, Noble Drew Ali became a more overt "race man," styling his political appeal on a program similar to Marcus Garvey's "back to Africa" ideology, Noble Drew Ali's general approach to religion closely paralleled Garvey's in its desire to embrace the ritual of 'black' culture as a vehicle for African-American political unity.[54]

The Circle Seven Koran, the sacred text of Moorish Science, directly connects the life and legacy of Marcus Garvey to the divine preparation for Noble Drew Ali's success as leader of Moorish Science. This is revealed in an excerpt from the *Circle Seven Koran.* In the chapter titled, "The End of Time and the Fulfilling of the Prophesies," Noble Drew Ali explains the genealogy of his ordination by Allah.

> 1. The last Prophet in these days is Noble Drew Ali, who was prepared divinely in due time by Allah to redeem men from their sinful ways; and to warn them of the great wrath which is sure to come upon the earth.
>
> 2. John the Baptist was the forerunner of Jesus in those days, to warn and stir up the nation and prepare them to receive the divine creed which was to be taught by Jesus.
>
> 3. In these modern days there came a forerunner, who was divinely prepared by the great God-Allah and his name is Marcus Garvey, who 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: who was prepared and sent to this earth by Allah, to teach the old time religion and the everlasting

> gospel to the sons of men. That every nation shall and must worship under their own vine and fig tree, and return to their own and be one with their Father God-Allah.[55]

This passage indicated that Noble Drew Ali and Marcus Garvey had a direct connection to one another that had a precedent in biblical truth. It is also stated that Noble Drew Ali was a prophet like Jesus. This reference of Garvey as John the Baptist supports the idea that it was not until the mid-1920s and Garvey's incarceration that Moorish Science began to expand.

Noble Drew Ali often highlighted the connection to Garvey in recruiting campaigns for MSTA members; and Ali publicized this relationship in the movement's paper *The Moorish Guide.* For example, on 19 November 1927, the newspaper reported, "Noble Drew Ali Returns after Long Visit South." This article detailed Ali's visit to Garvey in Atlanta's federal prison and Ali followed up this report with a drive for new members. According to the article, "Mr. Garvey was very much pleased with the splendid uplift work being done by the Moorish Divine Movement."[56] The rest of the article described the membership drive launched by the movement, emphasizing that "Persons desirous of learning the great work that is being done are asked to write Prophet Ali…" This article showed Ali's reliance on Garvey's popularity within the African American community to solidify Ali's position as a race leader.

While Ali gained esteem by emphasizing his connections to Garvey, there is no evidence that Garvey actually knew or agreed with Ali's mission. Correspondence between Garvey and Leonard Smith, the president of the Detroit UNIA division, revealed as of September 1927 that Garvey was unaware of Ali and his mission. Smith informed

him that Ali was using Garvey's reputation and fame to win over followers to Ali's movement. Garvey replied, "I know nothing of the man referred to. It is silly for people to allow every unknown person to agitate and influence them on such serious matters. I have spoken and written enough for the people of Detroit to understand [the] purpose of organization and not allow strangers to decoy and exploit them by calling on or using my name."[57] Here Garvey seemed dismissive of Ali and recognized his own organizing techniques as superior beyond question. This quote suggests that Ali was using Garvey's reputation in Detroit to gain followers.

At the same time, Noble Drew Ali's Moorish Science resembled Garvey's UNIA in a number of ways. Identity politics, racial uplift, and spiritual fulfillment were emphasized in both Marcus Garvey's UNIA and Noble Drew Ali's Moorish Science. To be sure, the cultural practices and characteristics of both social movements appealed to the masses of African Americans. After the failure of Reconstruction in the former Confederacy, followed by the imposition of Jim Crow laws, and the terrorizing reality of lynching, African Americans developed all-black alternatives to their exclusion from many aspects of U.S. social life. Marcus Garvey and Noble Drew Ali offered viable alternatives to the harsh realities African Americans confronted. By claiming an African identity, Noble Drew Ali and Marcus Garvey gave their followers a sense of self that asserted African greatness and challenged whites' claims of black inferiority.

The Moorish movement built upon Garveyism and offered its members a chance for a better future. Historian Emory Tolbert noted that in discussions of African

repatriation, specific details were not important. Rather, the more significant question was: "What are you going to leave your children?''

> Garvey's critics, without ever talking to the men and women whose contributions were financing the UNIA, assumed that physically boarding a ship and sailing to Africa was the total goal of rank-and-file Garveyites. Hence they saw Garveyism as mass hypnotism, and Garveyites as little more than automatons following the lead of their Messiah. Had they bothered to question the masses, they would have found an intelligent people who were perfectly aware of the obstacles to African Repatriation, but who also realized with more immediate evidence, that life in a white-dominated country held little hope for them unless a Black nation could embody the Black man's power and command respect for him around the world.[58]

Tolbert highlighted the pragmatic nature of the actions taken by the followers of Garvey who were concerned with self-determinist objectives, as well as the cultural and economic inheritance and livelihood left for their children. The resolve to identify with Africa and a black nation that would triumph over the injustices experienced in the United States demonstrated one potential solution to the problems created by white supremacists. Although Noble Drew Ali offered a dramatically different solution, his movement made use of Garvey's program and insights into racial politics, especially by defining the divine and incorporating that definition into a new religious movement.

Noble Drew Ali, too, worked hard to ensure that the Moorish Science Temple would provide an appropriate vehicle for the maintenance of good morals and strong family structures. In the "Supreme Laws," the rules guiding the leaders of Moorish Science, Ali declared that no leader should be "staying away from home, or neglecting his duty at home, or must allow the public to know of their wrong doings." Rather, "they must forever live the Life of Love at Home; and it must be known by all members."[59] Ali

also made sure to include chapters in *The Circle Seven Koran* that provided "Marriage Instructions for Man and Wife from the Noble Prophet," including the "Duty of a Husband," and "Holy Instructions for Thy Children," demonstrating his concern for the security and success of generations of Moorish Americans to come.[60]

Noble Drew Ali's vision of Moorish Science was a work in progress and the movement's limited success would not have been possible without the ideological foundations laid by Garvey's UNIA. During the first convention of Moorish Science, held in October 1928, the *Chicago Defender* ran an article publicizing the event and reported on the changes that were planned for the structure of Moorish Science. The article mentioned the "Supreme Grand Council" which would "have the power and duty to control and supervise all the affairs and properties of the Moorish Science Temple of America, and will be the sole judge of what constitutes conduct injurious to the order, peace, interest, or welfare of the organization or at variance with its constitution and by-laws." Mealy El, formerly Edward Mealy, was appointed to this Supreme Grand Council as the "Supreme Grand Sheik," in essence, the second in command of MSTA. The Supreme Council, Noble Drew Ali declared, consisted of men "tried and true, accepted…according to their words, works and deeds."[61] Through the appointment of Mealy El, a former Garveyite, to the Supreme Council and second only to Noble Drew Ali, MSTA appropriate the program initially laid out by the UNIA and offered a new way to organize African Americans, utilizing Islam, science, and African ancestry to challenge the racial inequities of American society.

[1] Wallace Best, *Passionately Human, No Less Divine: Religion and Culture in Black Chicago, 1915-1952* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 13-19.
[2] The "cause Afric" is the idea of African redemption purported by Garveyism. Scholars such as Mary Rolinson have discussed the way that this became, "the solution to universal Negro problems." This notion has been expanded in the work of Jarod Roll, "Garveyism and the Eschatology of African Redemption," *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation,* Vol. 20, No. 1 (Winter 2010): 27-56.
[3] The information pertaining to Edward Mealy (later referred to as Bro. Mealy El) was located in the primary source collections of the Supreme Grand Sheik of the MSTA, David Bailey El. A handwritten eulogy of Bro. Mealy El was among those in his collection and the source is responsible for this information regarding his personal background.
[4] Garvey in fact was raised in a Methodist Church in St. Ann's Bay, Jamaica and was early exposed to the teachings of the bible. Garvey is said to have gained part of his oratory skills by the rhythms and cadences of various preachers he scrupulously studied as a youth. Although Garvey severed his ties with the Methodist Church as a teen, Garvey did not turn away from Christian faith. In fact, later in his life he converted to Catholicism, maybe because of the experiences he had with his sister Indiana and the Catholic family of Braham Judah. For more information see, Tony Martin, "Religion" *Race First* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1976) ; Randall Burkett, *Garveyism as a Religious Movement: The Institutionalization of a Black Civil Religion* (Scarecrow Press, Inc. and the American Theological Library Association, 1978); Robert Hill, "Introduction" in *Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers,* Vol. 1 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), hereafter *MGP*; Philip Potter, "The Religious Thought of Marcus Garvey" in Rupert Lewis and Patrick Bryan, eds., *Garvey: His Work and Impact* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 1991), 146-163.
[5] Richard Brent Turner, *Islam in the African-American Experience, Second Edition* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1997, 2003), 82-83.
[6] See Robert A. Hill, "'Comradeship of the More Advanced Races": Marcus Garvey and the Brotherhood Movement in Britain, 1913-14" *Small Axe* 40 (March 2013): 52.
[7] Marcus Garvey, "The British West Indies in the Mirror of Civilization: History Making by Colonial Negroes," *African Times and the Orient Review* (October 1913); reprinted (Nendeln: Kraus Reprint, 1973), 158-160.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Robert A. Hill, "'Comradeship of the More Advanced Races": Marcus Garvey and the Brotherhood Movement in Britain, 1913-14" *Small Axe* 40 (March 2013): 61.
[10] Ibid.
[11] For the discussion of Garveyism as a "civil religion" see Randall Burkett, *Garveyism as Religious Movement* (1978); "British Military Intelligence Report," *MGP* (2:45).
[12] July 25, 1920 *MGP* (2:442).
[13] E. David Cronon, *Black Moses: The Story of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1960).
[14] See Eddie S. Glaude, Jr., *Exodus! Religion, Race, and Nation in Early Nineteenth-Century Black America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).
[15] Dr. Gordon, "Reports of the Convention," *MGP* (2:560).
[16] "Ganesh Rao to the Editor, *Negro World* in *MGP*, (4:495).
[17] Burkett, *Garveyism,* 67.
[18] Burkett, *Garveyism,* 113.
[19] Jarod Roll, "Garveyism and the Eschatology of African Redemption in the Rural South, 1920-1936," in *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation,* Vol. 20, No. 1 (Winter 2010); 27-56.
[20] "Twenty-Fifth Day, Morning Session: Convention Reports" *MGP* (4:991)
[21] Ibid.
[22] Edward Wilmot Blyden, *Christianity, Islam, and the Negro Race* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1967; reprint); 1-24.
[23] "Agents for *The African Times and Orient Review" The African Times and Orient Review: Politics, Literature, Art, Commerce: New Series Vol. 1, nos. 1-22* (Nendeln: Kraus Reprint, 1973); 239.

[24] Duse Mohammed Ali, *African Times and Orient Review* (November 1912); as quoted in *Pan-African History*, accessed online at http://mawelulu.net/downloads/PAN%20AFRICAN%20HISTORY%20COMPLETE.pdf (25-March-2014)
[25] Turner, *Islam in the African American Experience*, 87.
[26] Noble Drew Ali, *Koran Questions for Moorish Americans*, questions 57-61, p. 4. Published by MSTA.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Prophet Noble Drew Ali, "The Prophet Plea to Nation," *Moorish Guide*, March 1, 1929.
[29] Turner, *Islam in the African American Experience*, 88.
[30] Ibid.
[31]Ibid.
[32] Tony Martin, *Race First: The Ideological and Organizational Struggles of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Improvement Association* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1976), 315-320; "Complaint Against Marcus Garvey," *MGP* (4:340-342).
[33] Tony Martin, *Race First: The Ideological and Organizational Struggles of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Improvement Association* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1976), 315-316.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Tony Martin, *Literary Garveyism*, 5.
[36] Austin Evan Bridgman, "Words of Condolence to Marcus Garvey," *Negro World*, January 13, 1923.
[37] Amina Beverly McCloud, *African American Islam* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 10.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid, 81-81.
[40] Turner, *Islam in the African American Experience;* also see Jarod Roll, "Garveyism and the Eschatology of African Redemption in the Rural South, 1920-1936," in *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (Winter 2010): 27-56.
[41] For more information about the Ahmadiyya Movement see Richard Brent Turner, *Islam in the African American Experience*, 109-146. The Ahmadiyya movement was founded in India in the 1880s by Ghulam Ahmad. It offered a new interpretation of Islam and had a worldwide missionary program. Its arrival in the United States, Turner argues, "was unquestionably one of the most significant movments in the history of Islam in the United States in the twentieth century."
[42] Martin, *Race First*, 75-76.
[43] "Twenty-Fifth Day, Morning Session: Convention Reports" *MGP* (4:992)
[44] Ibid, 992-993; Turner, *Islam*, 124-125.
[45] Ibid.
[46] "Twenty-Fifth Day, Morning Session: Convention Reports" *MGP* (4:992); Noble Drew Ali, *Circle Seven Koran* (1927), 3.
[47] "Prof. Drew, Egyptian Adept Student," advertisement, unknown source and date. This image was made available to me by bro. David Bailey El, Supreme Grand Sheik of the MSTA, Chicago Temple No. 1, but can also be found online through an internet search: moorishsociety.com.
[48] "A Mohammedan Scientist," *Negro World*, July 24, 1926.
[49] Prof. Drew, Advertisement Card. Original date and source unknown.
[50] Peter Lamborn Wilson, *Sacred Drift: Essays on the Margins of Islam* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1993), 26.
[51] Michael A. Gomez, *Black Crescent: The Experience and Legacy of African Muslims in the Americas* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 206-207.
[52] Noble Drew Ali, "Moorish Holy Temple of Science Divine Constitution and Laws," Act 6.
[53] Richard Brent Turner, "What Shall We Call Him? Islam and African American Identity," *Journal of Religious Thought*, Vol. 51, No. 1 (1995): 1-28.
[54] Robert Dannin, *Black Pilgrimage to Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 28. Here Dannin points out a few important central themes which connect Garvey's UNIA to Ali's MSTA, such as the centrality of Africa as a politically unifying concept, the conflation between religion and politics in both groups, as well as the use of an existing cultural landscape embedded with its own traditions and rituals to unify and organize African Americans. These ties are significant in our understanding of the success of

Moorish Science, particularly the timing, and especially help to make sense of the looming thirteen year gap in the history of Noble Drew Ali and his Moorish movement. If it is true that Drew Ali's success was dependent on the campaigns of Marcus Garvey, then the lack of historical evidence that ties Drew Ali to the former Cannanite Temple in Newark, NJ (as oral history suggests) makes sense. The only tangible material that places Drew Ali in Newark is the advertisement for him as Prof. Drew. This ad, dated approximately to the early 1920s, does not mention Drew Ali as a practitioner of Islam, but rather as an expert in occult sciences and the lost years of Jesus' life. Moreover, Drew Ali himself, in all of his writings for MSTA never claimed to have started Moorish Science in Newark as the Canannite Temple. Rather, he claimed that the group began in 1925 and was incorporated in late 1926.

[55] Noble Drew Ali, "Chapter XLVIII: The End of Time and the Fulfilling of the Prophesies" *MGP* (4:81).

[56] "Noble Drew Ali Returns After Long Visit South," *Chicago Defender*, November 19, 1927, 5.

[57] Noble Drew Ali, "Chapter XLVIII: The End of Time and the Fulfilling of the Prophesies" *MGP* (4:82).

[58] Emory Tolbert, "Garveyism in California: A Case Study of Outpost Garveyism," in *Garvey: Africa, Europe, the Americas*, ed. Rupert Lewis and Maureen Warner-Lewis (Africa World Press, 1986), 27.

[59] Noble Drew Ali, "The Supreme Laws from the Prophet," Oct. 17, 1928.

