Debating the Origins of the Moorish Science Temple: Toward a New Cultural History

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The fallen sons and daughters of the Asiatic Nation of North America need to learn to love instead of hate; and to know their higher self and lower self. This is the uniting of the Holy Koran of Mecca, for teaching and instructing all Moorish Americans, etc. The key of civilization was and is in the hands of the Asiatic nations. The Moorish, who were ancient Moabites, and the founders of the Holy City of Mecca. The Egyptians who were the Hamathites, and of a direct descendant of Mizraim, the Arabians, the seed of Hagar, Japanese and Chinese. The Hindoos of India, the descendants of the ancient Canaanites, Hittites, and Moabites of the land of Canaan. The Asiatic nations of North, South, and Central America; the Moorish Americans and Mexicans of North America, Brazilians, Argentinians and Chilians in South America. Columbians, Nicaraguans, and the natives of San Salvador in Central America, etc. All of these are Moslems. The Turks are the true descendants of Hagar, who are the chief protectors of the Islamic Creed of Mecca; beginning from Mohammed the First, the founder of the uniting of Islam, by the command of the great universal God-Allah.

--*Holy Koran of the Moorish Science Temple* 45:1-7

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Established in 1925 by Timothy Drew, the Chicago-based Moorish Science Temple (MST) taught that African Americans were Moors from northwest Africa. Like all other Asiatic non-white peoples, argued their founder, their proper religion was Islam. Noble Drew Ali, as the prophet became known, insisted that this knowledge of black people's true national, religious, and racial origins would set them along a path of economic and political self-determination as well as moral renewal. In 1927, the prophet recorded his views for posterity in the *Holy Koran of the Moorish Science Temple*, and though he died in 1929, his movement spread to other northern U.S. cities and beyond.[1]

Arthur Huff Fauset's groundbreaking picture of the MST was among the first scholarly treatments of an African American Muslim community to appear in print. Though published in 1944, Fauset's short ten-page chapter on the movement stood for at least two decades as an authoritative source. When J. Milton Younger published *Religion, Society, and the Individual: An Introduction to the Sociology of Religion* in 1957, he included Fauset's 1944 Moorish Science Temple chapter.[2] In the 1960s, the two most carefully researched books about Elijah Muhammad's Nation of Islam relied on Fauset as a main source on the MST, which was depicted as a precursor to the Nation of Islam.[3] Fauset's chapter had staying power. In fact, little new scholarship on the MST appeared until the 1990s and 2000s. This new scholarship was spurred by a renewed interest in the MST on the part of black studies scholars, as well as the development of African American Islam and Islam in America as subfields in religious studies.[4]

While much of this new scholarship surpassed Fauset's in its presentation of data, 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. Even though Fauset's chapter on the MST was an ethnographically-thick description, his *analysis* of the group was concerned mainly with its psychological, political, and social benefits.[5] Avoiding cultural analysis of the movement was Fauset's answer to those scholars, like Melville J. Herskovits, who depicted black culture in heroic, but static and nearly atavistic terms.[6] Fauset's analysis of the contemporary contexts and functions of African American religious groups provided a useful antidote to Herskovits' ahistorical portrait of black religions in the United States. By stressing the larger contexts in which black persons lived, Fauset's alternative narrative of black religion showed that the "African's religious character" was neither monolithic nor unchanging.

But in devoting relative little analysis to the historical origins of these new religious groups, Fauset ducked a question that would reappear with a vengeance in later African American studies scholarship. Herskovits' explorations of African retentions in African American culture were revived and reconstructed in the 1970s and 1980s.[7] Though old habits die hard, the field of black studies became increasingly diasporic in scope, at once reviving the importance of Africa to the study of black people in the United States while also insisting on a less static, more dynamic understanding of black cultures.[8] In the wake of this sea change, scholars writing about the MST brought back the question of origins as essential to understanding the movement. Was the MST influenced by African traditions? Was there continuity between the practices of West African Muslims and African American followers in the MST? If not from Africa, then from where did Noble Drew Ali get his ideas about the religious and national revival of black people?

In answering these questions, some old-fashioned, Herskovits-like Afrocentrists have insisted on direct continuity between black practices in Africa and those in America.[9] But most scholars of the African diaspora have seen the MST as the product of multiple influences, insisting, like Michael Gomez, that scholars examine the MST as a "convergence" of Islam, Freemasonry, New Thought, Rosicrucianism, black political thought, Garveyism, American Orientalism, Hoodoo, and Christian Science, among other traditions.[10] Contemporary scholars of the MST have debated the degree to which each of these traditions is expressed in the religious culture of the MST. Some accounts emphasize the cultural and social contexts of the Great Migration in the United States, and claim that there are few African or Islamic influences on the movement.[11] Others, stressing a more transnational and diasporic view of the movement, see the MST not merely as a local or national phenomenon, but as the expression of modern black culture's global scope.[12] No matter what its particular bias, the best of this new scholarship utilized 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. Utilizing this more recent scholarship, this chapter examines the multiple cultural influences on the origins of the MST while retaining Fauset's ethnographic sensitivity to the meaning of the movement for its participants. It suggests that a comprehensive cultural history of the MST has yet to be written and recommends lines of inquiry that must be pursued in creating a new account of the movement's origins.

