Introduction

The present book, which is the first academic work to thoroughly examine the history of white American conversion to Islam before 1975, is a study of both the history of the conversions themselves and of the social and religious transformations that led to and shaped the phenomenon of white Americans becoming Muslims. While there have been a handful of books and articles on the most well-known early white American convert, Alexander Russell Webb; a book chapter and a non-scholarly biography on a prominent later female convert, Maryam Jameelah; and one study of white conversion narratives that were written before 1990, research on other pre-1975 converts and on the specific historical changes that led to their emergence and molded their characteristics has been practically nil. The primary reason for this scholarly silence is that there was little information on the subject available to researchers prior to the twenty-first century. Few early white converts besides Webb had ever been notable enough to earn mention in early scholarly studies of American Islam, and for the most part their impact on the American Muslim community was forgotten, as that community went through its significant post-immigration reform transformation starting in the mid-1960s. But today, with growing numbers of old periodicals, books, and government records being made available through interlibrary loan and digitization, and unpublished and rare documents concerning early American Muslims being collected and made public, researchers have been able to uncover much of what was previously hidden, and, as a result, we now have access to a fairly detailed picture of the early history of this important development in the US religious landscape.

The picture that emerges is one that both challenges and refines earlier views. It has become apparent, for instance, that the role that Alexander Webb played in the history of Islam in America has been somewhat distorted in the literature. Given the previous lack of information on early white American converts, it is understandable that the vast majority of scholarly discussions of this group of Muslims have focused on Webb. Nevertheless, this tendency downplays the important activities of other converts before and after Webb, and it frequently ignores the variety of ideological, social, and organizational forces at work in the development of the white American conversion community. Webb and the Muslim convert movement he started, for instance, were intimately connected to a specific nineteenth-century subculture that had a minimal role in the conversions of white Americans in the twentieth century—a fact that can be easily overlooked when no other white converts are discussed. One of the factors contributing to the emphasis on Webb is that there
religion that was often seen as the West’s greatest enemy, these converts helped teach Americans that violence and hate were not essential to Islam, and that great progress could be made if Americans and all people lived up to the ideals of tolerance and love.

With this background in mind, the significance of white American conversions to Islam can only be appreciated by acknowledging the deep roots of anti-Islamic sentiment in the culture out of which they emerged, and the deep historical forces that would eventually begin to weaken the strong hold of Islamophobia on Western Christian culture. At the same time, because the history of these conversions is quite complex, involving numerous cultural changes, individual idiosyncrasies, and multiple waves of immigration, it will also be important to have a framework on which to direct this study. The remainder of this introduction, then, provides an introduction to early American Islamophobia and a concept known as ‘deterritorialization,’ which is at once both an important historical phenomenon and the main theoretical lens through which the history of white American Muslims will be told.

Early Anti-Islamic Sentiment in North America

During the colonial and early independence periods, there was relatively little contact with Muslims who were not enslaved, and most white North Americans understood Islam through a traditional Christian anti-Islamic lens. Generally speaking, early white Americans looked at Islam’s teachings as sinful, its prophet as an ‘impostor,’ and its followers as violent and oppressive brutes. These views had been inherited from their European forebears and were cultivated and reshaped for the American context.

Anti-Islamic sentiment among Christians has shown a great deal of continuity since its emergence in the Byzantine Empire during the early years of Islam’s expansion. Since that time, Christian polemicists have, fairly consistently, attacked the character of the Prophet Muhammad, the legitimacy of the Qur’an, the doctrines of the Islamic faith, the religion’s purported methods of converting people, and the morality of common Muslims.1 The more direct antecedents of early American thought concerning Islam were, however, the polemics that developed in Western Europe starting in the twelfth century after Alfonso VI’s 1085 conquest of Toledo, the northernmost Islamic stronghold

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Church of England and Roman Catholicism to Islam, which was considered by Christians to be the penultimate example of an oppressive religion. The Puritan ‘pilgrimage’ to North America, meanwhile, was perceived as an escape not just from oppressive Christians, but also from Muslims, who, according to leading colonial religious figures like Cotton Mather and Jonathan Edwards, would be wiped out in a coming apocalypse. Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the widespread influence of Puritan religion and its notion of American exceptionalism helped to further establish the anti-Islamic current on North American soil.