[60] Noble Drew Ali, *The Circle Seven Koran of the Moorish Science Temple.* Ch., XXI-XXIII, 32-34.

[61] General Laws: As Said by the Prophet, Instructions of Tuesday Night—Oct. 16, 1928 at the First Annual Convention. Internal MSTA document made available by David Bailey El, Supreme Grand Sheik, MSTA, May 2012.

Women in the Formation and Development of the Moorish Science Temple of America

Despite the numerous historical narratives on male's participation in religious movements, including the history of the Moorish Science Temple of America, historians recognize that a majority of religious congregations have been sustained by their largely female memberships. This has especially been the case in the history of African American religious formations, including but not limited to mainstream Protestant denominations.[1] Even less attention has been paid to the activities of African American women in Islam, resulting in a large gap in the history and contributing to the belief that women were either not involved in forming and sustaining these religious groups, or that their participation was in some way not as significant as their male counterparts. However, the research for this chapter on women's roles in the MSTA's early years reveals that they were involved in MSTA publications, conventions, entertainment, business ventures, and leadership of the movement, thus shedding new light on African American women and Islamism in the United States.

Feminist scholars in the 1980s commenced some of the historical research necessary to document the role of women in Islam. In these studies the focus has been mainly on Arab women as representative of Islamic women. American Muslim women have been less represented in the scholarship, and as a result, studies of Islam in the United States have varied between the focus on women who are ethnically Arab, and women converts to Islam.[2] In the United States, political scientist Samory Rashid has recognized that "African Americans represent the single largest group of Muslims in the

U.S."[3] Studies of African American Muslim women have been limited primarily to discussion of converts in Sunni Muslim groups and women in the Nation of Islam. This chapter seeks to add to this scholarship some knowledge on the role of women in the Moorish Science Temple of America, since they were heavily involved in sustaining the group in its early years.

In 2014 Bayyinah S. Jeffries published *A Nation Can Rise No Higher Than Its Women: African American Muslim Women in the Movement for Black Self-Determination, 1950-1975* which focused on the contributions of women in the Nation of Islam (NOI). This is the first full length scholarly study of women's participation in one of the largest movements for black self-determination in the post-war United States explains the significance of women within the movement. Jeffries argued that women in the Nation of Islam were a responsible for sustaining temple life. Through her analysis of the Muslim Girls Training (MGT) it is evident that education for women was a key element for building the NOI. Jeffries compared the MGT to the better known Fruit of Islam (FOI) which sought the development and training of young men in the Nation of Islam. She notes that "both the MGT and FOI instructed members in their gender roles such as parenting and spousal relations, and other areas like 'rules, laws, and security,' self-defense, 'spiritual instructions,' and unity, i.e., working together as sisters and brothers in Islam."[4]

Another important aspect of women's involvement in NOI was their contributions to the NOI newspaper's, *Muhammad Speaks* and *Final Call*. Jeffries highlighted the importance of the "opportunity [of women] to meaningfully participate and voice their

opinions."[5] Jeffries' study is an important contribution to the scholarship of African American women in Islam generally, and women in the Nation of Islam specifically.[6]

Other works on African American Islam examined female participation in the movements. For example, Robert Dannin's *Black Pilgrimage to Islam* dedicates two chapters to women's participation and conversion to various Sunni Islamic groups. His chapter, "The Many Dimensions of a Muslim Woman" recounts Naima saif Ullah's conversion narrative. Dannin frames her conversion and experiences in Islam as driven by her desire to engage with black Muslim men. This is a portrait of a woman who has a history of drug addiction and "daddy issues" and only seems to become interested in Islam because her admiration of Omar, one of her co-workers, who refuses to date her unless she converts to Islam. Naima ultimately does not convert to obtain a relationship with Omar, but because of her experiences chooses to adhere to an Islamic life. Since her conversion to Islam, Naima married five times, with one being polygynous. Dannin's narrative about Naima centers around her desire and need to be protected and cared for by men due to financial need rather than love. Dannin's focus on her story in the chapter gives the impression other African American women who join Islam are seeking the protection of men who sometimes do not adhere to Islamic principles. Dannin's focus on the polygynous aspects of male-female relationships in Islam seems a bit sensationalized, although it may be a real issue for some Islamic women.

In the examination of women in Islam, several themes arise, including the concern with dress, marriage relations, and the seclusion or separation of women from men in both worship and daily life. These themes are relevant to women in the Moorish Science

Temple of America (MSTA). Historian Aminah Beverly McCloud in *African American Islam* reported that, "for women in the Moorish Science Temple and the First Mosque of Pittsburgh, subordination of women is not so clearly a problem, but we have no written accounts of the first women and their lives."[7] Women in Moorish Science were instructed on their role in marriage, but unlike other Islamic groups they were strictly monogamous and did not practice polygyny. On the issue of dress, McCloud notes that "Women wear a modest dress and cover their heads, but do not seem to feel oppressed; rather their dress is viewed as a difference that aligns them with a worldview, an identity other than Slavery, and God."[8] So while women who joined the MSTA appear to adhere to the traditional roles of women in Islam, there is a difference in their attitudes about submission to men. In the early years of the MSTA especially, women maintained a high profile and their contributions to the growth of the movement was significant, with women leading temples, acting as managing editors of the group's newspaper, and factoring prominently in the creation and maintenance of auxiliary groups. [9]

Other works on Moorish Science also described women's involvement in the group. Historian Richard Brent Turner in *Islam in the African American Experience* surveyed the activities of MSTA women in the 1940s, arguing that the continuation of the movement was dependent on "the leadership of its women."[10] He explained that in that era women "nurtured and supported their families, they cooked the meals required by the dietary laws of their religion, and they made much of the Moorish American clothing."[11] They also joined various self-help organizations that provided the basic necessities for their families such as food, clothing, shelter, and health care. Turner also points to the

monthly magazine of the MSTA, *The Moorish Voice*, during the 1940s as another space for the involvement and leadership of women. He listed eleven women in seven cities who were regular contributors the magazine. He also highlighted the significance of women in leadership positions within the movement, pointing to two women, Sister Mary Clift Bey and Sister P. Reynolds El, the former, the grand governess of Kentucky and the latter, the national chairperson of the Sisters Auxiliary[12].

Michael A. Gomez in his chapter on Moorish Science in *Black Crescent: The Experience of African Muslims in the Americas* looks at the leadership of women in the early movement through the examination of a photograph from the first convention and the newspaper, *The Moorish Guide*. In the 1928 photograph there are two women seated in the front row, Sister C. Alsop Bey and Sister Lomax Bey. Gomez surmised that it was "possible for women to ascend into the higher levels of organizational management."[13] In looking at the *Moorish Guide*, Gomez observed that there was one Grand Sheikess, Sister Whitehead-El, and that the managing editor of the newspaper was Juanita Richardson-Bey. In his discussion of Juanita Richardson-Bey, Gomez points out that she "also served as the Secretary-Treasurer of the 'Young People's Moorish League' and was culturally very active."[14] He cites a poem she wrote in *The Guide* along with her rendition of a Rudyard Kipling poem at a meeting of the League, as evidence of her leadership and cultural sophistication. On this point he concluded that "one can only assume that the space afforded Juanita Richardson-Bey in an official Moorish Science organ must have been commensurate with the prominence she enjoyed."[15] These examinations of women in MSTA suggest that the movement allowed women to express their views and

contribute to the growth of the organization. These portraits of the women in MSTA in the early days of the movement, while incomplete, emphasized their importance in temple life.

In *Mission to America: Five Islamic Sectarian Communities in North America,* Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad and Jane Idelman Smith also describe women in the Moorish Science Temple, by focusing on the role of women in the auxiliary organizations, marriage, and dress. Haddad and Smith, like Turner, point to the Moorish Sisters Auxiliary which helped to instruct women in the proper upbringing of their children, cooking, fund raising, and providing aid to the community. On the subject of marriage they emphasized that "Moorish Americans practice monogamy" and that the union is performed by the grand sheik of the temple.[16] Women in the MSTA typically wear turbans and long dresses, especially when in the temple and cover their heads to show respect for Allah.

Spencer Dew's article "Juanita Mayo Richardson Bey: Editor, Educator, and Poetic Visionary of First Generation Moorish Science" examines the role of Juanita Richardson Bey as leader of the early Moorish Science Temple of America and her work as "editor and pedagogue" of the movement. Dew offers a close reading of a number of the poems written by Richardson Bey and describes her role in facilitating a literary contest in the *Moorish Guide,* concluding that "she urged her fellow Moors to participate, pursue education…and express themselves in poems that would voice their religious experiences and beliefs."[17] Dew's examination of Juanita Richardson Bey shows that women were an integral component in the development of Moorish Science and he

describes the MSTA as one of "lived religious community, a variety of individuals negotiating claims and practices, values and concepts."[18] At the same time, citing the work of Laurie Maffly-Kipp in "Writing Our Way into History: Gender, Race, and the Creation of Black Denominational Life" in *Women and Twentieth-Century Protestantism,* Dew argued that "Ricardson Bey's work in the *Guide* 'sometimes complemented, and at other moments competed with, that of male colleagues.'"[19] This article sheds light on an understudied aspect of the early MSTA by focusing on her writings in the *Moorish Guide* and confirms that women in Moorish Science performed work that was critical to advancing the group's stated mission of the movement, "to uplift fallen humanity."

The aim of this chapter is to add to what we know about women in MSTA and to point out new pathways for future analysis. Despite the limited information we have on women in MSTA, they were key contributors to the formation and development of the theology and culture of Moorish Science.

Women in the Formation of MSTA

The creation of Moorish Science has mostly been attributed to the prophet of the group, Noble Drew Ali. Public records filed in Cook County, Illinois are the primary documents that detail the group's formation. There were two main affidavits filed with the county, one in November 1926 and another in July 1928; both documents list five men as the persons selected as the "directors" to control the corporation, so on the surface it would seem that women were not an integral part of the early establishment of the temple. However, there is a story that has circulated in Moorish circles that suggests that

Noble Drew Ali's first convert as a woman named Lily Sloan. Although this story is not found in any of the scholarly reports on Moorish Science, it did appear in a book about the Five Percenters, a group founded in the 1960s by a former member of the Nation of Islam, by Michael Muhammad Knight.[20]

In Knight's retelling of the story, Lily Sloan first learned of the prophet through a vision she had of him standing on top of a crate on a street corner calling out to her before she went to place a bet on "the numbers," the underground lottery game. Sloan, who thought she was crazy and suffering from hallucinations, saw the prophet in flesh on State Street in Chicago surrounded by a group of people who were heckling Noble Drew Ali. Once all of the people dispersed and only Lily Sloan remained, the prophet claimed to recognize her from her vision and asked her if she had a place for him to stay that night. According to the story, Sloan became Ali's first disciple and shared her revelation with her upstairs neighbors the Mealys, who soon also joined the movement changing their names to "Mealy El."[21]

This story is significant as it points to the first convert of Noble Drew Ali's as a woman who invited the prophet into her home and subsequently her upstairs neighbors, the Mealys, became important in the development and leadership of the group. While this story cannot be entirely corroborated by evidence, it circulated in Moorish circles, which Knight tapped into and subsequently spread to a wider audience. According to reports, women enjoyed an equal status with men in the MSTA and we know they held positions of leadership and were important

Women in the Sacred Text: *The Circle Seven Koran*

One of the places where the Prophet wrote most extensively about women was in the sacred text of the movement, *The Circle Seven Koran.* Chapters twenty through twenty-four dealt in some way with women. While these chapters discuss women, none of them are specifically directed at women alone. The only chapter that refers to women in its title is chapter twenty-one, "Marriage Instructions for Man and Wife from the Noble Prophet." Indeed, chapter twenty "Holy Instructions and Warnings for all Young Men" warned young men of the potential dangers of "all the allurements of wantonness" and advises them to "let not the harlot tempt thee to excess in her delights."[22] Yet the text also proclaims that "when virtue and modesty enlighten her charms, the luster of a beautiful woman is brighter than the stars of Heaven and the influence of her power it is in vain to resist."[23] The message is one of both instruction and warning, declaring that young men should beware of women who are immoral, for they could sow the seeds of destruction, while women who are virtuous and pure should be pursued. Although this chapter is addressed to young men, it can also be used by young Moorish women as instructions from the prophet on how to conduct themselves. According to the prophet, a woman should be pure of heart, innocent and sweet. These characteristics are the most worthy for a young woman.

The chapter on "Marriage Instructions for Man and Wife from the Noble Prophet" opens with direct instructions to young women. "Give ear, fair daughter of love, to the instructions of prudence and let the precepts of truth sink deep in thy heart; so shall the charms of thy mind add luster to the elegance of thy form." This passage advises women

in their youth to guard their hearts against the seductions of men and to ignore their "soft persuasions," as they have been "made man's reasonable companion, not [a] slave of his passion."[24] Again, the attributes of sweetness, innocence, and modesty are heralded as supreme characteristics of a desirable woman and future wife. The prophet advises that "submission and obedience are the lessons of her life, and peace and happiness are her reward."[25] Through these passages it seems that becoming a wife and mother is the optimum goal for a woman in Moorish Science, especially given that "the care of her family is her whole delight; to that alone she applieth her study; and elegance with frugality is seen in her mansion."[26]

Once a woman is mother and wife, according the *Circle Seven Koran,* her life should be dedicated to the rearing of her children and management of her household. It is mentioned twice in chapter twenty-one that "happy is the man that has made her his wife; happy the child that call her mother."[27] The role of the woman in nation-building through her development and that of her family is held in high esteem.

The instructions to men include the duties of a husband regarding the treatment of women. The prophet in this chapter warns men:

> If much of her time is destroyed in dress and adornment; if she is enamoured with her own beauty, and delighted with her own praise; if she laugheth much, and talketh loud; if her foot abideth not in her father's house, and her eyes with boldness rove on the faces of men; though her beauty were as the sun in the firmament of heaven, turn thy face from her charms, turn thy feet from her paths, and suffer not thy soul to be ensnared by the allurements of imagination.[28]

In this passage the emphasis is placed on the negative characteristics of women in general. According to the text, the beauty of a woman is only meaningful if she is humble

and not self-absorbed. Indeed, a woman should be soft-spoken, serious, and obedient. Men are warned to avoid any woman who is too concerned with her own beauty and the attention of men. Rather, she should have a sensible heart, good manners, and "accomplished mind."[29] In turn, according to *The Circle Seven Koran,* a husband should cherish his wife as a blessing sent down from the heavens and treat her with respect; he should trust her, and be faithful, and forgiving. Therefore, according to the prophet, the place of women in MSTA is one of great respect, reverence, and responsibility.

Women in the Development of Moorish Science

Women's involvement in MSTA has been documented through their production of *The Moorish Guide,* the newspaper of the early movement. Only a few copies of the paper have survived, but the women's presence is significant and demonstrates their commitment and importnace to the group. As historian Michael A. Gomez and Spencer Dew observed, Juanita Richardson Bey was an important contributor to the newspaper and served as its managing editor in the late 1920s. Pearl Ali, the prophet's second wife, was also an important contributor to the paper; she was also involved in organizing the Moorish youth. In addition to the production of the newspaper, women were also significant in running Temples for the prophet and drawing in additional members in their respective areas.