Origins of the *Holy Koran of the Moorish Science Temple*

The sacred scripture Noble Drew Ali published in 1927 is a main source for existing scholarship on the MST. Also called the *Circle Seven Koran*, because of an encircled number "7" on its cover, this scripture argued that the national identity of Moors was tied inextricably to their racial heritage as Asiatics and their religious heritage as Muslims.[13] Noble Drew Ali refused to call himself Negro, black, or colored. "According to all true and divine records of the human race," he revealed, "there is no negro, black, or colored race attached to the human family, because all the inhabitants of Africa were and are of the human race" (47:9). He believed that all humans should separate themselves according to their respective national groups. Drew Ali's use of national and ethnic categories represented a reframing of the derogatory terms often associated with black people in the 1920s. For Drew Ali, a "nation" signified a common history, creed, and value system—in short, a whole culture. In this, his ideas were similar to those to many other Americans in the 1920s who saw culture as coterminous with race and religion.[14]

In place of this specifically "racial" understanding of black identity, Drew Ali offered a complex genealogy that viewed "Moors" in light of a glorious, but fallen past of historical achievements. According to the Prophet, the "Moslems of northwest and southwest Africa are actually the Moabites, Hamathites, and Canaanites, all of whom were driven out of Canaan by Joshua. Having received permission from the Pharaohs to settle in Africa, these Muslims formed the modern-day kingdoms of Morocco, Algiers, Tunis, Tripoli, etc." (insert specific verse citation here?) Other Asiatic peoples, including the Egyptians, the Arabians, the Japanese and Chinese, the "Hindoos," the Turks, the South Americans, and even the "Mexicans in North America" settled the rest of the non-

European world (45:1-7; 47:1-8). Synthesizing and rewriting various parts of ancient history, Noble Drew explained that African Americans were the Moorish descendants of an ancient Asiatic race; their creed was Islam.[15]

For Drew Ali, it was not enough that blacks should be true to their nation; they should also be true to their particular creed. Specifically, he said, Moors should not "serve the gods of their [whites'] religion, because our forefathers are the true and divine founders of the first religious creed, for the redemption and salvation of mankind on earth" (48:6). Drew Ali, in other words, believed that being a good Moor meant keeping both foreign blood and foreign creeds out of the "nation." In constructing his Islamic tradition along lines of blood and geographic origins, Drew Ali also reinterpreted the meaning of Christ, arguing that Jesus was the Moors' genealogical ancestor: "Jesus himself was of the true blood of the ancient Cannanites and Moabites and the inhabitants of Africa" (46:2). Jesus had come to redeem "His people . . . from the pale skin nations of Europe" but "Rome crucified Him" (46:2-3). Drew Ali saw Jesus as a pan-Asiatic prophet whose teachings had been betrayed by the Church. Christianity, founded by the Romans, had little to do with the message of Jesus, Drew Ali said. "The holy teaching of Jesus," he wrote, "was to the common people, to redeem them from under the great pressure of the hands of the unjust. That the rulers and the rich would not oppress the poor" (46:5). But Rome, according to Drew Ali, had essentially rejected these principles, which explained in part why white Christians had not acted in a Christian-like manner towards non-whites.[16]

The "pale skins" were not the only ones to blame for the degradation of the Moors, according to Noble Drew. In fact, the Prophet blamed the enslavement of blacks

on moral and national decline among the Moors themselves. Because “they honored not the principles of their mother and father, and strayed after the gods of Europe,” they had been stripped of their nationality and had been called “negro, black, and colored” (47:16-17). By not being true to their heritage and its obligations, said Drew Ali, blacks had suffered the worst of fates: they did not know who they were and instead accepted the labels of their oppressors. “Through sin and disobedience,” Noble Drew wrote, “every nation suffered slavery, due to the fact that they honored not the creed and principles of their forefathers” (47:17). Redemption, he taught, would come not from the acts of a single black messiah but through the collective actions of a whole nation--uplifting “fallen humanity,” he insisted, must include linking oneself with the “families of nations” (48:11). Asiatics still held the “key to civilization,” he continued, if they would only embrace their God Allah and seek national renewal. What this really meant for Drew Ali was not that blacks should return to Africa and establish nation-states, but that they should separate along racial lines from their oppressors. “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” (48:3). Drew Ali desired a peaceful social separation from whites.

Like pan-African leader Marcus Garvey, Drew Ali denounced inter-racial relationships, arguing implicitly that racial purity was necessary to black redemption: “We, as a clean and pure nation descended from the inhabitants of Africa, do not desire to amalgamate or marry into the families of the pale skin nations of Europe.” Drew Ali also argued that only by returning to “their own kind” could humans hope to live in harmony: “All nations of the earth in these modern days are seeking peace, but there is but one true and divine way that peace may be obtained in these days and it is through Love, Truth,

Peace, Freedom and Justice being taught universally to all nations, in all lands" (46:9). Peace among human beings would be possible, said Noble Drew, but only if every group would "learn of your forefathers' ancient and divine Creed. That you will learn to love instead of hate" (48:10). At the same time, Drew Ali seemed to support notions of Asiatic superiority and chosen-ness. The Asiatics were of a "Divine origin," he said, failing to mention what he thought about the origins of whites. He also asserted that the Church and Christianity might provide the Europeans with *earthly* salvation, but that Islam would grace Asiatics with earthly and *divine* salvation (48:7-8).

While chapters forty-five through forty-eight of Noble Drew's revelation focused on the religious, geographic, and national genealogy of African Americans, most other chapters were drawn from texts popular in the 1920s among various esoteric and metaphysical groups.[17] Chapters one through nineteen of the *Holy Koran*, nearly half of the sixty-four-page text, are copied in exact form from the *Aquarian Gospel of Jesus the Christ*, a book written in 1908 by Levi H. Dowling (1844-1911). Dowling, a student of comparative religion and theosophy, wrote this alternative gospel of Jesus that, like other modern theosophical texts, incorporated beliefs in the universality of all religions, the mystical nature of the East, and the possibility of spiritual mastery of the "higher worlds." These themes, in addition to some information from the apocryphal Gospel of James, are apparent throughout Dowling's text. Dowling also borrowed from *La Vie Inconnue de Jesus Christ* (1894) by Nicolas Notovich, who may have also influenced Ahmadiyya founder Ghulam Ahmad, author of *Jesus in India* (1899).[18]

Dowling himself explained the *Aquarian Gospel* as the product of his ability to "read" or sense the "Akashic Records," which existed in the highest realm of

consciousness called the "Supreme Intelligence" or the "Universal Wisdom." According to Dowling, the Akashic Records were not physical things, but a spiritual substance that reverberated throughout the universe. "When the mind of man," he wrote, "is in exact accord with the Universal Mind, man enters into a conscious recognition of these Akashic impressions, and may collect them and translate them into any language of the earth." His *Aquarian Gospel* posited that time was broken into dispensations determined by the rotation of the solar system around the center of the universe. Each age, he taught, was 2100 years long. As the world entered the twentieth century, a transition from the Piscean Age, or the Christian dispensation, to the Aquarian Age had begun. Dowling, reflecting theosophical influences, implicitly criticized the Christian age and the dominance of the Church, claiming that the New Age, unlike the old, would be one of spirituality. Like other practitioners of metaphysical religion, Dowling believed in the possibility of mastering higher spiritual powers. In each human, he taught, there was a higher self, which was "human spirit clothed in soul," and a lower self, which was carnal and illusory. The soul, he said, was a Divine thought planted in the human body, where it must undergo trials and tribulations before it could become pure soul again. These premises, the most fundamental in Dowling's creed, are highlighted in the first three chapters of the *Holy Koran*.[19]