The traditional European image of Islam for early colonists, however, was not solely shaped by religious polemic; a number of American colonists had encountered Muslims under violent circumstances abroad, which reinforced the commonly-held image of Muslims as blood-thirsty. One of these was famed Jamestown leader John Smith who had, as a young man, fought against Muslims in Hungary and was for a brief time enslaved by Ottoman Turks. Also, by the early 1700s, a few Americans who had spent time as captives of ‘Barbary’ (North African) Muslims had begun writing about their experiences and the harsh treatment they endured. Occasionally, the American captives observed that even the European ‘renegade’ converts to Islam were similarly subjected to violence. All of this was contributing to the increasingly popular American ‘captivity narrative’ literary genre, in which non-Christian, dark-skinned ‘savages’—usually Native Americans—imprisoned and assaulted innocent white Americans. By linking the image of the Native American with the Muslim, white North Americans were not only legitimizing the dehumanization of and aggression towards both groups, they were also defining true

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9 Marr, Cultural Roots, 2–3.
11 See, e.g., John Foss, A Journal, of the Captivity and Sufferings of John Foss: Several Years a Prisoner at Algiers: Together with some Account of the Treatment of Christian Slaves when Sick:—and Observations of the Manners and Customs of the Algerines (Newburyport, MA: Angier March, Middle-Street, 1798), 40–41.
beginning of the century to the 1850s, coincides with the development of Transcendentalism out of Unitarianism. During this period, conversions to Islam were extremely rare and, as far as the evidence shows, almost all took place in Muslim-majority regions and had almost no connection to liberal religiosity. In fact, most of the few conversions we do know about for this period were done for very pragmatic reasons: either to improve that particular American’s treatment while living under Muslim rule or to enable him or her to marry a Muslim. However, the most famous white American who was believed to have converted during this era was unique because he had actually been influenced by elements of liberal religion while a student at Harvard in the early nineteenth century. Although the authenticity of his conversion is still uncertain, the fact that George Bethune English consciously and verifiably studied Islam and took up practices he knew to be those of Muslims reveals the fundamental importance of liberal religion in beginning to shape white American religious identities in the nineteenth century.

During the second period, which lasted from around the 1850s through the 1890s, the US saw a wave of religious movements that would culminate with the appearance of the occult revival. These movements, which were influenced by liberal religion as well as a growing desire amongst common people to apply rational science to religiosity, included spiritualism, mesmerism, an early ‘Rosicrucian’ occult group, and esoteric Freemasonry. In several instances, these movements promoted identification with Islam and Muslims, but at the time they did not produce actual converts in America, nor were they by themselves responsible for the transformation of American religiosity that would legitimize organizations for converts to non-Christian religions. However, in 1875, the key transformative moment finally arrived when these movements were brought together in the form of a new occult group known as the Theosophical Society (TS), which, despite promoting adherence to non-Christian religious practices, quickly gained a respectable following and significant attention from the wider public. With the TS, then, the American occult revival had finally commenced. Although at first the TS could not maintain its popularity in the US for more than a few years, in the early 1880s the group was revived when it connected with a new batch of liberal religion enthusiasts living across the country who were willing to rebuild the movement. In doing so, these new leaders broadened the reach of organizations promoting adherence to non-Christian teachings and created a national network on which new non-Christian movements were able to form.