In the Friday, September 14, 1928 issue of the *Moorish Guide*, alongside the public notice of the MSTA affidavit of incorporation, Sister Whitehead El's article, "Drew Ali in Time," discussed some of the core beliefs of Moorish Science. Whitehead El affirmed the importance of the revelations of Noble Drew Ali, especially the idea of

knowing Islam as your forefather's and mother's "ancient and divine creed." Historical knowledge of one's roots and culture was central to the philosophy of Moorish Science; and one's knowledge of self was directly linked to this belief system. The name of members of Moorish Science, according to the article, was linked to their awareness of their historical roots. According to the prophecy of Noble Drew Ali, African Americans were not "Negroes," "Black," or "colored," rather they were "Moorish Americans" who had historical roots in Morocco in North Africa and only needed to connect with these "lost" truths in order to know themselves as the descendents of ancient Canaanites and Moabites who practiced Islam, not Christianity.[30]

Though the article urged the importance of knowing one's true and divine national name and creed, Sister Whitehead El told readers, "We are marching on to Canaan. I used to think that was a city in the sky, but now I know it is here on earth. Don't you want your share?"[31] The story of Canaan was a popular trope in African American literature from the nineteenth century into the twentieth century that signified African American's hope for divine intervention into the racist conditions of life in the United States. Sister Whitehead El sought after Canaan on earth. The idea of finding solutions to earthly problems through religion and community was markedly different from the otherworldly Christian solutions familiar to most African Americans promising heavenly rewards rather than earthly progress. The attraction and appeal of Moorish Science to both men and women was the possibility of knowing one's true identity and religion. Moorish American women, like Sister Whitehead El, became significant voices

in the spread of the MSTA, not only through their writings, but also through their organizing abilities.

The Friday, September 14, 1928, issue of the *Moorish Guide* reported on the "special gifts" of the Prophet Noble Drew Ali through the testimony of Sister Davis Bey, who claimed to be healed by the prophet. This story was corroborated by advertisements the Moorish Science Temple disseminated or published, such as the poster for the "Great Moorish Drama." It made the claim that on Monday evening, May 16th 1927, Ali would "heal many in the audience without touching them, free of charge, as they stand in front of their seats [thus] manifesting his divine power."[32] The testimony given by Sister Davis Bey suggests that through Ali's "divine ability" to heal, women were converted to Moorish Science and subsequently shared their conversion narratives and healing experiences through the publication of the *Moorish Guide.* If women were willing to publish their stories in the newspaper, more than likely they also shared them with friends and family members, drawing new members into the Temple. Echoing the story of Lily Sloan's conversion to Moorish Science, this published story of healing and conversion reinforces the idea that women were attracted and significant in recruiting new members to the MSTA and spreading the prophet's message. Although Noble Drew Ali remained the leader and prophet of the movement, Moorish women played a critical function in sustaining the temples.

The draw of Drew Ali's "divine" healing abilities had been a feature of his work even in his earlier days before the formation of MSTA. In Newark, NJ, as Prof. Drew Egyptian Adept student, he publicized his knowledge of "the secret of destroying the

germs of tuberculosis and Cancer of the lungs in 10 to 30 days."[33] Drew also claimed to have the ability to destroy the germs of "Female diseases" along with other physical ailments. This earlier reference to his gift of healing was transferred into his leadership of MSTA. Once established, Moorish Science also produced a number of products. These healing agents were created and distributed by the Moorish Manufacturing Corporation located at 3603 Indiana Ave in Chicago. Among the products advertised by the company were a Moorish Body Builder and Blood Purifier, a Moorish Antiseptic Bath Compound, and a Moorish Mineral Healing Oil.[34] The bath compound was advertised as "beneficial for dandruff, rheumatism, stiff joints, tired and sore feet. Also skin troubles when used as a face wash."[35] Noble Drew Ali was listed as the founder of the corporation and each of the products pictured on the advertisement were stated to have been prepared by him. These products were meant to help men, women, and children, and extended MSTA's presence.

The "Great Moorish Drama" was not solely a display of Drew Ali's spiritual gifts; rather the poster also advertised the "acts of men, women and children," which together would make it known to the audience the "need of a nationality." The advertisement announced "great lectures" about Moorish nationality by not only the Prophet Noble Drew Ali, but also from "many of the Sheiks of the Grand Body of the Moorish Holy Temple of Science." Noble Drew Ali's spirituality was likened to Jesus. Drew Ali claimed that he would "be bound with several yards of rope, as Jesus was bound in the Temple at Jerusalem and escaped before the authorities could take charge of Him…."[36] The prophet would "perform the same act, after being bound by anyone in the audience"

and would also escape in only a few seconds. The mystical activities of Ali were complimented by the Moorish women who, as the advertisement stated, would entertain the crowd with music. The poster alerted readers that "you will also hear one of the greatest Moorish female songstress of the day—MME LOMAX-BEY."[37] Sister Lomax Bey was the wife of one of more successful leaders in MSTA, James Lomax Bey, who was the grand governor of the Detroit Temple No. 4. She was recognized by the organization on many occasions for her musical talents and beautiful voice. Efforts of Noble Drew Ali to convince African Americans to adopt a new nationality were successful with men, women and children in communities across the United States.

Moorish women continued to be important contributors to the cultural productions mounted by the MSTA. In addition to the musical acts such as Sister Lomax Bey in the Great Moorish Drama, women also acted as literary messengers for Moorish Science. In an early issue of the *Moorish Guide* Sister M. Dunn-El from Newark, NJ submitted a poem entitled, "Dooming Bells." The poem published in September 1928 stressed the importance of adopting their "true" name, not as "Negroes," but "Moorish Americans."

Oh, bells of hell,
Defy us not,
Hollow state of punishment,
strive against the wall
That has fallen down
To see the life of aviation
In fallen humanity,
shyly covered in storm.
A gale that eyes could not see
through.
Wondering who am I
Thou will say a Moorish
American,
The children of our fore-fath-

ers
As once before.
Why hast thou told me,
When the light is so strong,
Yet I cannot see,
seek and ye shall find,
The key to the light, that is
too
Strong for thine eyes.

Oh! Can ye not see the light.
After the storm has passed,
Away, into the light of day?
Far away yet near it has
come.
The day of lost sheep shall be
found.[38]

In this poem Sister M. Dunn-El's struggle with the state of "fallen humanity" is revealed through her acceptance of her own identity as Moorish American. She expressed her disdain for the state of African Americans in the United States, likening their hellish experiences to a punishment. The key was seeing the light that could guide one through the storm. The inequities of Jim Crow and white racism in the late 1920s ended with a hopeful promise that "The day of lost sheep shall be found." The key to getting through the storm was through Moorish Science, and defining oneself as "Moorish American." The presence of this poem in one of the early issues of the *Moorish Guide* is significant in not only articulating the Moorish solution to struggles that African Americans experienced with the heightened racial state in America, but also in demonstrating the cultural contributions of women who decided to join the ranks of MSTA. Moorish women, such as Sister M. Dunn-El, used their literary talents to create art that expressed

their choice to identify with MSTA, learn their forefather's "true and divine creed" and know themselves by understanding their national name, Moorish American.

"Dooming Bells" was only one of the poems published by MSTA women. Michael A. Gomez and Spencer Dew have reprinted the poetry of Juanita Richardson Bey in their examinations of MSTA women's cultural production. These poems and the publications by women in the movement were significant as expressions of their religious fervor and could be used to recruit new members. As Dew argued, Richardson Bey, in particular, "as editor and educator, insisted on a vision of collective participation in Moorish uplift, emphasized the importance of education and specifically the values of literary education…" by encouraging "individual creative expression of and synthetic engagement with Moorish Science teachings, and, as poet, modeled…her own sense of the meaning of Moorish identity."[39] The unique power women exercised through their writings in the *Moorish Guide* directly helped to craft Moorish theology and the basic tenets of Moorish Science.

At the first convention of Moorish Science in September 1928, women figured prominently in the proceedings. On the opening night of the convention, one of the first events was a testimonial given by a Moorish woman from Ohio's Temple No. 5 who proclaimed "I am glad I am not a Negro." Her speech touched on the transformative qualities that were attractive to converts of Moorish Science. Shedding the group designation "Negro" and re-making oneself anew as a Moorish American was central to the tenets of the MSTA. During the second night of the convention, Sister Sanifer El from Detroit's Temple No. 4 was responsible for reporting on the commercial enterprises

and the Temple's Sunday School. Her report was thorough and was said to have represented the work "to its fullest extent." On the fourth and final night of the meeting, Sister Smith Bey of Baltimore, MI, Sister Tompkins El of Detroit, MI (Temple No. 4), Sister Pearl Ali of Chicago, IL, and Sister Lomax from Detroit, MI (Temple No. 4) all either gave speeches or performed readings for the closing of the convention.[40]

Throughout the four nights of the first MSTA convention various musical numbers were performed by the Moorish women, including "Who is Noble Drew Ali?" by Sister Mince Bey and two little girls from Milwaukee, WI, and a solo from Sister Lomax from Detroit. Out of the seven members named to the Supreme Grand Council of the MSTA, Sister Pearl Ali, the only woman, was named Supreme Grand Secretary for the group. It is evident from the minutes of the first annual convention that women were active participants in Temple organizing and through their works helped to sustain the mission of Moorish Science.[41]

Moorish women's importance as organizers in Moorish Science and the African American community at large can be seen through the various published reports on their activities. An undated issue of the *Moorish Guide* reported that the "Moorish Cafeteria Service Won Praise at the Elks' Grand Lodge General Headquarters" during the Elks' twenty-ninth annual convention at Unity Hall. The Moorish Cafeteria Service provided meals for the convention under the leadership of Mrs. Pearl Jones Ali and Katherine Wilson. This feature of Moorish women's success in business ventures shows that their contributions and organizational skills were a critical aspect of MSTA success. In addition to the cafeteria service, the entertainment of Moorish women was also a

noteworthy contribution to the Elks' convention. The Elks' convention was an important event in the community and attracted distinguished guests of the Chicago community such as Chicago Alderman Louis B. Anderson. Mrs. Varnum Bey was mentioned in the *Moorish Guide* as providing entertainment at the Elks' Convention. Through the services provided by Moorish American women the MSTA gained esteem in the community.[42]

Following the first national convention of the Moorish Science Temple of America, women became increasingly involved in organizing activities in the temples. On March 17, 1929 the women of the Temple No. 1 in Chicago, Illinois, were responsible for organizing "Tag Day," an important fundraising activity for MSTA. The day was celebrated by all temples and was sponsored by the women in the Moorish National Sisters Auxiliary who charged ten cents per tag, worn by all members.[43] The Moorish National Sisters Auxiliary was also responsible for planning several activities for members upon the Noble Drew Ali's return from his visit to various temples in March 1929, including a performance of the play *Widow's Mite*. These activities were critical to building solidarity within the temple and signify another important role for women.[44]

The Moorish National Sisters Auxiliary (MNSA) was significant for the development of women's leadership activities in MSTA. It has remained one of the main contingents because of its prominence and visibility in temples' activities. Organized in December 1928 in Chicago by ten women, the Sisters' Auxiliary quickly grew to twenty seven women in two months. The main goal of the group was to "uplift fallen humanity and be the right hand of the Prophet" through their words and deeds. Soon after its formation, the sisters created a "Necessity Fund" which helped fellow Moors who were

in financial distress, needed care, or were sick, poor, or needy. The auxiliary sustained itself through the monthly dues of its members, twenty-five cents, and the officers were the president, vice president, recording secretary, financial secretary-treasurer, chairman, and chaplain.[45] As "the right hand of the Prophet," MNSA played a special role in helping members of MSTA by extending the work of Moorish Science beyond the weekly meetings of the organization.

The organizational skill of women in the MSTA extended beyond their role in the auxiliary and is visible in their leadership positions of various temples. In temple reports for 1927-1928 there were three women in the twelve temples listed as leaders: Sister O. Smith Bey of Baltimore, Maryland; Sister M. Whitehead Bey of the West Side of Chicago, Illinois; and Sister Alsop El of Chicago, Illinois.[46] Sister O. Smith Bey from Baltimore was the acting secretary from Temple 13, which in 1928 had seventy members. The temple had no reported debts, but seemed to be experiencing some difficulty in overcoming a tough time which may help to explain why no "Governor" or "Governess," the head official of a MSTA temple, was listed in association with the temple. On the West Side of Chicago, Sister M. Whitehead Bey was listed as Governess of Temple No. 9 which touted a membership of 163 Moors. This temple reported $342.50 from its dues paying members. While the temple in Chicago was identified as new, only two and half months old at that time, it already had 187 members. The women who led these temples were in charge of a large number of members and demonstrated that they were just as capable as their male counterparts in attracting and sustaining MSTA membership.

As the MSTA grew, women remained important contributors to the development of temples across the country. After the prophet died or "changed form" in 1929, the male leaders of the movement expressed a series of hardships, including infighting and violent contestations over who would take Drew Ali's place. Yet women remained on the frontlines, sustaining membership and developing new temples. Women in some instances claimed to have a more accurate interpretation of Moorish theology than their male counterparts and even suggested that the legitimacy of their positions temples was superior. In an April 1935 article in the *Moorish Voice* Sister R. Jones Bey reported that she was responsible for taking the teachings of the prophet from Brooklyn, NY to establish "the first true" MSTA branch in Newark, NJ.[47] Although this claim contradicts other reports on temples while the prophet was alive, it does demonstrate that women remained a powerful force in the development and leadership of some new temples.[48]

In 1928 B. Pollard-Bey was listed as the Governor of Temple no. 10 on 84 Sprinfield Ave., Newark, NJ. There is no evidence that this temple was still in existence in 1935, when Sister Jones Bey claimed the establishment of her temple. It is unclear whether she was contesting the legitimacy of the original temple opened earlier or reporting a new group that had formed after the prophet passed. In the article she argued that her agenda was in alignment with the Prophet. "Our dear Prophet has laid the foundation of our movement and it so simple to see, that I shall always do my part for the cause of uplifting fallen humanity."[49] She suggested that "Islam is a religion that binds all Moors in one united body."[50] It is interesting that she claimed "The State of New Jersey is now getting right" and that she had "established the only recognized Temple in that

State…located at 135 West Street, Newark, N.J." But there were earlier reports of another temple in Newark. This may be a reflection of the divisions that arose in Moorish Science once the original leadership by Noble Drew Ali was lost. In any case, her example as a strong Moorish leader reinforces the idea that women were a significant force in the development of Moorish Science, as she warned readers that "those who have strayed away from our Prophet had better fall in line."[51]

From its inception the MSTA women were involved in most aspects of temple life and development. Their activities in writing for the *Moorish Guide*, organizing various social functions, and leading temples illustrates that they were an integral component of the MSTA despite earlier scholars' reticence about their activities. Earlier studies have focused on Noble Drew Ali and the formation of Moorish Science without examining the significant efforts of women in movement. The involvement of women in the leadership positions in Moorish Science shows that the movement built on existing women's networks found in African American communities. In many Protestant denominations women were largely responsible for sustaining the churches and they had developed various clubs and organizations that reflected their natural roles as leaders and organizers. It should not be surprising, therefore, that MSTA women were active and engaged members often responsible for sustaining the organization in its early years.