Noble Drew's text also included Dowling's Christology. Christ, he taught, was no particular person, but a force, or logos, that might become manifest in any human. Like many theosophists, Dowling posited that belief in Christ's divinity must be understood symbolically rather than literally, lest humans mistake heaven as a reward for moral behavior. In Dowling's text, Jesus teaches that heaven is present to and abiding in

the "conscious" soul. Drew Ali excerpted this lesson in chapters eleven and twelve of the *Holy Koran*. In addition, Dowling believed that Christ was a universal religious figure who had traveled throughout the entire ancient lettered world to spread his good news. During these travels, Dowling depicted Christ meeting with a representative of every world religion. Of these, Drew Ali selected Jesus' meetings with a Buddhist priest, some Brahmins in India, and a Jewish scholar for inclusion in the *Holy Koran*.[20] Finally, Drew Ali chose the stories of Elizabeth, John the Baptist, Jesus' Egyptian journeys, the crucifixion, the resurrection, and Jesus' "full materialization" (i.e. "transmutation of flesh into spirit-flesh") in different sites throughout the world to proclaim his resurrection.[21] In total, Drew Ali selected 19 of the 182 chapters and part of the introduction to Dowling's text for inclusion in his *Holy Koran*.

Chapters twenty through forty-four of *The Holy Koran* were copied from either *Unto Thee I Grant* or *The Infinite Wisdom*. First published in Chicago in 1923 by the de Laurence Company, this work purported to be a translation of an ancient manuscript "found in the Grand Temple of Thibet" by a "Dr. Cao-Tsou, Prime Minister of China." The book's introductory sections included a letter supposedly written by the Chinese Emperor to the Tibetan Grand Lama asking for permission on behalf of the Prime Minister to read and examine ancient Tibetan writings. Also included in these sections was a letter dated May 12, 1749, addressed to an anonymous English Earl from the English translator of Cao-Tsou's Chinese translation of the original manuscript. This letter, which explained that the style of translation was intentionally biblical, also contained descriptions of Lhassa, the Potala, the Grand Lama, an account of Cao-Tsou's journey, and the text's Brahmin, Confuscian, and Taoist origins.[22]

In 1925, the Ancient and Mystical Order Rosae Crucis (AMORC), the largest Rosicrucian group in the United States, published a reprinted version of the text. These Rosicrucians were another modern esoteric group that traced their roots to early modern history, specifically to the Reformation and Counter-Reformation. Founded by the mythical Christian Rosencreutz, the Order of the Rose-Cross was as much an intellectual current as a real secret society. Rosicrucians believed that the heavenly realm of reality could be broached through the use of esoteric sciences. But their larger social goals by the 1900s were to use this knowledge in the reform of ethical behavior and education. In publishing *The Infinite Wisdom*, the Order said that its first goal was to encourage "health, happiness, and peace in the earthly lives of men." Their second goal was "to enable men and women to live clean, normal, natural lives." In fact, the crux of the text espoused rather Victorian moral ideals that could have been mistaken for the basic civilizationist values of the mainline American Protestant denominations, both black and white.[23]

Noble Drew Ali selected a large portion of these for inclusion in the *Holy Koran*, including a number of passages regarding the duties of men, women, and children toward each other. Women were to be submissive, industrious, nurturing, and modest. Men were to select mates prudently and treat their wives with kindness. Children were to honor their parents. Masters were to be good to their servants, and servants were to be "patient" under the reproof of their master. All people, the text instructed, should be good citizens by avoiding envy, vanity, deception, oppression, inconstancy, weakness, and ignorance. Those who practiced the "infinite wisdom" would be thankful, sincere, truthful, consistent, and faithful. The pinnacle of wisdom, however, would be to accept

life as it was, neither inherently good nor bad, but only what one makes of it. Only with work, the text urged, could humans avoid the miseries of life and lift themselves into a realm of pleasure and joy known only to the Universal Soul.[24]

All of these metaphysical texts offered the idea that human beings, through effort, might liberate themselves from their various forms of slavery, especially to a negative state of mind itself. Salvation was defined not as the other-worldly resting place of good souls, but as a this-worldly state of being. Drew Ali seemed to be saying that blacks could achieve true liberation in the here and now rather than in the afterlife. Noble Drew's path to African American liberation can be summarized in the following way: blacks must separate from whites, reclaim their original group identity, understand their Divine origins, meditate upon the true spiritual nature of all being, and follow a strict moral code. Noble Drew appropriated various strains of American and African American religious, political, and social thought to create his own understanding of what it meant to be a Moor. His religious identity was a hybrid; it was bricolage. But that did not make it any less authentic than any other religious identity.