The first prominent convert to Islam, Alexander Russell Webb, was closely tied to the 1880s rebirth of the TS in America, and it was during the expansion of the occult revival that decade that he embraced Islam. At the time of his
conversion, however, Webb was living overseas and remained fairly isolated until 1893. That year, he returned to the US, and by gaining the allegiance of several people tied to liberal religion and the occult revival, he was able to lead not just the first conversion to Islam movement for white Americans, but the first movement for white Americans to formally join any Asian-majority religion. The time during which Webb’s movement was organized and active, 1893 to early 1896, is therefore the third important period. The fact that the achievements of this conversion movement are directly attributable to its ties with liberal religion and the occult revival demonstrates the importance of those earlier movements for generating a religious market in which non-Christian religions could be exclusively and publicly adhered to by white Americans.

Nevertheless, the cohesiveness of the Muslim convert movement was very short-lived and by 1896, the relatively successful organized efforts to promote Islam had all but disintegrated. The fourth period, then, was the time during which the members of the previous period’s movement continued to attempt to spread Islam but achieved little success, and the results they did achieve had minimal impact. It was also during this period, which lasted from 1896 to circa 1910, that other Muslim proselytizers came to the US but similarly failed to bring Americans to Islam. The key to this fact, it seems, is that none of these post-movement attempts to spread Islam did what was done so well during the movement’s peak: strongly connect their proselytization efforts with the occult revival. Indeed, this was a period in which white Americans started joining several different Asian-majority religious movements, and the evidence suggests that the success of non-Christian religious organizations during this period was proportional to the degree to which they aligned themselves with the occult revival.

Part 1 examines these four periods over the course of six chapters. My argument is that nineteenth-century white American conversion to Islam—especially as embodied in Alexander Webb’s movement, which was the first successful conversion to Islam movement for white Americans—was primarily a product of the deterritorializing and reterritorializing forces of liberal religion and the occult revival. The present chapter looks at the first period of this history, which was the period in which the US saw its earliest known white converts to Islam. These converts were primarily sailors who—due to the deterritorializing forces of long-distance seafaring, global trade, and international warfare—were residing in Muslim-majority territory between 1803 and 1823. Some of these sailors converted as captives of Muslims, others willingly embraced Islam as free men, and at least one well-known ‘convert’ from the period may not have actually been a convert at all, but rather a liberal-minded critic of Christianity who simply valued aspects of the religion and culture of
were protected there by the British and French navies. Upon independence, however, the Americans had to defend themselves. This meant that—because the US did not have a particularly strong navy in its early years—American merchant ships were constantly being seized and their crews were being held hostage by various North African pirates attempting to extract ransoms and tributes. To deal with this problem, the US began building up its navy. In 1801, the American government refused to pay an excessive tribute demanded by the Tripolitan Pasha, who responded by declaring war against the US. The US then sent warships to the region to create blockades and perform raids, setting into motion the First Barbary War.

On October 31, 1803, the Philadelphia, one of the US warships stationed on the Barbary Coast, hit uncharted rocks near the Tripolitan shore. Separated from the rest of the American navy and lacking the means to ably defend itself, the ship was captured by Tripoli’s Pasha, who subjected its crew to frequent floggings, beatings, food deprivation, and generally very unpleasant conditions. It was made clear to the captives that they would receive better treatment if they embraced Islam, but the general sentiment among the crew was that conversion would be a cowardly, treacherous act.

John Wilson was the first to ignore the crew’s opinions and join up with the Muslims. Even before he converted, just days after the crew was taken prisoner, Wilson was already behaving, as the Philadelphia’s Captain Bainbridge put it, “in a most infamous manner.” He had told the Tripolitans that Muslim captives on another American ship were being abused, a lie that appears to have caused the Philadelphia’s Muslim guards to flog the Americans even harder and more often. Then, barely a week after being captured, attempting to further ingratiate himself with the Pasha, Wilson claimed that Captain Bainbridge had thrown gold and American money overboard—another outright falsehood that resulted in further persecution of the Americans and, simultaneously, the elevation of Wilson’s status by his captors: he was made overseer of the captured crew.