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[2] Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992); Nicholas Awde, ed., *Women in Islam: An Anthology from the Qur'an and Hadiths* (London: Bennett &Bloom, 2005); Amina Wadud-Mushin, *Qur'an and Woman* (Kuala Lumpur: Penerbit Fajar Bakti Sdn. Bhd., 1992); Karim J. To Be Black, Female, And Muslim: A Candid Conversation about Race in the American Ummah. *Journal Of Muslim Minority Affairs* [serial online]. August 2006; 26(2):225-233; Karen Fraser Wyche, "African American Muslim Women: An Invisible Group" *Sex Roles, Vol. 51, No. 5/6 September 2004;* Carolyn Moxley Rouse, *Engaged Surrender: African American Women and Islam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).
[3] Samory Rashid, "Divergent Perspectives on Islam in America," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs,* Vol. 20, No. 1 (2000), 79.
[4] S. Jeffries, *A Nation Can Rise No Higher Than Its Women: African American Muslim Women in the Movement for Black Self-Determination, 1950-1975* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2014), 27.
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[6] Bayyinah S. Jeffries, *A Nation Can Rise No Higher Than Its Women: African American Muslim Women in the Movement for Black Self-Determination, 1950-1975* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2014); Ula Yvette 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); Bayyinah S. Jeffries, "Raising her Voice': Writings by, for and about women in *Muhammad Speaks* Newspaper, 1961-1975" in James L. Conyers, ed., *African American Consciousness: Past and Present* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2012); Ula Yvette 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 Theoharris and Komozi Woodard (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).
[7] Aminah Beverly McCloud, *African American Islam* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 147.
[8] Ibid.
[9] "Temple Reports" *Moorish Guide,* 1928 available in the collections at the Schomburg Center, New York Public Library; Sister R. Jones-Bey, "Public Notice of New Jersey" *Moorish Voice,* April 19, 1935; Spencer Dew, "Juanita Mayo Richardson Bey: Editor, Educator, and Poetic Visionary of First Generation Moorish Science," *Journal of Africana Religions,* Vol. 2, No. 2 (2014): 203.
[10] Richard Brent Turner, *Islam in the African-American Experience* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003, second edition), 104.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Michael A. Gomez, *Black Crescent: The Experience and Legacy of African Muslims in the Americas* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 260-261.
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[19] Ibid, 204.
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[21]Ibid.
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[23] Ibid.
[24] "Marriage Instructions for Man and Wife from the Noble Prophet," *Circle Seven Koran*, 33.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid.

[28] "Duty of a Husband," *Circle Seven Koran*, 34.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Sister Whitehead El, "Drew Ali in Time," *Moorish Guide,* Vol. 1, No. 3, Friday September 14, 1928. MSTA files at Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture of the New York Public Library.
[31] Ibid.
[32] "Don't Miss the Great Moorish Drama," poster advertisement; courtesy of the Moorish Science Temple of America, Temple No. 1 archival collection.
[33] See image of early advertisement of Prof. Drew in chapter 1; it was made available to me by bro. David Bailey El, Supreme Grand Sheik of the MSTA, Chicago Temple No. 1, but can also be found online through an internet search: moorishsociety.com.
[34] See advertisement, "Health and Happiness Prolongs Your Life," produced by MSTA. A copy was given made available to me by bro. David Bailey El, Supreme Grand Sheik of the MSTA, Chicago Temple No. 1, but there is also a photograph of a later version of the advertisement in Peter Lamborn Wilson, *Sacred Drift: Essays on the Margins of Islam* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1993), 37. The difference between his photograph and the copy I have are the prices. The prices listed for the Body Builder and Purifier and the Antiseptic Bath Compound in my version are fifty cents, where as his copy lists the prices for the same items at $2. These differences lead to the conclusion that his version of the advertisement is from a later date than the one made available to me.
[35] Ibid.
[36] See image of early advertisement of Prof. Drew in chapter 1; it was made available to me by bro. David Bailey El, Supreme Grand Sheik of the MSTA, Chicago Temple No. 1, but can also be found online through an internet search: moorishsociety.com.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Sister M. Dunn-El, "Dooming Bells," *Moorish Guide,* Vol.1, No. 5 Friday September 28, 1928. MSTA files at Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture of the New York Public Library.
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[41] Ibid.
[42] "Moorish Cafeteria Service," *Moorish Guide*, random undated page found in the MSTA collections at the Schomburg Center, New York Public Library.
[43] "Tag Day" *Moorish Guide* Vol. 1, No. 14 Friday March 1, 1929.
[44] Ibid.
[45] "What is an Auxiliary?" This site of the Moorish Science Temple of America, Inc. has a brief response to this question of what an auxiliary is and reprinted three articles from the *Moorish Guide* regarding the Moorish National Sister's Auxiliary: "The Moorish National Auxiliary Well on Its Way," "Preparation for Moorish Tag Day In Readiness to be Celebrated In All Temples," and "To Hold Tag Day in Temple Number One." http://www.moorishsciencetempleofamericainc.com/AuxilaryAppointedOfficials.html.
[46] "Temple Reports" *Moorish Guide,* 1928 available in the collections at the Schomburg Center, New York Public Library.
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[49] Sister R. Jones-Bey, "Public Notice of New Jersey" *Moorish Voice,* April 19, 1935.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid.

Symbolism and Science: African American Freemasonry and Photography in MSTA

Introduction

Throughout the twentieth century, visual culture became an increasingly important aspect of life in the United States. Photography was employed for a variety of purposes. Able to represent cultural identity, the portrait became a staple of American middle class life. Many political and cultural leaders used the portrait to demonstrate their position within society. Race photographs were used in the burgeoning social sciences to designate hierarchies based upon phenotype. This racial stereotyping found its opponents among African American leaders. As art historian Shawn Michelle Smith has noted, W.E.B. Du Bois defended the humanity of African Americans in his exhibition at the 1900 Paris Exposition, *Types of American Negroes, Georgia, U.S.A.*[1] Other leaders, such as Marcus Garvey, also utilized the portrait to reify their status and value in American society. Much like Du Bois and Garvey, Noble Drew Ali used portrait photography to define his specific vision of Moorish-American identity. In an attempt to disrupt the narrative of African American belonging to the American nation, Noble Drew Ali and his followers developed a group identity that relied on recognition of Moroccan ancestry and roots to an Asiatic past. The photographs as sites for the performance of the beliefs, values, and customs of the Moorish Science Temple enabled an embodied representation of national origin and group identity.

Photography became an instrument of the scientific community and its power to define, capture, and categorize reality seeped into American culture. The World's Fairs,

National Geographic Magazine, migration photographs, and local museums were just some of the cultural spaces that exhibited the new and exciting scientific mediums commonly used to portray life in the early twentieth century. Alongside these popular images, the portrait was a valued source of defining middle class status. The use of photography and science alike contributed to the burgeoning social science definition of racial difference and otherness. African Americans' ongoing struggle for recognition as full American citizens was exacerbated by the reliance on a racial discourse codified by the newly formed social sciences. In an effort to vindicate the position of African Americans, intellectuals and leaders alike took up the camera and introduced competing images of life along the color line. Alongside photos by W.E.B. Du Bois and Marcus Garvey, Noble Drew Ali, leader and prophet of the Moorish Science Temple, added to the contrasting definitions of African American heritage. Images of Noble Drew Ali and members of the Moorish Science Temple exemplified lavish black nobility and signaled the power of the Temple.

The photos of Noble Drew Ali and his followers add to our understanding of the social construction of race in the United States. Rather than being understood as a quirky deviation from the more traditional forms of American social and religious movements, Moorish Science should be evaluated as a participant in the production of racial knowledge through the performative quality of photography. Noble Drew Ali harnessed the power of science through the name of his religious group as well as his use of photography, disrupting stereotypes of African Americans in the early twentieth century. Through a process of self definition, Noble Drew Ali vindicated the position of his

followers as national subjects by identifying them as "Moorish Americans". The photography of the movement was both a performative move to reconstruct racial knowledge, and a political one to earn Moorish Americans a respectable place as first class citizens of the United States.

Through a compilation of religious philosophies, members of the Moorish Science Temple carved out their own niche in America's burgeoning urban centers. Pseudo-scientific racism acted as a potent force in the early twentieth century to subjugate not only the bodies, but more importantly, the minds of racialized subjects. With the assistance of the bourgeoisie intelligentsia, race rampantly made its mark on modernity, permeating layers of national and global society and ultimately becoming part of the normative structures in territories touched by European and American colonialism.[2] Noble Drew Ali's creation of the Moorish Science Temple should be understood within this historical context. Scientific racism's grasp in the United States was strong enough to warrant the appropriation of alternate racial categories and identification with nationalities not marked by skin color prejudice; Moorish Science epitomizes this phenomenon.

By hearkening back to an African, specifically Moroccan identity, Ali reinscribed his followers' place in the United States.[3] The racial atmosphere of the United States allowed Ali and his followers to create a place for themselves and a religious community. Noble Drew Ali participated in a re-definition of black identity through explicit cultural statements. According to historian Edward E. Curtis, IV, "the Moors enjoyed not only religious service at their temple, but grand displays and public rituals meant to expose

others to Moorish wisdom and to build the group's popularity."[4] The use of photography should be included as a means in which Moorish wisdom and popularity was garnered. Images of Moorish Science presented lavish black nobility and power to define the members of the Moorish Science Temple generally, and Noble Drew Ali specifically. Through the analysis of photographs representative of the ideology of Ali and the MST, I argue that they utilized a number of available cultural cues such as middle class race photographs, freemasonry, and Islam to take something familiar in American society and transform it into something unique.

Race Photography in the United States

By the mid- nineteenth century race began to permeate Americans' national identity making its way across the Atlantic through the "enlightened" ideas of western modernity. U.S. notions of racial superiority became linked to the notion of "manifest destiny" and as historian Reginald Horsman has demonstrated, "The American intellectual community did not merely absorb European ideas, it also fed European racial appetites with scientific theories stemming from the supposed knowledge and observation of blacks and Indians."[5] Given this approach to national identity and the definition of citizen directly above and against African Americans and Indians, it was viable to combat the weapons of modern identity formation with alternative portraits of these non-whites as American citizens.[6] Therefore, Noble Drew Ali and more specifically his creation of The Moorish Science Temple of Ameri ca was one of the early twentieth century manifestations of this struggle for self definition.[7] As Richard Brent Turner has argued, one the keys to understanding both the religious and political significance of Moorish

Science lies in the phrase uttered by Noble Drew Ali, "The name means everything."[8] This insight is significant as it confirmed the use of science to combat the racial stereotypes of the era. If the name really did mean everything, then not only the adoption of a Moorish identity, but also the reliance on science is a critical component of the way we understand Noble Drew Ali's movement.

Noble Drew Ali's photographs were demonstrative of the visual culture of the Moorish Science Temple and participated in the reconstruction of racial knowledge. Shawn Michelle Smith in her analysis of W.E. B. Du Bois' 1900 Paris Exposition, *Types of American Negroes, Georgia, U.S.A.*, argued that race should be viewed as both fundamental to and defined by visual culture and seen as mutually constitutive. Photographic archives must be read as racialized sites contested through cultural meaning.[9] Du Bois' extensive collection served to challenge scientific racists by transposing the African American body away from the realm of science and into that of class and culture. As Smith argued, the middle class portrait became a site of African American resistance and reorientation. Du Bois' collection of photos held a particular argument about African American life and history, acting as a counter-archive they upheld the reality of a black patriarchal and middle class group that aimed at disrupting the pervasive notions of African Americans as intellectually and culturally inferior. The photographs of Noble Drew Ali were not as widely displayed as those of Du Bois, yet they too contributed to redefining conceptions of race in the early twentieth century.

In looking at photographs as a counter-archive, I argue that Noble Drew Ali's portraits also aimed at breaking down prevailing notions of racial inferiority. They did

Figure 4.1: Drew Ali with Moroccan and American Flags

this in a number of ways, but primarily they took customs and symbols that were already at work in the society and refashioned them into something new and progressive. This caused people to recognize the movement as echoing something familiar, while, at the same time, providing them with a self-knowledge that reflected a reinterpretation of history, religion, and national belonging. The photographs in this archive demonstrate this especially through the use of Masonic and Islamic symbolism. The cultural work of the photographs turned normative notions of African Americans on their head and offered a new and alternative explanation of race. The emphasis on a Moorish heritage was buttressed by an overt physical expression of clothing and further entrenched through photographs that cemented Moorish identity for future generations.[10] Much like the photographs collected in Du Bois' archive, Noble Drew Ali's images seem to be highly staged portraits meant to evoke a particular identity.

The first portrait identified is of Noble Drew Ali in western attire, dressed in a suit and tie, with a large brimmed Stetson style hat. Pens and a pocket watch adorn his left breast, while he holds an American flag in his left hand and a Moroccan flag in his right.[11] Ali stares into the camera sitting on top of a bench draped with an embellished

cloth. The flags in Ali's hands are the primary focus of the portrait's statement. The juxtaposition of the flags could signify the coalescence of the two nations within the bodies of Moorish Americans. Ali's dress here is not the usual garb that most pictures of the MST highlight; this could be for several reasons. The portrait could be read as contributing to the archive of middle-class photography, common throughout the 19th and early 20th century, denoting a message possibly unrelated to the religious motivations of the Moorish Science Temple. It could be utilizing the familiarity with photography in religious culture, while, at the same time, advancing a new identity that moved away from African American toward Moorish American. Noble Drew Ali was part of the migration of African Americans from the South to northern urban centers, so this photograph could also be representative of the great migration photography that pictured African Americans who had left the south in search of a better life.[12] While the origin and the exact date of the photograph are currently unknown, Ali's stance on American nationalism is quite clear. He, much like Du Bois, took issue with the notions of black inferiority offered by scientific racists of the era. Demonstrating both his class and intellect through his clothing and props, Ali sits in a critical position towards U.S. conceptions of race and challenged the contemporary identifications of African Americans by offering the alternative identity of Moorish-Americans. This photograph encapsulates this move toward re-identification with Morocco and illustrates Ali's prescription for his followers.

The Role of Freemasonry in MSTA

Historians who have studied the Moorish Science Temple agree that it was in some fashion shaped by the practices of African American Freemasonry. It is important to have some understanding of African American Freemasonry to identify several of the practices of the Moorish Science Temple. By comparing the MSTA to African American Freemasonry, it is possible to identify the direct links between the two and offer possible reasons for these connections. Although not much is known of the early life of Noble Drew Ali, some of the stories of his life provided by members of Moorish Science suggest that he was a mason. Historian Richard Brent Turner has argued, "Noble Drew Ali, the first self-styled prophet of modern American Islam, appropriated ideas and symbols not only from Garveyism but also from the global religion of Islam, Freemasonry, Theosophy, and nineteenth century Pan-Africanism." Turner points out some of the adoptions of Noble Drew Ali, arguing that, "He appropriated some of the symbols of Freemasonry, such as the fez, turban, crescent and star, circle seven, all-seeing eye, clasped hands, Sphinx of Giza, and pyramids for his movement. As Ali knew, black Freemasonry was a cultural conduit for eastern religious ideas and rituals and for Pan-Africanist thought and it was packaged in the form that appealed to the black masses." Turner concluded, "Noble Drew Ali was probably a Freemason (there are photographs of him in "Egyptian Shriner" garb), and his association with this organization partly explains the 'eclectic religious motif' of his movement."[13]

Peter Lamborn Wilson (aka Hakim Bey), author of *Sacred Drift: Essays on the Margins of Islam,* argues that "Noble Drew Ali's 'Islam' had historical roots, of several

kinds—first in various secret societies, second in certain surviving groups of Islamic-descended black Americans."[14] In discussing the roots of Islam in Moorish Science, Wilson claims that both secret societies and Islamic practices had a prominent position in the configuration of the religion. More importantly he argues that, "The first deep source of Moorish Science is Masonry."[15] He claims that the roots of Islam in Western culture go back to the time of the Crusades and actually embedded itself in Masonic knowledge. Wilson explains that European freemasonry actually admitted blacks, but it was American practices that were largely racially separate. In fact, he argues that Prince Hall Lodges have legitimate European charters under the names the Chapter of the Eastern Star, Order of the Golden Circle, and Knights of the Invisible Colored Kingdom. This connection suggests the depth of masonry that he argues is a source of Moorish Science. He presents information from an informant, M.A. Ahari, that "Noble Drew Ali was a 'Phythian Knight, a Shriner, a Prophet of the Veiled Realm, and, of course, a thirty-second degree Mason."[16]

Noble Drew Ali's use of Masonic symbols, gestures, and dress in Moorish Science signal an intimate knowledge of African American freemasonry. If we assume that Drew Ali was at some point in his lifetime an active Mason, then we can also assume that he was someone worthy of acceptance into the selective and exclusive all-male group. According to historian Loretta J. Williams in order to become a Mason, "The individual must be nominated or recommended by a member and must have achieved some measure of economic success and community visibility or popularity viewed as evidence of good moral character."[17] In addition to having a certain amount of public

Figure 4.2: Noble Drew Ali in Masonic Attire

visibility, "the candidate must be assessed as a man of honor, intelligent and free from any bodily defect that would prevent him from carrying out his Masonic duties."[18] Both scholars and members of MST have alluded to the possibility of Drew Ali's participation in freemasonry, yet few have discussed what this type of involvement meant for the Moorish Science religion. The aspects of Moorish Science that are visible adaptations from freemasonry are important links that Drew Ali chose to maintain in the development of his religious movement. One of the main mediums through which we are able to view the Masonic adoptions of Noble Drew Ali is in the photography. It played an important part in the representation and dissemination of Moorish Science, as many of the photos of Ali and MST were circulated through newspapers such as *The Chicago Defender* and *The Moorish Guide.*

The photograph adheres more to a Masonic representation of Ali, picturing him standing next to a table with his left hand placed on an opened book; and conveys notions of black middle class respectability. Ali is dressed in a three-piece suit and tie, with pocket watch dangling in front and pen in left breast pocket. The portrait is similar to some of those in Du Bois' collection, with the dark curtain draped in the background and

the use of props that signify cultural sophistication. One notable difference between this photo and the previous is the fez Ali is wearing. This symbol of the Moorish Science Temple signifies the links to, at the very least, a Masonic cultural heritage. This move toward a Moorish-American nationality can be understood as a gradual adoption that blended cultural symbols present in the contemporary society with Ali's interpretation to create something new.[19] Scholars have long suspected his participation in Masonic activities prior to the creation of Moorish Science. Through the various cultural symbols he adopted and adapted to Moorish Science, it is evident that Freemasonry was at the very least an important cultural conduit for the practices of MST.