Avoiding "Textbook Islam" in Studying the Moorish Science Temple

The fact that the *Holy Koran of the Moorish Science Temple* contained no explicit references to or excerpts from the seventh-century Qur'an revealed to Muhammad of Arabia has often been seen as evidence that the group was, ultimately, fanciful and fake. Exploring the Islamic-ness of the MST has been a particularly daunting task for scholars, who have sometimes imposed a certain "textbook Islam" on the movement, and in so doing, come to doubt its authenticity as a Muslim group. This textbook Islam, created by

Muslim and non-Muslim academics alike, too often adopts a modernist and reformist view of Islamic religiosity that will be familiar to most modern readers, since media pundits, Western policymakers, and some American Muslim missionaries constantly reproduce it.[25] Textbook Islam revolves around the five pillars of Islamic practice, a brief introduction to the Qur'an and Muhammad, an explanation of shari'a as "Islamic law," and the historical split between Sunni and Shi'a—with perhaps a sprinkling of Sufism or jihadism thrown in for good measure. For some students of the Moorish Science Temple and American religions more generally, this recipe seems to represent the total sum of their Islamic knowledge. On the one hand, the need for basic religious literacy among the general public makes such textbook knowledge a cultural imperative.[26] On the other hand, American studies scholars must be extremely cautious in foisting this rather simplistic model of Islamic religiosity upon Moorish American culture and practice. If one applies textbook Islam to the Moorish Science Temple, scholars may be tempted to conclude too hastily that the MST is not really Islamic and that Noble Drew was not a Muslim.[27] Textbook Islam generally ignores the contested and diverse meanings of being Muslim, and often excludes folk Islam, antinomian Islam, and women's Islam.[28] It does not reflect the extent to which the so-called orthodox traditions of Islam have been connected in Islamic history to religious practices, like the veneration of the Prophet Muhammad and his family, now out of favor among some modern Sunni Muslims.[29] If scholars are to re-open interpretive possibilities for understanding the cultural influences of Islamic tradition on the MST, they must become more familiar with such traditions.

One way to pursue the possibility of Islamic influence is to query the biography of MST founder Timothy Drew. Like the biographies of all prophets, his biography, as told by his followers, is a didactic and epic story, and it is difficult to separate historical fact from mythic truth. He was born January 8, 1886, in North Carolina to a Cherokee mother and "Moorish" father.[30] His North Carolinian provenance is evidence for at least one scholar that Timothy Drew may been aware of Islamic practices or Muslim persons.[31] Certainly, there were practicing Muslims on the coasts of Georgia and the Carolinas, and one of the most well-known Muslim slaves in antebellum times, Omar ibn Sayyid, was discovered in North Carolina.[32] Of course, to what extent this presence of Islam and Muslims in the South influenced Noble Drew's later appropriations of Islam is unclear, and it is hard to imagine the discovery of sources that will ever bear out such speculation. Scholars of the MST have not yet found any documents linking Timothy Drew to a particular time and place in the South, and in the absence of such sources, it is unclear how Drew Ali can placed in a particular Muslim milieu there.

Furthermore, though more evidence of Islamic practice among North American slaves has emerged in the past two decades, scholars have not yet adequately theorized the problem of religious diversity among Muslim slaves. It is unlikely that all African American Muslims practiced the same forms of Islamic religiosity. With what type of Islamic expression might Noble Drew Ali have been familiar? The "Islam" of North American slaves was not monolithic or unchanging. Though urbane slaves like Omar ibn Sayyid were well-versed in Qur'anic learning, Islamic *salat*, and Muslim saint worship, not all African Muslim slaves who were brought to the Americas would have had similar opportunities to study the Islamic sciences and visit the shrines of the saints in West

Africa.[33] Furthermore, one must be sensitive to the possible diffusion of African Islamic practices into the African American religious culture often known as Conjure and the possibility that the meaning of such practices changed as they became part of a new cultural matrix. Persons who did not call themselves Muslims may have performed African Islamic practices whose Islamic meaning shifted or disappeared over time.[34]

Consider, for example, the Afro-Asian practice of using Qur'anic verses in the production of amulets.[35] It must be remembered that, despite the picture one may deduce from textbook Islam, for some Muslims, studying the exact claims of the Qur'an has not been central to their Muslim identity or spirituality. Indeed, there are examples of Muslims who barely talk about the Qur'an.[36] Certainly, until recently, many Muslims have not been able to read the Qur'an—they were illiterate. Even if they knew how to pronounce the letters, they may not have known what the words meant. Those verses that many Muslims know from the Qur'an have been memorized. Deep knowledge and analysis of the contents of the Qur'an and *tafsir*, or Qur'anic commentary, were generally left to religious specialists. Qur'anic literacy has increased in the modern world, but Muslims around the globe still enjoy reciting and listening to what is primarily an aural and oral text.[37] As in pre-modern times, the Qur'an also continues to be used not only as a theological and legal guide, but also a source of healing and protection. If Noble Drew was exposed to any part of African Islamic culture, he would have been far more likely to encounter amulets rather than a bound volume of the Qur'an. For many West African Muslims and even non-Muslims, verses of the Qur'an could be placed in an amulet to ward off evil or offer protection.[38] Often, a *shaykh*, or religious specialist, would instruct the lay person on how to use a particular amulet. Though there were many learned

scholars of the Qur'an in West Africa, and Arabic was an important lingua franca of the region, there were also Muslims and non-Muslims who had no idea how to read what was inside their amulets. What they knew was the text as talisman. Perhaps this was the Islam to which Noble Drew was exposed, if he was exposed to Islam at all.

But Fauset's ethnographic coverage of the MST also reminds us that any search for the meaning of religious activity to African Americans must take account of the contemporary context in which that religion exists. Rather than locating the possible sources of Noble Drew's Islam only in African retentions, one must also focus on the northern cities where Moorish Science was born. To place Noble Drew's Islamic identity in the rich contexts of his time and place requires knowledge of the other forms of Islam that African Americans and others were practicing around Chicago, Detroit, and the other cities through which Noble Drew moved. Michael Gomez helpfully speculates that the MST may have intentionally distanced itself from Sunni or "orthodox" Islam.[39] Prophet Noble Drew, after all, offered revelation directly from God, investing himself with a divine authority that, for his followers, superseded the claims of other Muslim vying for the attention of black Americans in the 1920s. Rather than assuming that Noble Drew was ignorant of other forms of Islam, this approach tries to understand what constructions of Islam he chose to include--and exclude--in his teachings.[40] The leader might have been exposed to numerous contemporaneous sources of Islamic knowledge, including Muslim immigrants from India and the Ottoman Empire, immigrant missionary tracts, African American veterans of the conflict with Muslims in the Philippines, Orientalist scholarship, the publications of the Universal Negro Improvement Association, the

writings of Edward W. Blyden, and oral historical legends about Muslim ancestors in Africa.