Although Wilson, a Swede by birth, was a naturalized US citizen, his brazenness in betraying his crewmates was apparently grounded in his expectation that

3 The latter because of a treaty with Britain.
5 Naval Documents, 3:223.
7 Naval Documents, 3:530; Ray, Poems, 234.
The fact that three of the first converts were of similar minority ethnic backgrounds on the American ship is not particularly surprising. As we will see, throughout the history of religious conversion of Americans to non-Christian religions, it is often the case that ethnic minorities convert in groups. Frequently, this is because ethnic minorities, particularly those who are immigrants or the children of immigrants, tend to rely heavily on social ties based on shared ethnicity and language. When one of these ties is stretched through one of the members of the group changing identities or loyalties, particularly when this is a relatively influential member, other members of the group may follow in order to preserve the valuable ethnically-based social tie. In the case of the Philadelphia, John Wilson seems to have been this influential member for the ship's German speakers.

Nevertheless, Thomas Smith and Peter West—the two other Philadelphia crewmen who “turned Mahometants” were not, by any accounts, from German backgrounds. Almost nothing is known about seaman Thomas Smith, other than his approximate conversion date of January 15, 1804.19 Peter West, a carpenter and another early convert, is only noted for having helped build at least one boat for the Pasha that later attacked an American cruiser.21 It is likely that these men’s primary motive for converting was to reduce their harsh treatment and improve their chances of survival. Despair was in fact quickly spreading through the crew, and by mid-January 1804, Captain Bainbridge was expecting “many more” of the ship’s crew members to follow in Wilson’s footsteps.22 A wave of defections did not occur, however; instead, the Americans’

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17 For a discussion of this phenomenon, see Stark and Finke, Acts, 125.
18 Naval Documents, 3:329.
19 Ibid., 3:185, 6:203. Although in some instances this specific date was given for Smith’s conversion, we can only consider it approximate, for on January 14—one day before Smith’s supposed conversion—Bainbridge observed that five crew members—which was the total number of crew members that were reported to have converted, so this number included Smith—had already converted; see Naval Documents, 3:329.
20 Ibid., 3:185.
21 Ibid., 5:488.
22 Ibid., 3:329.
23 In February 1804, Bainbridge noted that there were seven total converts, suggesting two additional conversions (see Naval Documents, 3:409). However, given that (a) in all other documents written by the Philadelphia’s crew these two additional converts were never mentioned (although in late December 1803 another American ship heard the probably exaggerated rumor that eight Philadelphia sailors had converted—see Naval Documents, 3:301); (b) in the official reports only five converts were named and all remaining crew members’ fates were accounted for; and (c) the Muslim captors would have punished apostasy from Islam with death and we know that they did not kill more than four of the
‘Taking the Turban’: George Bethune English

Out of all of the eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century phrases that described British and American conversions to Islam, none captured the ambiguity of the supposed converts’ motives for joining up with Muslims as much as ‘took the turban.’ The meaning of ‘renegade’ and ‘turned Mahometant’ were clear. The ‘Turk’ in the phrase ‘turned Turk,’ meanwhile, could be equivalent for ‘Muslim,’ but it also could signify that the convert took on the appearance and social habits of the North African Ottoman Muslim people without necessarily becoming Muslim, or—more significantly, in times of war—that the way the person was really converting was in terms of national loyalty: ‘Turk’ being a designation of national identity rather than ethnic or religious identity. In all these meanings—which could be employed simultaneously—the convert’s social commitments, whether they be religious, secular, or political, were understood as having changed. However, the wording of ‘took the turban,’ although surely understood by many as basically equivalent to the other terms for converting to Islam, was the phrase that was least connected to a person’s social commitments and internal motives. More than the other terms, it could be interpreted as a superficial change only, and perhaps better reflected the mentality of the convert sailors.