The clothing featured in this particular photo, specifically the fez, echoes the influence of both the Shriners and Islam. The photograph in this instance demonstrates the syncretism in Ali's practices between notions of Western respectability and Islamic cultural identity. This portrait of Ali makes a bold statement especially in comparison to the former. It does not necessarily link cultural belonging to the United States, but instead cites the sophistication and progress of Ali as remnants of a respectable heritage of both Islam and Freemasonry.

The origins of Black Freemasonry in America

Most scholars agree that freemasonry did in fact shape the religious values and cultural symbolism of Moorish Science and was a critical reference point for the movement. With its historical origins dating back to the founding of the nation, associational ties with freemasonry made Moorish Science a more legitimate and respected affiliation. There are a number of places where the role of freemasonry in

Moorish Science can be seen, particularly their dress. A number of MST photographs illustrate the visual cues and cultural allusion that Noble Drew Ali utilized to take easily recognized cultural symbols and transform them into something new that challenged African American positionality in U.S. society.

African American freemasonry in the United States was an enterprise that arose during the Revolutionary War when black artisan, Prince Hall, and fourteen other free men of color in Boston were initiated into the Ancient and Accepted Order of Freemasons. The fifteen men shortly afterward established their own lodge, the Provisional African Lodge No. 1, later African Lodge No. 459, and Hall became the first Grand Master. After attempting to obtain a permanent charter for almost ten years, the African Lodge was recognized by the Grand Lodge of England in September of 1784. Hall's death in 1807 was honored by the renaming of the African Grand Lodge to the Prince Hall Grand Lodge. Therefore, the historical origins of African American freemasonry are rooted in the foundation of the nation and encompass both the fight for freedom as well as the racially exclusive aspects of that liberty. The connection then between MST and African American freemasonry bolster the legitimacy claims of the movement and connect the claims of nationality and belonging to the foundations of U.S. citizenship.[20]

While African American freemasonry was initiated by the establishment of the African Lodge, historian Corey B. Walker has argued that we should view its origins not as an American phenomenon, but rather a Diasporic and Atlantic World development. This move away from an American exceptionalist reading of African American

freemasonry toward a more global or diasporic understanding of these networks widens our understanding of the cultural roots of freemasonry to a more extensive and inclusive process. Walker argues, "When situating African American Freemasonry as the central site for interrogating cultural identity, we are reminded of the rhetorics, discourses, and performances utilized by these historical actors in this fraternal order in attempting to articulate some sense of a shared cultural ethos."[21] The use of freemasonry to speak the same language can help to make sense of the cultural identity or ethos designated in the diasporic claim of MST members as Moors from Morocco, and may help give credence to their long standing diasporic identification away from possibility into the realm of reality. In other words, if we can agree (as many scholars have) that Noble Drew Ali relied on knowledge he gained from fraternal orders to create the Moorish Science Temple, then by taking a closer look at the establishment of African American freemasonry we may better understand the choices Drew Ali made in associating his organization with a cultural heritage stemming from Morocco. Particularly, this affiliation of MST members as members of a larger diasporic group of Africans can be understood not only as a feature of a general connection to the African continent, but rather one that is informed by the practice of black freemasonry, a practice which by its origins was already diasporic in nature.

Moreover, scholars of African American freemasonry have argued that because of the racially exclusive culture of the United States, African American freemasonry was influenced more by the fraternal associations that had long been a part of African roots than those of European freemasonry.[22] Black Nationalist leader and intellectual Martin R.

Delaney, during a speech to the St. Cyprian Lodge #13 in 1853, for example, argued that the Masonic movement originated in Ethiopia, Egypt, and Assyria, giving the African continent the legitimacy of Masonic creation.[23] The focus on Africa as both the creator of freemasonry and the cultural roots of African American fraternal organizations solidifies the diasporic nature of these organizations and enhances the centrality of Africa in the heart and minds of African Americans in the nineteenth and twentieth century. This is important because it enables us to further recognize the validity of Moorish Science's association with Africa, more specifically with Morocco, as the root of its cultural practice and genealogy. The ties made between a Moorish heritage and American national belonging are part of the transformative power members of Moorish Science relied on in their adherence to the MST. With the historical connections available to Noble Drew Ali and members of MST through freemasonry, it is clear that the identification with Moroccan heritage is not a great leap in creativity, but rather an informed association made by temple members with their historical roots.

While the symbols and genealogy can be traced to African American freemasonry, Moorish Science most closely embodies the fraternal organization of the Ancient Egyptian Arabic Order Nobles of the Mystic Shrine (AEAONMS), also referred to as the Black Shriners. The Black Shriners represent an Islamic interpretation of African American freemasonry which parallels the cultural and religious affiliations found in Moorish Science. According to shrine history, the Black Shriners were established in 1893 during the Columbian Exposition in Chicago. The Shriners founder, John George Jones, was possibly influenced by the "The Street of Cairo," said to be one

of the fair's greatest attractions. The Street of Cairo was a re-created based on the Cairo of old Egypt and contained a mosque that was a replica of the Mosque of Abou Bakir Mazhar of Sultan Kait Bey. "The Muezzin, Sheik Ali, in charge of the spiritual welfare of the Mohammedans who were in the majority on the street, was faithful in his duties, for in the Mosque one would find numbers of worshippers in their daily devotions."[24] The presence of Muslim worshippers at the fair demonstrates a significant presence of Islam in Chicago in the 1890s. Influence of Islamic doctrine in Chicago helps to explain not only the creation of AEAONMS but also the flourishing of Moorish Science.

The choice of a Moroccan identity rather than an Egyptian one is the main difference between AEAONMS and MST, although it does not undermine the influence of freemasonry on MST. In fact, it reveals the process by which Ali extracted cultural practices from his environment, but then altered them to suit his own prophetic solution to the racial problems facing African Americans at that time. Indeed, for a time, Drew Ali went by the name: Professor Drew, The Egyptian Adept, illustrating a more intimate affiliation with AEAONMS. The November 1956 issue of the *Moorish Review* reported that, "The Prophet started on his mission under the name of Professor Drew the Egyptian Adept, [and] The Moorish literature contains "the Industrious Acts of the Moslem" [written] by Professor Drew [and] he also founded the Canaanite Temple in the year of 1913 in Newark, New Jersey. He had over nine hundred members. After a period of time a man came to Newark from Sudan, Egypt teaching languages."[25] The title of "Egyptian Adept" strengthens the argument that Ali participated in African American freemasonry, or at the very least was culturally influenced by the prominence of the Nobles of the

Mystic Shrine. The combination of the use of Egypt and the term "adept," used to signify knowledge and proficiency, illustrates that Ali had contact with freemasonry and was influenced by it. That the man who came to Newark from "Sudan" and taught "Egyptian" languages may have found more credibility in the community of followers in the Canaanite Temple could quite possibly help to explain Ali's transition from an Egyptian identity to a Moorish-American nationality. A competitor specializing in Egyptian languages may have pushed Ali to focus on the Moors in Morocco.

In fact, the reliance on both an Egyptian title and a connection to Moorish greatness is evident in the writing by "Professor Drew" in the "Industrious Acts of the Moslem." Drew's article discussed the beauty and superiority of Moroccan architecture, tracing the history of the style back to Damascus and revealed its more contemporary appearance in the motifs in the famous Dutch ceramic tiles. Ali's North African history of architectural crafts highlighted Moorish antiquity and wisdom. "This mode of disappearing walls with arabesques and stuccoing the vaults with grotto work was invented in Damascus but highly improved by the Moors in Morocco." So, while presenting himself as an Egyptian Adept, Drew was moving toward an emphasis on Moorish identification. His early use of an Egyptian identification may have resulted from his participation in or exposure to Black Shriners. Either way, his development of "Moorish Science" included the use of African American Masonic symbolism and knowledge; the connection becomes even more evident when interpreting the photos produced in the 1920s by MST and Black Shriners.

A poster of a group of black Shriners from January 1924 included phrases and terms similar to those used by the Moorish Science Temple. The men are pictured in suits and ties with fezzes and referred to as "Osiris Temple No. 67". These details parallel and visibly echo the photograph of Ali pictured in his suit, tie, and fez. The greeting on the top of the poster, "Es Salamu Aleikum-Aleikum Es Salamu" also emphasizes the Islamic nature of the Masonic organization and is also found in Ali's writings. The poster is an advertisement for a parade, similar to the "grand displays" the MSTA produced years

Figure 4.3: Image of black Shriners at Masonic Temple in Daytona, Florida, January 31, 1924

later. On both the masons' fez and flag the crescent moon and star are displayed, the same symbols used by Moorish Science years later. There are distinct similarities in the

framing of this photograph of the nobles of the mystic shrine and male members of Moorish Science. The parallels provide points of entry into the interpretation of African American freemasonry's influence in the formation of an alternate cultural identity for African Americans in the early twentieth century.[26]

Additional photographs of Shriners and Moorish Science reinforce the cultural connections between Ali and the black Shriners. In August 1912, for example, the "Third Grand International Conference of Knights Templars and Imperial Council of Nobles of the Mystic Shrine" was held in Washington, D.C. The poster advertising the event included a photograph strikingly similar to one taken of members of Moorish Science in 1927 at their first annual session. The garments worn by these Shriners are more ornate than those worn in the 1924 poster; they exhibit a more "orientalized" form of Egyptian nobility. Each member is wearing a headpiece and some are in their traditional fezzes, while others are adorned in turban style headdress. The man in the front and center of the photograph is wearing what resembles an Egyptian pharaoh's headdress and clearly signifies his leadership position. Two men are bent down on one knee paying homage to the leader. The photograph exalts the group as regal, demonstrating their respectability and grandeur. Likewise, the photograph of members of Moorish Science at the first session echo visual themes present in the Shriner poster. In fact, the similarities between the two images urge us to think more seriously about the very real and possible connections between early African American organizations using Islam, such as Moorish Science, and African American Masonic organization using Islam, such as the Black Shriners.

Figure 4.4: Image of black Shriners Third International Conference, 19 August 1912

Figure 4.5: Image of Moorish Science members at First Convention, October 1928

While it is evident that Moorish Science adapted the cultural symbols of the Nobles of the Mystic Shrine, there were other symbols available to Ali in early twentieth century America that Ali reconfigured in his brand of religious belief and practice. Ali utilized the relevance and familiarity of Islam in early twentieth century cultural space to his advantage, riffing off of dress, religious knowledge, and biblical interpretation to fashion Moorish Science as a reflection of African ancestry legitimated by historical truth.

The Cultural Influences of Islam in Moorish Science

Portraits of Ali present him in orientalized Islamic regalia, complete with turban, kurta, sash, and cummerbund. In negotiating U.S. racial environment, his choice of an "Asiatic" identity placed him and his followers in a position of power. By adopting an alternative nationality, Ali and his followers attempted to subvert the categorization given to African-descended people in the U.S. Ali's goal was much the same as Du Bois', but rather than appealing to middle class standards, Ali appealed to a transnational identification that often provided room for foreign-born blacks to have access to the same freedoms as whites in the United States. This portrait has many layers of performance that when deconstructed reveal a counter-archive of early twentieth century African American photography. Held up against scientifically sanctioned ideas about racial hierarchy, Noble Drew Ali performed an alternative view of African American life, tied to African and Asian cultural systems and traditions.

Figure 4.6: Noble Drew Ali

The photograph in this era asserted through visual image the complexities of identity in the early twentieth century. A multiplicity of images of Ali in his Moroccan style clothing demonstrate the use of photography to disrupt normative ideas of blackness, but also to emphasize the centrality that Moroccan identity took on within The Moorish Science Temple.

Figure 4.7: Noble Drew Ali, leader of MSTA in 1925

In a full-length photo of Ali standing, is placed against the background of clouds in possibly the same photo-shoot. As Sayyid Al Imaam Isa Al Haadi Al Mahdi in *Who Was Noble Drew Ali?* explained that the positioning of Noble Drew Ali in this photograph affirms his position as a Mason. The stance of his feet, and the placement of his hand on his chest, are all explained as traditionally Masonic influences.[27] This consistent combination of the use of masonic symbols with Islamic identity solidified an unique space for both Ali and his followers. Ali and his movement would go onto influence the formation and development of the Nation of Islam and create a lasting intellectual, cultural, and political legacy within the African American community.

Figure 4.8: Noble Drew Ali at Office

Other images of Noble Drew Ali highlight his role as the religious leader of the Moorish Science Temple. One image depicts Ali at a desk in his Islamic styled clothes. He is wearing a turban and sash, similar to "orientalized" dress he is seen wearing in other pictures. He sits with a few books opened in front of him and a stack of books to his left. He again gazes into the camera, but in this photo he seems to exert a focus and seriousness not found in other pictures. He appears studious, astute, and authoritative. Along with the previous images of the Moorish Science Temple's prophet, Ali conveys a charismatic allure and offers a counter-archive beyond U.S. racial distinctions. While the scholarship on Noble Drew Ali and the Moorish Science Temple pay little attention to the performative aspects of the images produced by the movement, they also allow understanding of the larger cultural meanings of Moorish Science.

The photograph of Noble Drew Ali among his followers during a birthday celebration shows Ali standing front and center with his arms raised up as if he is preaching, surrounded on all sides by his followers. They too are adorned in Moroccan clothing and sit rigidly beside their leader. Other accoutrements of class and culture included are books and a piano.[28] This photograph was featured on the front page of an issue of *The Moorish Guide* on Friday, 15 February 1929. The caption under the photograph reads, "Prophet Noble Drew Ali, founder of the Moorish Science Temple of America, is seen here in the midst of his birthday celebration blessing those who bore gifts upon that momentous occasion. Similar blessings will be conferred upon nearly

every member of the faith shortly when the Prophet makes his nation-wide tour." This photo's dramatic nature emphasizes the performative qualities of the MST and play on the ties to Morocco and Islamic religious practices. The caption's reference to the "blessings [that] will be conferred upon nearly every member" illustrates the religious motivations and respect for Islam and encourages members and those exposed to the MST message to accept Moorish doctrine in order to receive the blessings of the prophet.