The number of possible sources for Noble Drew's Islam increases dramatically if one dates the establishment of the MST to 1925 rather than to 1913. A common mistake in the secondary and tertiary literature on the MST is to equate Noble Drew's establishment of the *Canaanite* Temple in Newark, New Jersey, in 1913, with the establishment of the *Moorish Science* Temple in Chicago in 1925.[41] If the MST was established in Chicago, it is also likely that Noble Drew knew about the success of the Ahmadiyya movement in converting African Americans to Islam. Even if Noble Drew established the MST on the East Coast before 1920, he certainly would have learned later about the Ahmadiyya movement in Chicago. One way or another, Chicago, as Susan Nance has established, was a central place for the development, if not the birth of this movement. It was in Chicago, in the 1920s, where Noble Drew published his *Holy Koran of the Moorish Science Temple*. And it was in Chicago, in 1928, where the Moorish Science Temple was officially incorporated, and where the movement used "Unity Hall," located on 3140 Indiana Avenue, as its headquarters.

Chicago was also an important center for the Ahmadiyya movement. Its "Moslem Mosque and Mission House" in Chicago was located by 1922 on 4448 Wabash Avenue, about two miles south of Unity Hall.[42] Originally established in 1889 in the Punjab by Ghulam Ahmad (d. 1908), the Ahmadiyya movement was a modern messianic group that sought the revival of Islam. Many of Ahmad's followers believed him to be a *mujaddid*, or a renewer of religion; the Islamic *mahdi*, an important figure in Islamic eschatology; and the Christian messiah. Though the group would face claims of heresy

from other Muslims, Ahmadis were among the most successful Muslim missionaries in the first half of the 1900s.[43] In 1920, South Asian Ahmadi missionary Muhammad Sadiq arrived in the United States and quickly focused his evangelizing on African Americans. Sadiq promised black converts that they would experience true brotherhood and equality in Islam, claiming that "there is no question of color" in the East.[44] He also promoted Islam as the cultural and religious heritage of African Americans, stolen from them when the "Christian profiteers brought you out of your native lands of Africa and in Christianizing you made you forget the religion and language of your forefathers—which were Islam and Arabic."[45] The Ahmadi newspaper, the *Moslem Sunrise*, featured the stories of great black ancestors in Islam, persons like Bilal ibn Rabah, the first prayer-caller, and included pictures of black American Ahmadi leaders like P. Nathaniel Johnson or Sheik Ahmad Din.[46]

Speculating that Noble Drew was at least familiar with this group by the time he revealed the *Holy Koran of the Moorish Science Temple*, one can conclude that Noble Drew also knew the Ahmadi claim, repeated by African American converts, that Islam was part of their African heritage stolen from them during the Middle Passage. What is remarkable, continuing with this speculative line of reasoning, is how much of the Ahmadiyya he ignored. The Ahmadiyya missionaries were busy bringing translations of the Qur'an to black folk (change "folk"?) in Chicago, but Noble Drew did not allude to any verses of the Qur'an in his own work. The Ahmadiyya taught their believers how to pray the *salat*, the prescribed Arabic prayers involving a series of prostrations toward the Ka'ba in Mecca. There is no evidence that the rituals of the MST included any aspects of these prayers. Ahmadi African American converts took on variety of famous names from

the history of Islam like Ahmad, Zeineb, Ayesha, and Abdul Basit; many of the Moors came to be known by the surname “Bey” or “El.” There was, in sum, very little correspondence between the religious practice explicitly constituted as Islam in the MST and that in the Ahmadiyyah movement.

But there were other understandings of Islam available to Noble Drew Ali during this age, including the growing association of Islam with political protest and black resistance to colonialism and racism. Islam as a symbol of protest had been part of black English-speaking discourse at least since the era of the nineteenth-century leader Edward Wilmot Blyden, the African American Liberian professor and politician, whose English-language works, read in Britain, the Americas, and West Africa, praised Islam, the Qur’an, and West African Muslim society as effective vehicles of modern black manhood and nationalism.[47] Blyden’s linkage of Islam and black nationalism was perpetuated in the English-speaking black world by the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). Arnold Ford, the musical director of the UNIA, included allusions to Allah in some of his movement songs, and the UNIA’s *Negro World* supported pan-Islamic attempts to resist European imperialism. Marcus Garvey, the UNIA’s founder, even compared himself to the Prophet Muhammad, though he was careful to contrast his exclusively political aspirations with the religious goals of the Prophet.[48]

Noble Drew’s familiarity with Garveyism, and perhaps with the construction of Islam as political protest, is suggested most strongly by his explicit allusion to Garvey in the *Holy Koran*: “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" (48:3). Noble Drew hoped to assume the mantle of Garvey's leadership and to make the MST a successor to Garvey's UNIA. Unlike Garvey, however, Noble Drew framed his mission in unmistakably religious terms. Whereas the Garvey movement supported the presence of religious diversity and the ecumenical African Orthodox Church, Noble Drew condemned Christianity as a non-Asiatic religion. As one of the heirs competing for Garvey's legacy, Noble Drew insisted that Islam, not Christianity, was the proper religion of all Asiatics, and that he was the prophet sent to bring the Moors back to their original religion.

Perhaps the greatest source of Noble Drew's Islam was the culture of the Black Shriners, or the Ancient Egyptian Arabic Order of the Nobles of the Shrine, a Masonic group established at Chicago's world fair, or World's Columbian Exposition, in 1893. One indication of the Masonic influence on the MST, for example, is the way that Noble Drew's hagiography was constructed as a classic Masonic tale: At age 16, Drew Ali traveled to Egypt as part of the merchant marine. In the land of the Pharaohs, Noble Drew met the "last priest of an ancient cult of High Magic who took him to the Pyramid of Cheops, led him in blindfolded, and abandoned him." The priest offered Drew initiation in the cult after making his way out. He became "Noble," a title used by Shriners. Noble Drew's movement would come to incorporate many other Islamic symbols from the Shriners, including the star and crescent, the fez, and many Islamic names—the same names used in Shriner ceremony and architecture.[49]

In the past, scholars have asserted or at least implied that because Noble Drew Ali's understanding of Islam seems to be derived largely from the Shriners, Noble

Drew's Islam was largely fake. For some, this Shriner's understanding of Islam reveals the chasm between Noble Drew and "traditional Islam."[50] But why must one dismiss the Islamic-ness of the group just because their Islam came from the Shriners? Such criticisms construct a mythical authentic Islam against which the false Shriner's Islam of the MST can be measured. Taking a less imperious approach to Noble Drew's Islam suggests another possibility—that the Shriners are no less an authentic source for Islam than any other. From the very beginning of Islam in the seventh century, Islamic ideas have drifted over the oceans and across the land through a variety of means, often being indigenized in the process.[51] Noble Drew's appropriation of Islam, no matter what its source, need not be considered any less authentic just because its source is not listed in world religions textbooks.