It is noteworthy, then, that the last and most well-known American to be called a ‘renegade’ in the context of conversion to Islam was also accused of ‘taking the turban,’ and even used the phrase himself to describe another convert sailor. Indeed, despite all the evidence and reports indicating the contrary, George Bethune English made sure that posterity would always have to acknowledge that we cannot say with certainty whether or not he actually converted.

The accusations began appearing in January 1819 when American newspapers reported a rumor that an unnamed “American officer of marines had embraced the Mahometan faith at Constantinople.” This was undoubtedly English. Through a favor of then-Secretary of State John Quincy Adams, English—a graduate of Harvard’s law and divinity schools—had joined the American military as a second lieutenant in the Marines in February 1815. English’s early military career was brief. In 1816, he was posted in the

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29 The phrase ‘to turn Turk’ was also sometimes used as a derogatory euphemism for prostitution; see Warner G. Rice, “‘To Turn Turk,’” Modern Language Notes (March 1931): 153–54.

30 National Advocate (New York), January 26, 1819, 2.
Yorker, known only as Khalil Aga, “took the turban” a few weeks before the forces left for the Sudan. In another account, conveyed by British clergyman George Waddington, both Khalil and his companion, a Swiss-born naturalized American known as Achmed Aga, ‘took the turban’ at that time, apparently following English’s lead. Waddington claimed to know an “eye-witness” of their supposed conversions who said that about a week or two prior to the event, the two men were seen walking around Cairo in their American navy uniforms; then they disappeared for eight or ten days, only to reappear in Muslim garb. Nothing more is known about their backgrounds, and only a few facts are known about their fates. Achmed would die during the expedition; Khalil would survive, leaving an important unpublished account of the journey, and after the expedition he returned to Egypt where even in as late as 1831 he was reportedly “distinguished for his courage and good conduct.”

With such little information, it is impossible to accurately assess the sincerity and depth of Khalil and Achmed’s conversions. For English, on the other hand, much more evidence exists, although it is still difficult to come to a definitive conclusion. English, first of all, adopted some Muslim customs, such as using the Islamic calendar for dating his account of the expedition, ‘Turkish’ stoic mannerisms, and quoting from the Qurʾan. English also later recalled that while in Muslim countries he even participated with Muslims in prayers, although, admittedly, he did the same with Jews and their prayers as well. Another suggestive anecdote comes from English’s Narrative. In it, he records that one day during the Nile expedition he stayed for a night at the home of local Muslims who offered their married daughters for him to sleep with. English responded by telling his hosts that “a Mussulman [Muslim] ought to

37 Waddington and Hanbury, Journal, 115. This account seemingly eliminates the possibility that the Swiss identity of Achmed was a misidentification of the Swedish John Wilson, who would have long been wearing local clothing, not an American sailor’s uniform, and by this time, seventeen years after his conversion, probably would not be accompanying another American sailor.
42 Knapp, American Biography, 96.
regard lying with his neighbour’s wife as a crime.” This was, most likely, merely a condescending remark on English’s part, and not evidence of him being a “Mussulman” himself. Indeed, English admitted that he gave into temptation and took up the hosts’ offer. For the American press, the most persuasive pieces of evidence of English’s conversion were the testimonies of three European Christians. One of these was Waddington, who had traveled with the expedition for a time and quickly came to suspect English of having converted. When English learned that Waddington, another Westerner, was in the entourage, he eagerly went to go see him, but Waddington treated English coolly precisely because he already believed English to be a “renegade.” Waddington, in fact, generally had little respect for English, and this showed through in his unfavorable depictions of the man in his journal made during the expedition, which was published in 1822. The fact that Waddington put into print his claim that English had converted angered English, who later confronted Waddington demanding that in the next edition of the book he retract the assertion. The rumor, however, would be in vain, as no new edition of Waddington’s book was published and other Europeans who met English in Egypt also identified him as a convert. When English and Khalil returned from the expedition, they stayed with their patron, the British consul Henry Salt, who happened to be hosting at the time various other Western travelers. One of these travelers noted in a letter to a friend that English had “turned Mahomedan and written an exposition of the Koran.” Another traveler staying with Salt, one Joseph Wolf, a German Jewish convert to Christianity, wrote in his journal that English confided in him “the history of his turning to Mahomedanism by principles.” According to Wolf, after reading Voltaire in college, English supposedly “became a complete infidel,” and extracts from Wolf’s journal indicate that he learned that one of English’s major criticisms of Christianity was that the New