This image and ones like it have previously been read as displays of publicity by MST in attempts to gain respectability. Historian Susan Nance has argued that, "for a time, the Moors and their prophet, Ali, did become publicly respectable by staging exoticizing but law-abiding displays of publicity that drew on whatever positive stereotypes of Morocco and Islam existed in black and white American culture."[29] While it is true that the Moors did become popular in part due to their grand displays, including wearing red fezzes and flashing their identification cards in the streets. As part of a counter-archive, this image says much more about the nature of African American religious identity at that time. While most African Americans of this period considered themselves Christians, Noble Drew Ali offered a different religion based on an African-Asiatic heritage. Nance, may suggest that both Ali and his followers understanding of Morocco and Islam were drawn from "whatever positive stereotypes," my research indicates a much more complicated, nuanced, and intellectually credible of use of Africa and Islam. Ultimately, images like this convey the respectability of Islam in American culture and demonstrate that Moorish-Americans were part of this noble tradition.

While the images of Noble Drew Ali and his movement form a counter-archive to mainstream Western portrayals of African American life, Ali's visual cues also present another possibility. They offer an alternative middle-class religiously inspired image of respectability. This addition to the visual culture of the 1920s expands conceptions of race and class to include the performance and pageantry of the counter-archive. Many early twentieth century black leaders used propaganda like the photograph to make readily available their ideological positions on pan-Africanism and life in the United States. The collection of photographs of Ali and MST contribute to our understanding of this volatile period in African American history and help to make what may seem strange or obscure, actually central to our conceptions of the way folks were thinking of themselves. Especially in light of the flourishing of pan-African ideals found in Graveyism and the number of movements inspired by Garveyism. Moorish Science's version of pan-Africanism and identification as "Asiatic" prominently factors into this discussion, and thus the visual culture of Moorish Science should be included in this larger discussion of African American visual representation, respectability, and political posturing.

This analysis of the photography of Noble Drew Ali reveals the complexity of both the leader and the movement. The cultural work of Moorish Science's photography is clear in that it challenged the religious and racial conceptions of the time. American trust in social scientific reasoning placed the photograph in the position to become a tool of resistance. By disrupting these misconceptions about racial hierarchy in the early twentieth century, race leaders used the camera to reinforce positive images of black

people, and by doing so, offered a counter to the imposed inferiority of African Americans by contemporary "scientific knowledge." Although, our understanding of the photographs of Moorish Science should not be reduced to a concern with scientific racism, as they served multiple purposes. They were used to help publicize the movement to keep members abreast of the activities of MST, and to exhibit the authority of the prophet, Noble Drew Ali.

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[1]Shawn Michelle Smith, *Photography on the Colorline: W.E.B. Du Bois, Race, and Visual Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

[2] Denise Da Silva, *Toward a Global Idea of Race* (University of Minnesota Press, 2007), xiii.

[3] Here I am referring to the wave of vindication that relies on the historical greatness of Africa. Usually vindication scholars begin back in ancient Nile Valley Civilizations to rectify the placement of descendants of Africans in the Americas, post-racial slavery. I am thinking specifically of people within Noble Drew Ali's contemporary intellectual climate, such as Edward Blyden, W.E.B. Du Bois, Carter G. Woodson, and others. This emphasis in the burgeoning vindication work of the period could have explanatory factors on the choice of a "Moroccan" identity.

[4] Edward E. Curtis, "Debating the Origins of the Moorish Science Temple: Toward a New Cultural History" in *The New Black Gods: Arthur Huff Fauset and the Study of African American Religions* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), 70-90.

[5] Reginald Hoorseman, "Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism" in *Critical White Studies: Looking Beyond the Mirror,* ed., Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997), 140.

[6] Oral history pertaining to the origins of Noble Drew Ali, mention that he was part Cherokee, if this is the case then photography of Noble Drew Ali could serve to vindicate both groups. Oral history relating to the origins of Noble Drew Ali may be found in a number of scholarly accounts. Arthur Huff Fauset, *Black Gods of the Metropolis* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1944), 41-52. Arna Bontemps and Jack Conroy, *They Seek a City* (garden City: Country Life Press, 1945), 174-177; St. Clair Drake and Horace R. Cayton, *Black Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life in a Northern City* (Brace and Company, 1945); E.U Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism: A Search for an Identity in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), 1-62 are particularly relevant; C. Eric Lincoln, *The Black Muslims in America* (Trenton: Africa World Press, Inc., 1961), 1-63; Clifton E. Marsh, *From Black Muslims to Muslims: The Transition from Separatism to Islam, 1930-1980* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1984), 41-50; Peter Lamborn Wilson, *Sacred Drift: Essays on the Margins of Islam* (San Francisco: City Light Books, 1993), 13-50; Richard Brent Turner, *Islam in the Africa-American Experience* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 71-108; Albert J. Raboteau, *Canaan Land: A Religious History of African Americans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 90; Hans Baer and Merrill Singer, *African American Religion: Varieties of Protest and Accommodation, Second edition* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2002), 57, 121-123; Edward E. Curtis, IV, *Islam in Black America: Identity, Liberation, and Difference in African-American Islamic Thought* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 45-62; Susan Nance, "Mystery of the Moorish Science Temple: Southern Blacks and American Alternative Spirituality in 1920s Chicago" in *Religion and American Culture,* Vol. 12, No. 2 (Summer 2002), 123-66. Susan Nance, "Respectability and Representation: The Moorish Science Temple, Morocco, and Black Public Culture in 1920s Chicago" in *American Quarterly* Volume 54, Number 4 (December 2002), 623-659; Michael A. Gomez, *Black Crescent: The Experience and Legacy of African Muslims in the Americas* (New York:

Cambridge University Press, 2005), 203-275; Edward E. Curtis IV and Danielle Brune Sigler, eds. *The New Black Gods: Arthur Huff Fauset and the Study of African American Religions* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), 70-87.

[7] Richard Brent Turner, *Islam and African Americans*, (New York Public Library and Proquest Information and Learning Company: electronic volume, 2006), 1.

[8] Ibid, p.4.

[9] Shawn Michelle Smith, *Photography on the Colorline: W.E.B. Du Bois, Race, and Visual Culture*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 3. Also see Shawn Michelle Smith, *American archives: Gender, Race, and Class in Visual Culture* (Princeton University Press, 1999), 157-186.

[10] A note about the method involved in obtaining the photographs is due here. The six photographs were found by the author in a Google Image search. This makes their origin a bit more complicated and needs further research to make sense of the timeline of the performative work. The following is a list of the various websites the images were taken from, www.zulunation.com/6017665.gif, www.moorsgate.com/wp-content/uploads/2006/10, www.whitecarver.com/albums/WeAreGreat/ThePro, www.blackpast.org/.../Noble_Drew_Ali.jpg, www.mooishrepublic.com/untitled-1.jpg.

[11] The following is an interpretation of the photographs taken from a current website. "Pictured above (upper right) is The Illustrious Noble Drew Ali, Holding the Flags of Morocco and United States while Registering The Moorish Americans, as a New Nation and Sovereign power, at the 1928 Pan American Conference For Indigenous Nations. Also make careful notice of the above picture at the upper left: Is a reflection of Moorish Secretary Juanita Richardson Bey at the Home Office with her Prophet, Noble Drew Ali. Equally important is the national 'hand writings on the wall.' Study the flags on the wall of Drew Ali office. The above black and white photos are a few of many displaying Noble Drew Ali's vexillology of the flags of Morocco and Corporate UNITED STATES. Whenever he displayed either of these flags they were always 'Upside Downward' and / or 'backward.' Pictured at the right; notice Drew Ali's upright posture is that of an Ancient Kemetian Adept Master. Although he has the flags of two governments in his hands, He has his legs crossed left over right. This denotes both Governments are now recognized as being in dire adversity by those who know law. The importance of this science was Drew Ali's warning to the Moorish Americans showing neither government had the will nor strength to free them or save themselves. Still, to this day, many half-awake Moorish hoist the flags of Morocco and Corporate USA declaring these flags represent the free national name "Moorish American." Meanwhile the flag of Morocco is not Moorish but Moroccan. And the flag of the United States is not American but *of* America. This is to say, the free national name "Moorish American" have never been represented or supported by the Governments of Africa which sold them into slavery or the European Governments that enslaved them. It appears someone did not follow Prophet Noble Drew Ali ...oh well, back to Cuba..." The website this information was obtained from, http://www.sevensealspublications.com/566111.html.

[12] James N. Gregory, *The Southern Diaspora: How the Great Migrations of Black and White Southerners Transformed America* (University of North Carolina Press, 2005). This book contains photographs of the Great Migration that support my point.

[13] Turner, *Islam in the African American Experience*, 90-94.

[14] Wilson, *Sacred Drift*, 25.

[15] Ibid, 26.

[16] Ibid, 28.

[17] Loretta J. Williams, *Black Freemasonry and Middle-Class Realities* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1980), 51.

[18] Ibid.

[19] For more about the influence of freemasonry on the movement see, As Sayyid Al Imaam Isa, *Who was Noble Drew Ali?* (The Original Tents of Kedar, 1988), 81-85.

[20] Charles Wesley, *Prince Hall: Life and Legacy* (United Supreme Council, Southern Jurisdiction, Prince Hall Affiliation, 1977), 162.

[21]Corey D. B. Walker, *A Noble Fight: African American Freemasonry and the Struggle for Democracy in America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 61.

[22] Martin Robinson Delany, "The Origin and Objects of Ancient Freemasonry, Its Introduction into the United States, and Legitimacy among Colored Men a Treatise Delivered before St. Cyprian Lodge, No. 13, June 24th, A.D. 1853, A.L. 5853," (Pittsburgh: W.S. Haven, 1853); Corey D.B. Walker, *A Noble Fight: African American Freemasonry and the Struggle for Democracy in America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008).
[23] Paul Dunbar, "Hidden in Plain Sight: African American Secret Societies and Black Freemasonry." *Journal of African American Studies* Vol. 16, No. 4 (2012), 622-37.
[24] Joseph A. Walkes, Jr., *History of the Shrine: Ancient Egyptian Arabic Order Nobles of the Mystic Shrine, Inc. Prince Hall Affiliated, A Black Pillar of Society, 1893-1993* (Detroit: A.E.A.O.N.M.S., Inc., 1993), 9.
[25] "Prophet Noble Drew Ali," in *The Moorish Guide.* November 1956.
[26] Photograph courtesy of Emory University, Manuscripts, Archives, and Rare Books Library, African American History Misc. File.
[27] As Sayyid Al Imaam Isa, *Who was Noble Drew Ali?* (The Original Tents of Kedar, 1988), 81-85.
[28] An interesting note about the use of the piano in this photo: in Smith's analysis of Du Bois' counter-archive, she also brings up a picture with a young girl playing the piano while being guided by an African American patriarchal figure. She mentioned the debate between Booker T. Washington and Du Bois on the role and nature of the piano in black life. Washington saw the piano as a useless and meaningless symbol of black attempts to gain middle class stature. Washington prioritized an industrial emphasis, one that placed European cultural affinities outside of the immediate need of black folk in the U.S. In thinking about this type of cultural debate, what can be made of the placement of the piano in this portrait of The Moorish Science Temple? Did it simply signify the role of music within the worship of the Temple? Or does the fact that no one seems to be playing the piano give reason to believe that this too is just another cultural prop endorsed by Ali? Further investigation into the origin of these photos is in order.
[29] Nance, "Respectability and Representation," 624.

The Final Days of Noble Drew Ali

In June 2010 members of a splinter group of the Moorish Science Temple of America (MSTA) made headlines in the Hampton Roads, Virginia newspaper, the *Daily Press*, for attempting to claim ownership of a home they said was built on Moorish property. There was a series of news articles claiming that "Factions within Religious Group Disagree over Claim to $645,000 Hampton Home" and "Religious Group Apologizes for Attempting to Claim House in Hampton."[1] Subsequent articles about this incident described the events as evidence of the chaotic nature of the contemporary Moorish movement, of which multiple dissident factions exist. The contestation between the different factions of Moorish Science dates back to the days of Noble Drew Ali, when the movement began suffering from internal divisions. Since then, there have been groups that claim legitimacy through charters given by the original Chicago branch, Temple No. 1, established by Noble Drew Ali; those that follow leaders who claim they are the reincarnation of Drew Ali; and those that follow the historical leadership of C. Kirkman Bey-who asserted authority over a majority of MSTA followers in the mid-1930s. Scholar of religion Spencer Dew has written multiple articles on the Moorish Science Temple and argued that, "Chaos, indeed, is the state of the Moorish nation today, the muddled and disappointing legacy of an early twentieth-century experiment at clarifying black identity in relation to American citizenship."[2] While Dew's comments on the current state of the "Moorish nation" may seem accurate given the numerous groups that utilize Moorish Science to legitimate their social and political observations also suggest

that of Noble Drew Ali's original political goals have has either been missing or forgotten.

This confusion surrounding the original political orientation of Moorish Science may partly be due to the seemingly clandestine nature of the organization. In 2001 religions scholar Debra Washington Mubashshir recorded her surprise that the Moorish Science Temple was still an active and living religion. As a student of religion she had heard of Noble Drew Ali and MSTA but had no idea that it still existed. It was through a Chicago obituary of the late Dr. Edward Page-El of Temple No. 1 that Mubashshir realized that there were still participating members of Noble Drew Ali's Islamist movement. She then contacted Dr. Page-El's surviving wife, Ann Page-El, who surprisingly invited Mubashshir into her home to discuss her late husband over breakfast. In her published article, Mubashshir openly admitted, "I did not expect her to be so open and inviting; after all, few researchers have been able to break the self-imposed code of silence that seemed to shield those associated with MSTA."[3] Mubashshir acknowledged that her encounter with Ann Page-El was informative and delightful. Although Ann Page-El was not a member of MSTA herself, she offered as much information as she could to Mubashshir; and when she was not able to answer the queries, she pointed Mubashshir to other members of the movement for additional assistance. The Moorish Science Temple, indeed, is alive with an active religious group that is constantly interpreting the works left behind by their prophet, Noble Drew Ali. It is with the assistance of historically minded "Moors" (a name that MSTA members call themselves) that social researchers have been able to investigate the contemporary and historical movement.

Throughout this research project scholars of MSTA, as well as participants in the movement, have been particularly helpful.[4] The Supreme Grand Sheik of Chicago's Temple No. 1, David Bailey El, maternal great grandson of the movement's Supreme Grand Historian, Edward Mealy El, allowed access to extensive historical records and documents on the founding and evolution of MSTA. Based on these important documents (some not previously been examined by scholars of Moorish Science), it is clear that those groups that utilize the name of Moorish Science including those who attempted to occupy the Hampton home in 2010, were either not aware of the political thrust behind Noble Drew Ali's formation of movement, or chose to ignore those aspects of the MSTA to advance their own personal or religious goals.