To be sure, Noble Drew's Islam bears little descriptive similarity to the orthodox Islam that is assumed to constitute the essence of real Islam in textbooks. But that point alone should not disqualify it as a form of Islam in the academic study of religion. If scholars have the right to make such judgments about the real Muslims versus the fake ones, they should be prepared to inform literally millions of Muslims around the world, from the Gayo to the Guyanese, that they are not real Muslims—since millions of Muslims do not practice many of the Islamic traditions supposedly essential to the religion of Islam.[52] Furthermore, scholars who exile certain Muslims to the margins of the academic study of religion blind themselves to the story of how so many human beings became Muslims. From the very beginning of Islamic history, Muslims reshaped the texts and traditions of Islam to reflect their local and regional identities and interests. Orthodox Islam itself is not a static entity, and understanding how "outsiders" shaped

what today is considered mainstream Islam during the first several centuries of Islamic history is essential to understanding how Islamic law and ethics developed.[53] What Sunni and Shi‘a Muslims established was not so much consensus about what their religion meant but rather networks of persons and institutions that debated the meaning of this religion over time and in space. “What people of faith share,” Wilfred Cantwell Smith argued, “is not necessarily common definitions of what their religion means, but a common history.” No person, said Smith, should be understood simply as a product of his or her tradition, but rather as a participant in that tradition.[54] The story of Islam must include all those persons who see themselves as part of that tradition, however construed. Once a scholar is thus freed from the limiting perspective of textbook Islam, one can take seriously Noble Drew’s mission as a Muslim messenger, and ask what he meant by calling himself a Muslim.

Religious Culture in the Moorish Science Temple

There are several essential questions about the meaning of being Muslim left to be answered. Following Nance’s lead, first one can learn more about the religious aspects of Freemasonry in the 1910s and 1920s. Noble Drew’s Islam may have been a familiar faith to those associated with American fraternal movements, particularly the Shriners. “Whether Masons, Shriners, Elks, or Pythians,” writes Susan Nance, “Ali and the initiates of other orders held in common rituals and philosophies, which some members perceived as only colorful remnants from a distant past, while those inclined to mysticism interpreted them as holding the key to spiritual transformation.”[55] Like Masonic organizations, members of the MST learned secret knowledge and rituals meant to free

them from the ignorance of the past, and permit them to serve others. In addition, like other African Americans touched in one way or another by American alternative religions, it is clear that Moors' esoteric understanding of spiritual enlightenment and self-improvement was shaped by various metaphysical groups in the United States.[56]

There is a great deal of research yet to be done on the material culture and everyday activities of MST members. Little scholarship has been produced about the meaning and functions of their religious objects, ethical interactions, clothing styles, rituals, sacred space, and other forms of rank-and-file religious expression. For example, the Moors enjoyed not only religious services at their temple, but grand displays and public rituals meant to expose others to Moorish wisdom and to build the group's popularity. Like many of black Chicago's other civic organizations, the Moors proudly participated in parades, donning turbans *and* waving American flags.[57] Did this pageantry have any religious importance? Or was it mere burlesque? Noble Drew also performed public displays of his spiritual prowess, staging a "Moorish Drama" in which he promised to be hung with a rope like Jesus in the temple and to heal the sick. Other MST members performed songs, and sold refreshments.[58] What religious meaning did this carnival have for those in attendance, if it did? In another event, reported the movement newspaper, the Prophet performed a public exorcism. "Prophet's Spirit Routs Enemy from Hall," the *Moorish Guide* proclaimed.[59] Susan Nance stresses the potential Masonic meanings of this act, but given the context, it is worth asking whether members in the audience did not also see this as root work or Conjure.

There is other evidence to suggest that the material culture of the MST may have been more connected to African and African American folk practices than has been

previously stated. Throughout many cities, the Moors became known for manufacturing and distributing various toiletries and herbal remedies. Their product line included Moorish Mineral and Healing Oil, and Moorish Body Builder and Blood Purifier, which was a tonic for "rheumatism, lung trouble, rundown constitutions, indigestion, and loss of manhood."[60] Nance interprets these products as evidence of Noble Drew's Orientalism; "in the early twentieth century, Americans would still have associated products like Moorish Mineral and Healing Oil, indeed Moorish-American identity itself, with magical transformation and Oriental abundance."[61] That may be so, but African Americans who had come north as part of the Great Migration may have equally associated the Prophet's product with root work—the ancient wisdom of African or even Muslim ancestors.

There are other elements of Moorish religious culture mentioned by Fauset that remain largely unexplored in the literature. Even if we wish, like Fauset, to interpret the function of this religious expression in largely political and social terms, we still need to know much more about their meaning to the people who practiced them. For example, Fauset gives enticing descriptions of Moorish religious services, noting their quiet and contemplative nature, and the chanting, rather than the singing, of "Moslem's that Old Time Religion" to the tune of "Give Me that Old Time Religion."[62] At their Friday religious services, which began and ended on time, MST members quietly read the holy scripture of their prophet, and were reminded of the importance of their name, their national origins, their religion, and their great Asiatic history in Canaan, Egypt, and Morocco. Followers extended their arms in a Masonic salute and prayed: "Allah, 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, through His Holy Prophet,

Drew Ali. Amen." Just what theologies were being expressed as they prayed these words aloud? Fauset also noted that in Philadelphia, women and men were segregated in the temple, with the women sitting in front.[63] Was this an African American Victorian religious expression of "ladies first"? Fauset gives no interpretation, and there is precious little scholarship about women's religiosity in the MST more generally.[64]

Decades after it was published, it is remarkable that Fauset's account of the MST still provides leads for further exploration of the movement. In pursuing those leads, I have suggested, scholars must be weary of simplistic assumptions that limit the potential sources and meanings of Islam to members of the MST. Building on new scholarship about the MST, any comprehensive cultural history of the movement should also attempt to reveal more about the multiple meanings of the MST's religious culture to its participants, remembering that their imaginative worlds may have been shaped by their local circumstances, but were not limited by them. Understanding the meaning of Moorish religious culture can shed light on the question more generally of African American cultural formation during the Great Migration, revealing important insights about the role of religion in the material culture of the era. Exploring the cultural history of the MST might also explain better the relationship of African Americans to other Americans of color, especially immigrants from Muslim lands. Finally, it will provide scholars of the African diaspora with a better sense of how some African Americans were appropriating and constructing elements of the African heritage in their everyday life and practice.

[1] See "The Moorish Science Temple of America," in Arthur Huff Fauset, *Black Gods of the Metropolis: Negro Religious Cults of the Urban North* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2002), 41-51.

[2] See J. Milton Younger, *Religion, Society, and the Individual: An Introductory to the Sociology of Religion* (New York: Macmillan, 1957), 498-507.

[3] E. U. Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism: A Search for an Identity in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), 33-36 and C. Eric Lincoln, *The Black Muslims in America*, 3d ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1994), 48-52.

[4] See Susan Nance, "Respectability and Representation: The Moorish Science Temple, Morocco, and Black Public Culture in 1920s Chicago," *American Quarterly* vol. 54, no. 4 (December 2002): 623-659; 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): 123-166; Michael A. Gomez, *Black Crescent: The Experience and Legacy of African Muslims in the Americas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 203-275; Yvonne Y. Haddad and Jane I. Smith, *Mission to America: Five Islamic Sectarian Communities in North America* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1993), 79-104; Ernest Allen, Jr., "Identity and Destiny: The Formative Views of the Moorish Science Temple and the Nation of Islam," in *Muslims on the Americanization Path?*, edited by Yvonne Y. Haddad and John L. Esposito (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 163-214; Richard Brent Turner, *Islam in the African-American Experience*, 2d ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 71-108; and 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.

[5] Fauset, *Black Gods*, 90-91.

[6] Ibid., *Black Gods*, 3-4; 82n7; 101-104.

[7] See, for example, Sterling Stuckey, *Slave Culture: Nationalist Theory and the Foundations of Black America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

[8] See, for example, Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993).

[9] See Jose V. Pimienta-Bey, "Some Myths of the Moorish Science Temple: An Afrocentric Historical Analysis," (Ph.D. diss., Temple University, 1995).

[10] Gomez, *Black Crescent*, 204.

[11] See especially the work of Susan Nance, cited above.

[12] For example of more global approaches to the MST, see Turner, *Islam in the African-American Experience*, and Gomez, *Black Crescent*.

[13] My copy of the *Holy Koran*, now widely available in redacted forms through the internet, is from the MST's FBI file. See File 100-3095, 1/28/42, in HQ 62-25889, sect. 1 in *FBI File on the Moorish Science Temple of America* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1995).

[14] See further Walter Benn Michaels, *Our America: Nativism, Modernism, and Pluralism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995), 14-15, 30-32, 78, 84.

[15] *Holy Koran of the MST*, 3, 56-59.

[16] Ibid., 57-60.

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[17] See further Hans A. Baer, *The Black Spiritual Movement: A Religious Response to Racism* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1984), 82-98.

[18] Levi H. Dowling, *The Aquarian Gospel of Jesus the Christ*, sixth ed. (London: L. N. Fowler, 1920), 13, and Edgar J. Goodspeed, *Modern Apocrypha* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1931), 15-17.

[19] Dowling, *Aquarian Gospel*, 5-12, 31-32.

[20] Compare the *Holy Koran of the MST*, chapters 5, 6, 7, and 11, with Dowling, *Aquarian Gospel*, chapters 18, 21, 22, and 32 on pages 44, 47-49, and 60-62.

[21] Compare *Holy Koran of the MST*, chapters 2, 4, and 13-19 with Dowling, *Aquarian Gospel*, chapters 1, 15, 47, 61, 65, 168, 178, 172, and 176 on pages 25, 40-41, 78-79, 93-94, 97-98, 239-240, 253-255, 244-246, and 250-251.

[22] See "Introduction" in *The Infinite Wisdom* (Chicago, IL: De Laurence Co., 1923). For a scholarly work on Tibetan Orientalism in the West, see Donald S. Lopez Jr., *Prisoners of Shangri-La: Tibetan Buddhism and the West* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

23 See Sri Ramatherio, ed., *Unto Thee I Grant*, rev. ed (San Jose, CA: Supreme Grand Lodge of the AMORC, 1953), 93-97; Stephen R. Prothero, "Rosicrucians," in Edward L. Queen et al, *The Encyclopedia of American Religious History* (New York: Facts on File, 1996), 575-6; Frances A. Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), 220-223; and Harry Wells Fogarty, "Rosicrucians," in Mircea Eliade, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Religion* 12 (New York: Macmillan, 1987), 476-77.

[24] Compare *Holy Koran of the MST*, 32-56, with *Infinite Wisdom*, 27-102, or its exact equivalent in the AMORC edition.

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[25] For examples, see Catherine L. Albanese, *America: Religions and Religion*, 3rd ed. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publicing Company, 1999), 292-300; John Bowker, *World Religions* (New York: DK Publishing, 2006), 176-195; and Jamal J. Elias and Nancy D. Lewis, *The Pocket Idiot's Guide to Islam* (Indianapolis: Alpha, 2002). To clarify, these are effective textbook treatments, and I have taught each of them in my college classes. But their models of Islamic religion should not be applied in a normative fashion to all forms of Islamic religiosity.

[26] See further Stephen Prothero, *Religious Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know—and Doesn't* (New York: Harper San Francisco, 2007).