In Spencer Dew's analysis of the 2010 Hampton dispute, he stated that "this obscure news item nicely highlights the tensions between American law and the religion of Moorish Science, as well as the situation of 'sovereign citizen' groups in the United States." Dew subsequently cited what he referred to as a "typical contemporary 'Nationality and Identity card' from a branch of the Moorish Science movement" which claimed that members of MSTA are citizens of "Moorish America, an Ordained Government prepared in due time by the Great God."[5] What Dew did not disclose is that this version of the identity card used by some contemporary Moors not only diverges from the original version created by Noble Drew Ali, but also is not the primary card given to members of temples that fall under the authority of the original Temple No. 1 in Chicago, Il. Neither the original "nationality and identification" card of Moorish Science, as well as those used by contemporary members of the movement, state anything about

the individual citizen as a "Moorish America," or that Moorish America has an "ordained government." Rather both versions of the nationality and identification cards read :

> This is your Nationality and Identification Card for the Moorish Science Temple of America and Birthrights for the Moorish Americans, etc., we honor all the Divine Prophets, Jesus, Mohammed, Buddha, and Confucius. May the blessings of the God of our Father Allah, be upon you that carry this card. I do hereby declare that you are Moslem under the divine Laws of the Holy Koran of Mecca, Love, Truth, Peace, Freedom, and Justice. "I AM A CITIZEN OF THE U.S.A."[6]

The identification card only claims citizenship in the United States. It is clear from the cards and additional material published by Noble Drew Ali that he intended the MSTA to adhere to the laws of the United States and give its members a "free national name" so they could fully participate in the United States government. Despite this well known mission of the Moorish Science movement, confusion still exists among those who join the group and claim to be Moors.

The history of most religious groups has been filled with dissension and division, especially the most prominent religions. Yet, Moorish Science in particular has suffered from grave misunderstandings about the meaning and intent of the religious movement; this was evident even in the days of the prophet's leadership. As early as October 1928 Noble Drew Ali put out a warning to all "governors," "grand sheiks," and other officials of the MSTA temples, advising them that "those who have been delinquent may now know that they will not be tolerated any longer, because this great Divine and National movement must move on according to the Law…."[7] This was the first of many warnings by the prophet to the MSTA leaders and demonstrates the tensions and divisions within the early movement. It is therefore not surprising that a century after the creation of

Moorish Science, there still remains confusion and conflict over the political aspects of the Moorish movement. This chapter seeks to shed light on the foundational documents and the purpose behind creating a unified religious organization that upheld the laws of the United States, as well as those of the "Moorish nation." It is clear from analysis of these foundational documents that the Moorish Science Temple of America was created in accord with U.S. laws and sought to assist its members by teaching them to be law-abiding citizens, while creating a space for them to know and practice their Islamist religion.

On 16 October 1928 during the first annual convention, Noble Drew Ali gave instructions to temple leaders for operating their temples. These specific instructions were called "the general laws" and were announced to address a number of problems the prophet was having controlling the various MSTA branches. More than a third of these laws dealt with the temples financial dealings. Although there were no specific details about which temples needed to adhere to the new financial rules and regulations, it is clear from the number of laws that they dealt with many of the actions that were beginning to be a problem for the prophet. For example, Noble Drew Ali noted that he "had heard of many who charge for Membership- those are not Moors-but robbers."[8] And he reminded the leaders that membership was free and discussed the prices of various items sold at the temple, including twenty-five cents for buttons and cards; along with the membership fee which was fifty cents a month.

It was also clear that there was some abuse of the financial authority given to leaders of the temples. The use of the Emergency Fund, problems with borrowing and the

unauthorized purchase of property some of the issues. Each member was to contribute twenty-five to fifty cents each week to the Emergency Fund and that money was to be deposited into the bank account for "Moorish Science Temple of America-Finance."[9] This demonstrated the need to designate a "grand treasurer" who would be in charge of MSTA finances. During the final day of the convention 18 October 1928 Drew Ali announced the members of the "Supreme Grand Council" and named the "Supreme Treasurer." There may have also been problems arising from MSTA leaders borrowing money from the membership. One of the laws stated that leaders should not borrow any more than ten dollars from a member; and if the leader needed a loan, he should contact directly the grand body or prophet. Any plan to purchase property needed to be cleared with the "trustees and board."[10] The property also needed to be purchased under MSTA's name, and not any specific individual. Noble Drew Ali was ultimately responsible for all actions performed in the name of "Moorish Science." The subject of property was significant and the prophet warned the leaders, "Some of you have slipped, slipped drastically, so you had better lace up your shoes before I get there."[11] He reiterated that all business transactions and financial decisions needed to be done in the name of the MSTA.

In addition to financial problems, there also were social and behavioral issues regarding the temples. The temple leaders were instructed not to use any form of profanity in front of their members and were to refrain from all alcoholic beverages. They were also told not to act in any way that would cause public rebuke. Although there were no specific actions listed here, it seems that some of the leaders were engaging in illicit or

inappropriate behavior. The support of children may have been neglected in some temples. The leaders were told that it was their responsibility to care for the children in their temples; if they did not then they were not "true Moors." The leadership was also told that they needed to live among their members and even be loved by them, as the prophet was. Lastly, the prophet alerted his leaders that if serious problems should arise, they should contact him immediately and not try to solve the problems themselves.[12]

After the release of the general laws on 17 October 1928, the prophet Noble Drew Ali announced the "supreme laws." These laws stated concisely many of the rules that were issued earlier and clearly outlined the qualifications for maintaining a leadership position in MSTA. The supreme laws made it clear that all leaders needed to be of good moral character, to abstain from intoxicating liquors, to take care of their duties at home, and to live a "life of love." Above all they needed to "imitate the Prophet in speech and teaching in any…Temple."[13] Using profanity, even in the mildest form, was forbidden "because a leader without influence of good works cannot be a leader."[14] Much like the general laws, the supreme laws placed a heavy emphasis on the financial responsibilities of the leaders. It was clear that the prophet needed to be consulted before financial transactions took place in any temple. Noble Drew Ali emphasized "money [raised] is to finance the Moorish Movement."[15]

Fractures in MSTA

After the close of the first convention in Chicago October 1928 there was increasing trouble within the MSTA. There were several newspaper reports about members of Moorish Science.[16] Only three months after the publication of the supreme

laws, Noble Drew Ali was still having trouble controlling some temple leaders. On 15 January 1929 Noble Drew Ali released to all members "A Warning from the Prophet" with strict instructions that it be read at every meeting. [17] Two main issues were discussed: the abuse of a Moorish identity by flashing identity cards in the streets to gain respect from whites; and the potential danger the prophet faced by parts of his congregation who threatened the unity of the organization by vying for control over temples. On the first issue, Noble Drew Ali asserted that,

> Members…must put an end to all radical and agitating speech while on their jobs, homes, or on the public streets. We advocate peace and not destruction. Stop trying out your cards with the Europeans—for it causes confusion. There has been much confusion caused by members trying out their cards. The cards are for your salvation.[18]

The actions of some Moors seemed to violate and contradict the prophet's message and Ali warned his congregations that those who failed to obey his orders would face severe consequences and those who failed to live by the divine principles would face justice that took its course.[19] This in many ways foreshadowed the impending violence that would subsequently overtake the Moorish Science movement.

The imminent danger posed to both the prophet and Moorish Science seemed to be ever present, as most of Ali's message dealt with these internal threats. And, in many ways it was precipitated by the series of general and supreme laws handed out during the first convention. Noble Drew Ali referred to his statement as a "divine plea," demonstrating the urgency and gravity of the message. He recommended to members of all ranks that "if they lose confidence in their prophet, [then] give up your card and button, cease wearing your turban or fez, and return to the state where I, the prophet

found you."[20] The ill feelings among some Moorish Science's members seemed to be growing as some individuals joined the movement for their own personal gains. Noble Drew Ali reminded his followers that he, indeed, was the founder and main proponent of the movement. He reminded the membership that, "all true Moorish Americans…do their part in protecting their prophet and the temple."[21] The structures that Ali had worked hard to put in place through the incorporation of Moorish Science in the state of Illinois were quickly being undermined by new members who failed to abide by these rules.

The general and supreme laws were meant to guide Moorish leadership while also serving as correctives to behaviors that had arisen in the few years since the MSTA was officially an incorporated religious institution. There were repeated admonitions that the leaders should live and act according to the five divine principles ("love, truth, peace, freedom, and justice"). Without these principles guiding the leaders, the MSTA was susceptible to failing in its divine mission to "uplift fallen humanity." It is significant that after the close of the first convention and release of the laws, there was a recognizable division in Moorish Science's leadership. One of the most widely discussed internal issues was related to the activities of Claude Greene.[22]

Claude Greene was the group's business manager, the managing editor of the *Moorish Guide,* and chairman of the arrangements committee for the first annual convention; and he proved to be a crucial member of Moorish Science who was actively involved in virtually all aspects of the organization. Yet in March 1929 he was found murdered inside Unity Hall in Chicago. It was rumored that he was killed by MSTA members loyal to Noble Drew Ali.[23] Greene was a successful business man and political

figure in the Chicago black community. His educational and political networks made him an ideal associate for Drew Ali. Greene was a graduate of Tuskegee Institute, former Pullman porter, former butler to philanthropist Julius Rosenwald, and an active member of Chicago's Booster Club.[24] In January 1929 *The Chicago Defender* reported that Claude Greene was elected president of the Boosters Club where he had been a member since its founding in 1923.[25] The article also reported that he was the manager of Unity Hall located at 3140 Indiana Avenue, the same address listed on its original constitution as the main office of the Moorish Holy Temple of Science.

Within a month of Greene's appointment as president of the Booster's Club, he stepped down from his position as the MSTA's business manager. The 15 February 1929 issue of the *Moorish Guide* announced that "Bro. Greene Bey Quits Business Manager Post."[26] The article described his resignation as a "great and direct surprise to all" and suggested that his new role as the Chicago Boosters Club president may have the reason he stepped down as MSTA business manager. Although neither Drew Ali nor Claude Greene would make a public statement about the decision, it was reported that they seemed to appear "in the best of spirits and parted with a friendly adieu."[27] Despite relinquishing his title and responsibilities within Moorish Science, Greene, according to the article, remained an active member of the movement. Given his role in the success of Moorish Science in Chicago, his resignation was quite significant. Indeed, his connections may have attracted a number of important personalities to join Moorish Science in the late 1920s.

Juanita Richardson Bey, the city editor of the *Moorish Guide* in 1928 and 1929, was an important figure in the MSTA and may have been introduced to the movement by Claude Greene. A *Chicago Defender* article in December 1928 that reported on Pearl Drew Ali's formation of the Young People's Moorish League also mentioned the organizing activities of Juanita Richardson Bey.[28] The article announced that Mrs. Drew Ali "is being assisted in the organizational work by Miss Juanita Richardson Bey, a graduate of Wendell Phillips high school and city editor of the *Moorish Guide.*"[29]

Greene's prominence within Chicago's African American political networks was evident in the *Chicago Defender's* article on him, ""Greene Heads Chicago Boosters Civic Club." He was described as "modest and unassuming" who "enjoys the confidence and friendship of some of the most distinguished business and public men in Chicago and the nation."[30] In addition to Greene's personal networks, his wife was also important and well respected in the community. She was a podiatrist who graduated from Keith Public School and the Illinois College of Chiropody. The couple met while students at Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. The Greene's involvement in various social and political networks was an obvious advantage to Moorish community. The article on Greene ended by mentioning his position with MSTA and stated that he was "a close personal friend of the distinguished Moorish leader, Noble Drew Ali."[31]

A month after *Moorish Guide's* report that Claude Greene had stepped down from his post as business manager, he was killed by members of MSTA. Greene was found murdered inside an office at Unity Hall. According to a report in the *Chicago Defender*, at eight p.m. March 15, 1928, the janitor of Unity Hall, Arthur Scott, encountered six

Moorish Science members who asked Greene to leave his primary office on the first floor and meet privately in a second story office of the building. Five minutes into their meeting, two gun shots were heard and then the men ran downstairs and disappeared into the street. Scott went upstairs to find Greene kneeling in a pool of his own blood. In addition to being shot two times, Greene was stabbed in the neck four times.[32]

The *Defender's* unnamed staff reporter who wrote the article claimed that, Greene's murder was the result of an internal split in MSTA. Greene had allegedly allied with several prominent temple leaders who were planning to create a separate faction Islamic group. Supposedly Greene held a meeting of his confederates on the Sunday prior to his death attended by informants for Noble Drew Ali. According to Scott's subsequent testimony, Drew Ali called upon one of his loyal members, Crumby Bey, leader of the Pittsburgh temple, to help plan the murder. A key ally of Greene's was supposedly Lomax Bey, leader of the Detroit branch. Lomax Bey controlled one of MSTA's most financially successful temples. In 1928 the Detroit branch reported having four successful businesses, two grocery stores, a printing press, and a laundry-and had a total annual income of $19,458, but only donated $700 to the prophet. This was in stark contrast to the finances reported by Drew Ali's loyal leader Crumby Bey, who had earnings of $4,548.90 that same year, and donated to the prophet $4,221.42.[33] It would seem that Drew Ali's concerns about betrayal by temple leaders may indeed have been warranted. If Claude Greene and Lomax Bey were planning to create a separate group, then Drew Ali had good reason to become alarmed.

After hearing of the murder and the divisions in the MSTA, violence erupted in the Detroit temple on 22 March 1929, two Moors and two police officers were wounded. According to the *Chicago Defender,* the disturbance "started when the two factions of the order attended a mass meeting."[34] The meeting was led by Lomax Bey who was reported as a "marked man" due to his role in dividing the movement. During the meeting, a shot was fired at Lomax Bey and fighting began. The week prior to the incident, Lomax Bey had been visited by Drew Ali and accused of siphoning off funds from the temple. As a result, Ali dismissed him from his position. The official statement of dismissal included the signatures of Crumby Bey, C. Childs Bey, and Mealy El.[35]

The murder of Greene signaled the beginning of the end for Drew Ali in Chicago after his arrest on charges of plotting the murder, and as a result, the *Chicago Defender* began to refer him as the leader of a "cult" and cited him as a "prophet."[36] In an article reporting his untimely death only a few months after his arrest, Drew Ali fell ill. This occurred only a week after the death of Claude Greene and Greene's friends reportedly saw Ali's illness and subsequent death as retribution for Greene's murder.[37] Although there was no direct evidence that Drew Ali was implicated in Greene's murder plot, it seems that the unraveling of the MSTA was ultimately a great burden for the prophet.

After the passing of Noble Drew Ali on 20 July 1929, MSTA seemed to fall into a greater cycle of chaos and dysfunction and the remaining members fought each other for control over the temples. For example, on 12 October 1929 the *Chicago Defender* reported that five members of Moorish Science were indicted by a grand jury in the death of two police officers. Ira Johnson Bey, Edward Mealy El, Compton Johnson Bey, Moses

Jackson Bey, and Eugene Jackson Bey, were listed as the Moors responsible for the officers' death. It was reported that Ira Johnson Bey and Edward Mealy El aspired to the leadership but were in conflict with Charles Kirkman Bey. The two men went to the home of Kirkman Bey to obtain a document he had in his possession. But Kirkman was kidnapped and taken to an MSTA apartment where he was held prisoner. Mrs. Kirkman alerted the police of her husband's kidnapping, and when the police arrived at the apartment, shots were fired and three men, two police officers and one Moor were dead.