[27] Sylviane Diouf, for example, portrays Noble Drew Ali's claim to be a prophet "in total opposition to a crucial tenet of Islam." This pronouncement ignores the debates in Islamic tradition over the nature of prophecy and its status in the absence of Muhammad—and takes sides in an Islamic debate. See Sylviane A. Diouf, *Servants of Allah: African Muslims Enslaved in the Americas* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 205-206.

[28] For criticism of a "pamphlet Islam" that tends to present an overly simplistic vision of Islamic religion and excludes too many Muslim voices in favor a monolithic, modern, and reformist version of Islam to the public, see Omid Safi, ed. *Progressive Muslims: On Justice, Gender, and Pluralism* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2003), 22-23.

[29] See further Carl W. Ernst, *Following Muhammad: Rethinking Islam in the Contemporary World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

[30] Peter Lamborne Wilson, *Sacred Drift: Essays on the Margins of Islam* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1993), 15.

[31] Gomez, *Black Crescent*, 204.

[32] See further Allan D. Austin, *African Muslims in Antebellum America: Transatlantic Stories and Spiritual Struggles* (New York: Routledge, 1997); Diouf, *Servants of Allah*; and Gomez, *Black Crescent*, 143-184.

[33] For a reprint of Omar ibn Sayyid's 1831 autobiography in Arabic, see Edward E. Curtis IV, ed. *Columbia Sourcebook of Muslims in the United States* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).

[34] Albert Raboteau makes a similar claim about the diffusion of Conjure and African religions more generally into African American Christianity. See *Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South*, updated ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), especially 4 – 92.

[35] For a sense of the importance of amulets, one cannot consult the typical textbook. Start with Katheleen Malone O'Connor, "Amulets," in *The Encyclopedia of the Qur'an*, edited by Jane D. McAuliffe (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2001), 77-79.

[36] See, for example, James L. Peacock, *Purifying the Faith: The Muhamadijah Movement in Indonesian Islam* (Menlo Park, California: Benjamin/Cummings, 1978).

[37] For an introduction the Qur'an as an aural and oral text, see Michael A. Sells, *Approaching the Qur'an: The Early Revelations* (Ashland, Oregon: White Cloud Press, 1999).

[38] See further David Robinson, *Muslim Societies in African History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 44-45, 53.

[39] Gomez, *Black Crescent*, 232.

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[40] Compare Nance, "Mystery of the Moorish Science Temple," 142. Nance asserts that African Americans would have known little about Islam other than the exotic images appearing in the *Chicago Defender*. Such an assumption ignores the fact that *some* African Americans knew a great deal more about Islam than that.

[41] See, for example, Turner, *Islam in the African-American Experience*, 92; and Jane I. Smith, *Islam in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 79, 205.

[42] *Moslem Sunrise*, October 1922, 126.

[43] See further Yohanan Friedman, *Prophecy Continuous: Aspects of Ahmadi Religious Thought and Its Medieval Background* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989).

[44] *Moslem Sunrise*, October 1921, 41.

[45] *Moslem Sunrise*, April and May 1923, 184. The similarity to Elijah Muhammad's later thought suggests that Elijah Muhammad was influenced by the Ahmadiyya.

[46] See *Moslem Sunrise*, October 1932/January 1933, 31-33, and July 1922, 119.

[47] See Edward Wilmot Blyden, *Christianity, Islam, and the Negro Race* (orig. 1887; reprint, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1967); Hollis Lynch, *Edward Wilmot Blyden: Pan-Negro Patriot, 1832-1912* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967); Hollis Lynch, ed., *Selected Letters of Edward Wilmot Blyden* (Millwood, NY: KTO Press, 1978); and Richard Brent Turner, *Islam in the African-American Experience*, second ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 47-59.

[48] Randall K. Burkett, *Garveyism as a Religious Movement* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1978), 178-81. Garvey's pan-Africanism was influenced partly by Dusé Mohammed Ali, publisher of the *African Times and Orient Review*. Garvey knew Ali from London, where he also read the works of Blyden in the British Library. See Turner,

Islam in the African-American Experience, 83-86; Gomez, *Black Crescent*, 259-260; and Ian Duffield, "Dusé Mohamed Ali and the Development of Pan-Africanism, 1866-1945" (Ph.D. diss., Edinburgh University, 1971).

[49] Wilson, *Sacred Drift*, 6-7.

[50] Susan Nance, for example, insists that Noble Drew's "influences were not Muslim but rather distinctly American," creating a false dichotomy between Islam and America, and ignoring the fact that Islam had been an American tradition from the very beginning of the Columbian Age. See Nance, "Mystery of the Moorish Science Temple," 125.

[51] For various treatments of how Islam became indigenized in its growth and development, see Devin A. DeWeese, *Islamization and Native Religion in the Golden Horde: Baba Tükles and Conversion to Islam in Historical and Epic Tradition* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994); Richard M. Eaton, *Essays on Islam and Indian History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); and Nehemia Levtzion, *Conversion to Islam* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1979).

[52] Compare Robinson, "Western Views of Africa and Islam," in *Muslim Societies in African History*, 74-88.

[53] Richard W. Bullet, *Islam: The View from the Edge* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).

[54] See further Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *Toward a World Theology: Faith and Comparative History of Religion* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1981), 4-5, 27-28.

[55] Nance, "Mystery of the Moorish Science Temple," 138.

[56] For more on metaphysical religions in American religious history, see Catherine L. Albanese, *A Republic of Mind and Spirit: A Cultural History of American Metaphysical Religion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).

[57] Nance, "Respectability and Representation," 643.

[58] Wilson, *Sacred Drift*, 30.

[59] Nance, "Respectability and Representation," 633.

[60] Ibid., 629.

[61] Ibid., 630.

[62] Fauset, *Black Gods*, 49.

[63] Ibid., 50.

[64] One source that takes seriously the role of women in the MST is Debra Washington Mubashshir, "A Fruitful Labor: African American Formulations of Islam, 1928-1942," (Ph.D. diss., Northwestern University, 2001). It is worth noting that the *Moorish Guide*, a bimonthly periodical, was edited in the late 1920s by Moorish female poet, Juanita Mayo Richardson-Bey. See further Gomez, *Black Crescent*, 261-262 and archival sources available in the Moorish Science Temple Papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture at the New York Public Library.