By 11 February 1930 Ira Johnson Bey, Moses Jackson Bey, and his father Eugene Jackson Bey stood trial for the death of the two police officers. Edward Mealy El had been directing MSTA operations after the death of Drew Ali and Mealy El's leadership of the movement was being directly challenged by Ira Johnson Bey. Eventually, Ira Johnson was accused of killing Claude Greene in March 1929. The trial of the Johnson Bey, Moses Jackson Bey, and Eugene Jackson Bey for the death of the two police officers ended in a mistrial.[38] Eventually, Ira Johnson Bey was charged with manslaughter for the murder of the police officers and sentenced to life in prison.[39]

From 1930 to 1934 there were several men who competed for supreme authority in the Moorish movement. After Edward Mealy El's death on 14 November 1934, it was announced in a July 1935 issue of the *Moorish Guide* that C. Kirkman Bey was declared the only "Supreme Advisor and Moderator of the Moorish Science Temple of America."[40] Although Edward Mealy El was mentioned in the court case *The Moorish Science Temple of America vs. Givens-El et al J. Shelby-El vs. E. Mealy-El et al*,[41] he was not mentioned any further in the newspapers. Instead, articles focused on the contest

between Givens-El and Shelby-El who claimed to be the resurrection and incarnation of Noble Drew Ali. The case concluded that the provisions of MSTA documents did not allow for grown men to become the reincarnated prophet. The provisions did allow, however, reincarnation of the prophet to take place in the body of an unborn child. Therefore, a baby born after the prophet's death could become the host for the prophet's spirit. Ultimately, the circuit court of Cook County, IL ruled C. Kirkman Bey was the only legitimate heir to the Moorish Science Temple of America. While this ruling in many ways solidified Kirkman Bey as the MSTA leader, the claim of legitimacy persisted among various factions groups of the MSTA for years.[42]

In many ways the struggle over the legacy of the Moorish movement continued to the present day. This is evident in the number of groups that utilize Moorish Science in the names of their organizations. An internet search of Moorish Science yields numerous results, with many groups claiming to be true representations of the organization. This has led to much confusion, not only among followers of the movement, but also for researchers who have attempted to document the history of MSTA.

The most successful faction of Moorish Science after the death of Noble Drew Ali was the group led by C. Kirkman Bey. This group claims to be the carriers of the legacy of Drew Ali and have been the most successful in gaining members and determining the historical narrative for Moorish Science. Unfortunately, this infighting and competition among the various leaders of the Moorish movement has meant that important aspects of the group's history have been lost entirely. The recovery of some of the historical information collected by members of the Moorish Science Temple of America, Temple

No. 1 in Chicago helps add historical knowledge about the early years of the group, especially the history of E. Mealy El. Although there is still much additional research needed, the group whose headquarters are in Chicago currently owes its origins to Noble Drew Ali. This group is currently trying to bring some unity and cohesion among followers in all temples.

[1] Mike Holtzclaw, "Religious group claims 'jurisdiction' over $645,000 Hampton home, *Daily Press*, June 25, 2010, "http://articles.dailypress.com/2010-06-28/news/dp-nws-national-moors-20100628_1_moorish-science-temple-religious-group-claim; Mike Holtzclaw, "Factions within religious group disagree over claim to $645,000 Hampton home," *Daily Press*, June 28, 2010, http://articles.dailypress.com/2010-08-30/news/dp-nws-moors-apology-20100830_1_moorish-science-temple-crowell-bey-religious-group.
[2] Spencer Dew, "Sovereign Citizenship, Religion, and Law: The Case of Moorish Science" an article on the events in Hampton, Virginia appeared on an online site for the Martin Marty Center for the advanced Study of Religion at the University of Chicago's Divinity School at http://divinity.uchicago.edu/sightings/sovereign-citizenship-religion-and-law-case-moorish-science-spencer-dew.
[3] Debra Washington Mubashshir, "Forgotten Fruit of the City: Chicago and the Moorish Science Temple of America," *Cross Currents* (Spring 2001): 6.
[4] It is only with their assistance that I am able to write this chapter.
[5] Spencer Dew, "Sovereign Citizenship, Religion, and Law: The Case of Moorish Science" http://divinity.uchicago.edu/sightings/sovereign-citizenship-religion-and-law-case-moorish-science-spencer-dew.
[6] See box of MSTA papers available at the Schomburg Center for Black Studies, New York Public Library.
[7] Noble Drew Ali, "A Warning from the Prophet for all Governors, and Grand Sheiks and Head Officials of all Temples," *Moorish Guide* Friday, October 26, 1928.
[8] Prophet Noble Drew Ali, "General Laws" issued October 16, 1928.
[9] Ibid.
[10] It is unclear what is meant by this since there is no mention of a board or trustees up until this point. Noble Drew Ali may have been referring to the grand body that was going to be put into place the next evening, but that is not the language that was used here.
[11]Prophet Noble Drew Ali, "General Laws" issued October 16, 1928.

[12] Ibid.
[13] Noble Drew Ali, "Supreme Laws," October 17, 1928.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid.
[16] From March 1929 through February 1930 there were nine articles published in the *Chicago Defender* alone covering the affairs of the members of Moorish Science.; "Hold Moorish Temple 'Prophet in Murder Plot Blame Split in Cult for Brutal Crime," *Chicago Defender,* March 23, 1929; "Moorish Head Released in $10, 000 Bail," *Chicago Defender,* April 6, 1929; "Drew Ali 'Prophet' of Moorish Cult Dies Suddenly," *Chicago Defender,* July 27, 1929.
[17] Noble Drew Ali, "A Warning from the Prophet," *Moorish Guide,* January 15, 1929.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid.
[22] "Hold Moorish Temple 'Prophet in Murder Plot Blame Split in Cult for Brutal Crime," *Chicago Defender,* March 23, 1929.
[23] "Hold Moorish Temple 'Prophet in Murder Plot Blame Split in Cult for Brutal Crime," *Chicago Defender,* March 23, 1929; The first annual convention flyer from October, 15, 1928 lists Claude Greene as "managing editor" of the *Moorish Guide* weekly newspaper.
[24] "Greene Heads Chicago Boosters Club," *Chicago Defender,* January 12, 1929; "U.S. World War I Draft Registration Card, 1918," digital image, *Ancestry.com,* accessed December 23, 2013; Arna Bontemps and Jack Conroy, *Anyplace but Here* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1966), 207.
[25] "Greene Heads Chicago Boosters Club," *Chicago Defender,* January 12, 1929.
[26] "Bro. Greene Bey Quits Business Manager Plot," *The Moorish Guide,* Friday, February 15, 1929.
[27] Ibid.
[28] "Mrs. Drew Ali Organizes Young Moorish People," *The Chicago Defender,* December 1, 1928.
[29] Ibid. Coincidentally, Claude Greene was the father of two children, Ashton and Dorothy Greene, who in January 1929 were senior high school students at Hyde Park and Wendell Phillips.[29] It is very likely that Juanita was either friends or former classmates with Ashton or Dorothy, or at the very least was aware of the developing Moorish Science of which Claude Greene had become an influential member.
[30] "Greene Heads Chicago Boosters Civic Club," *The Chicago Defender,* January 12, 1929.
[31] Ibid.
[32] "Hold Moorish Temple 'Prophet in Murder Plot Blame Split in Cult for Brutal Crime," *Chicago Defender,* March 23, 1929.
[33] "Reports of Temples, 1927-1928," first reported during the annual convention, Wednesday October 17, 1928 and later printed in an issue of the *Moorish Guide,* nd.
[34] "Hold Moorish Temple 'Prophet' in Murder Plot: Blame Split in Cult for Brutal Crime, Police Quiz Founder of Freak Order," *Chicago Defender,* March 23, 1929.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid.
[37] "Cult Leader Dies; Was in Murder Case: Timothy Drew Styled Himself 'Prophet'," *Chicago Defender,* July 27, 1929.
[38] "Moors' Trial 'Blows Up': Sick Juror and Allah Cause the Three Moors to Get New Hearing; Sick Juror Causes Mistrial," *Chicago Defender,* February 15, 1930.
[39] Peter Lamborn Wilson, *Sacred Drift: Essays on the Margins of Islam* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1993), 42.
[40] "Col. C. Kirkman Bey Declared the Only Grand Supreme Advisor and Moderator: Moorish Science Temple of America," *Moorish Guide National Edition,* July 12, 1935.
[41] Ibid.
[42]See Wilson, *Sacred Drift,* 43-50.

Conclusion

The Moorish Science Temple of America (MSTA), despite its recognition among scholars of religion and the African American experience, remains relatively obscure. The modern day movement of "Moorish Americans," with the exception of the communities where Moorish Science still exists, is even less known. This may be explained in some part by the founder Noble Drew Ali's untimely death only four years after its establishment in Chicago, Illinois in 1925. Although scholars of African American Islam have cited the MSTA as one of the first groups to organize African Americans around the Islamic religion, there is still no book length study that examines the movement. Within the past fifteen to twenty years, the history of Moorish Science has been a subject of investigation for a number of scholars, including Michael A. Gomez, Susan Nance, Patrick D. Bowen, and Edward E. Curtis, focusing on the relevance of the movement to our understanding of the spread of Islam in the United States and the great religious diversity among African Americans in the early twentieth century. This study demonstrates that the religious practices introduced in the temples of MSTA by Noble Drew Ali and his followers have remained a significant component of African American identity formation in the twentieth century. Indeed, many religious groups use Noble Drew Ali as a figure to uphold their Islamist political beliefs. This is most evident among several groups, including the Moorish Science Temple of America, The Moorish Science Temple of America, Inc., The Moorish Science Temple of America-1928, and Moorish Temple of Science of the World, and others.

This study of Noble Drew Ali and MSTA has attempted to make several important contributions to the scholarship of African American Islam. The potential

identity of Noble Drew Ali as "Thomas Drew," rather than "Timothy Drew," is a possible clue in determining who Drew was before his arrival in Newark, New Jersey, in 1913 and his subsequent emergence in Chicago as the leader and prophet of Moorish Science in 1925. The networks uncovered by the historian Patrick D. Bowen, and their connections to the Masonic life among African Americans, also raised new questions about African American freemasonry and Islam in the United States. The web of connections between multiple Islamic political formations in the early twentieth century Bowen unearthed laid the foundation for the examination of Islam, freemasonry, and African Americans in this study.

Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) was also a fundamental influence on the formation of Moorish Science. This is evident in Noble Drew Ali's designation of Garvey as his "John the Baptist"; and this also helps to explain Ali's appointment of Edward Mealy El, a former Garveyite, as the Supreme Grand Sheik of MSTA at the 1928 conference. During the conference Mealy El proclaimed, "There is just one way for Asiatics, one Religion, Islamism, one God, Allah, and one destiny."[1] This declaration showed the confluence between Moorish Science and Garvey's UNIA, which popularized the motto "One God, one aim, one destiny." The blend of Islam and the black nationalist politics of Garvey ultimately helped to make Moorish Science successful in the 1920s.

In addition to the ideas and practices that Noble Drew Ali established for the MSTA, the leaders and followers helped to make it a success in the early years. This is particularly evident in the participation and activities of the women in Moorish Science.

They became instrumental in organizing events, providing entertainment, writing articles, poetry, and music for the movement. They organized the children through the "Young People's Moorish League," and came together under the "Moorish National Sisters Auxiliary." These important activities aided in the development of a robust cultural life within Moorish Science temples. Under the editorship of Miss Juanita Richardson Bey, the MSTA's weekly newspaper, *The Moorish Guide*, became a major vehicle of communication among temples, showing that women within Moorish Science were important in formulating and disseminating the message of the movement. Richardson Bey's literary activities in the *Moorish Guide,* including organizing a literary contest among young readers of the newspaper, demonstrates the women's roles in the construction of the social and religious culture of MSTA.

The photography of MSTA has been used by scholars in their discussions of the movement's unique elements. This study's examination of the visual culture produced by the group reveals the political aims of Moorish Science and its understanding of contemporary scientific research. In the early twentieth century "racial science," particularly the photographic documentation of the putative racial inferiority on non-white groups by pseudo-scientists, was a way to circulate ideas about white racial superiority. The images produced by Noble Drew Ali and Moorish Science contributed to a counter-archive of visual representation of African Americans which worked to undermine racists concepts circulated in the photographs of racial scientists. These MSTA images not only bolstered claims of African American respectability and cultural

sophistication, but also presented the multiple cultural influences found in Moorish Sciecne.

The claims made by Noble Drew Ali that African Americans were "not Negroes, colored, or Ethiopians," but were "Moorish Americans" allowed his followers to escape the racist glare of white Americans. The lasting impact of his claims about the racial equality of Moorish Americans is a significant marker in African Americans religious history. Although the MSTA became fractured after Drew Ali's death, the movement persisted throughout the twentieth century. The creation of the Nation of Islam (NOI) in the 1930s and its rise to prominence in the 1950s and 1960s ultimately overshadowed its precursor Moorish Science, but there were many ideas adopted by NOI that were first associated with MSTA. The most significant of these was classification of black peoples as "Asiatics." Noble Drew Ali argued for the recognition of two main racial groups in the world, Europeans and Asiatics; and this particular notion was adopted by Elijah Muhammad in his formation of NOI. These unique racial distinctions made MSTA and NOI an alternative to Christian cultural formations throughout the twentieth century and contributed to the success of Islamic groups.

Although the NOI became a more popular version of Islam adopted by African Americans, the followers of Moorish Science remained active; this is especially evident in the creation of a "Moorish Colony" in Virginia during the late 1930s. The land was first cleared for the colony in 1939 in Prince George County, Virginia by F. Nelson Bey of the Detroit temple, along with three other members. Nelson Bey was sent to establish the colony by C. Kirkman Bey, the "Supreme Advisor and Moderator of Moorish

Science" after the death of Noble Drew Ali.[2] The colony provided a location in the South to spread the message of Moorish Science. Within the first twenty years the colony attracted approximately eighty adherents and established about twenty-eight homes. The MSTA did not place a great emphasis on proselytizing, but the creation of the colony ultimately brought the messages of Noble Drew Ali for the first time to black souterners.

The tracing of Moorish Science currently is somewhat disconcerting because so many groups present themselves as "the true inheritors" of Noble Drew Ali's message. But what is clear is that Drew Ali's message remains alive, not only among adherents of Moorish Science, but also in several venues in U.S. popular culture, such as hip-hop music and culture. For example, in 1997 on the Wu Tang Clan's first single "Triumph" from the *36 Chambers* album, Ghostface Killah introduced himself as "the black Noble Drew Ali." In 2012 the artist/actor Mos Def changed his name to Yasiin Bey, signifying his identification with Islam, and quite possibly with Moorish Science. These connections to MSTA either through explicit lyrics that mention Drew Ali, or implicit in the names of sports and musical artists, signal the remaining presence of Moorish Science in American culture.

Future research on MSTA should offer new insights into the movement's earlier and more recent embodiments. An investigation into the connections between African American freemasonry and the formation of Islam during the early twentieth century should prove fruitful in expanding our knowledge, hopefully by identifying other personalities responsible for the spread of Islamic groups. We need more information on Noble Drew Ali's family history and background. Noble Drew Ali never claimed the

name “Timothy” in any of his writings. The only consistency in his name has been “Drew,” so it is possible that the first name was “Thomas” and this opens up additional avenues for investigation into the “missing years.”

This study has demonstrated that Noble Drew Ali chose Mealy El as his first in command and Mealy El was a former Garveyite who fused the mottos of the UNIA and MSTA. It was also shown that Islam was a clear presence in Garvey’s movement; therefore, there needs to be more research on the connections between the UNIA and other African American Islamic groups.

The importance of women in the early movement of MSTA has been demonstrated, but more research should be done reveal the ways the women viewed themselves in their relationships with Islam and the MSTA. Oral interviews with current Moorish Science women could help to expand our understanding of the internal social and cultural activities sponsored by the movement.

Most works on Moorish Science, including this study, look at the history of Moorish Science up to the 1930s; but in order to understand what occurred after the death of Noble Drew Ali, and its connection to the development of the Nation of Islam in the early 1930s, the history of MSTA should be expanded into the present. It has been suggested that NOI was shaped by followers of Moorish Science, but there documentation of these connections. Even if the development of the NOI was independent of MSTA, understanding the historical trajectory of Moorish Science throughout the twentieth century would help to fill the gap in our knowledge of history of Islam in the United States.

[1] Minutes from the 1928 Convention; internal MSTA document made available by David Bailey El, Supreme Grand Sheik of the Moorish Science Temple of America, May 2012.
[2] "In Prince George Moors Colony Flourishes," *Times Dispatch News Bureau*, newspaper clipping nd., Moorish Science Temple of America, original documents, Schomburg Center, New York Public Library.

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