43 English, A Narrative, 93.
44 Ibid., 93n.
45 Waddington and Hanbury, Journal, 117.
46 As Vivian points out, however, Khalil presents English in a more honorable light. See Vivian, Americans, 80–81, 85.
47 Vivian, Americans, 85.
48 “George B. English,” Spectator (New York), July 26, 1822, 3. This exposition of the Qur’an, like several of English’s unpublished writings, has not yet been found. It may be included in his “Miscellaneous religious instruction,” which is appended to a manuscript copy of A Narrative located at Yeshiva University.
49 Ibid.
and Old Testaments could not be completely reconciled with each other. All of these claims were included in an 1822 syndicated news article about English’s conversion, which helped cement his reputation as a ‘renegade.’ For the rest of his life, English would repeatedly deny having converted to Islam, but at least one of these claims—Wolf’s assertion about English’s criticism of Christianity—was at least partially based in fact.

George Bethune English was born in Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1787 to Thomas English, a Boston merchant and Irish immigrant, and Penelope Bethune, an American of Scottish descent. A naturally inquisitive young man and member of Harvard College’s Phi Beta Kappa academic honor society, English was said to have devoted twelve to fifteen hours a day to study and was known for both his love of learning and his “lofty and refined sentiments of honor.” English’s intellectual interests were wide; as an undergraduate, he investigated metaphysics, church history, biblical criticism, oriental languages, military tactics, and poetry, even becoming the official poet for his school’s famous Hasty Pudding social club. After graduating in 1807, English apparently unsuccessfully attempted to join the navy, he then turned to law enrolling in Harvard Law School before attending as an attorney for a brief period. However, English quickly came to dislike working in this field and decided to attend Harvard Divinity School instead. Here, English excelled. He had a gift for learning languages and he began reading medieval and early modern Hebrew texts as well as new works being published on Asian religions. In 1812, English won Harvard’s most prestigious academic honor, the Bowdoin prize, for his dissertation entitled “The Origin of the Masoretic Points, and Their Subserviency to a Thorough Knowledge of the Hebrew Language.” During this time, English, now leaning towards the increasingly popular Unitarian

50 Ibid.
51 Ibid.
52 Knapp, American Biography, 96.
57 “George B. English,” Spectator, 3; Knapp, American Biography, 92.
58 Harvard University, A List of the Winners of Academic Distinctions in Harvard College during the Past Year together with Lists of the Scholars of the First Group since 1902 and of the
the end of the eighteenth century, Congregationalist churches began splitting over the movement. Then, in 1805, the liberal Congregationalists won a significant coup with the election of the liberal Henry Ware for the Hollis Professorship of Divinity at Harvard College, one of the most influential positions in one of New England’s most influential centers for ministry training. Harvard—which George Bethune English was attending at the time—was now firmly in the hands of the liberals, who soon parleyed this achievement into better establishing the Unitarian movement. Rational, moralistic, liberal religiosity was now becoming a major institutionalized force in New England.

In this environment of modern religious liberalism, there were many people like English who began taking an interest in and showing liberal sympathy towards the so-called oriental religions, including Islam. The general American public, for instance, was being entertained by the Arabian Nights’ tales of oriental magic and indulgent wealth; the 1794 Philadelphia edition of *Nights* sold over forty thousand copies in its first decade. Among the better educated classes, there were Islam sympathizers like Thomas Jefferson, a Deist, who had privately studied Islamic history, the Qur’an, and even some Arabic and would also, in the early years of the country, join with a handful of other Enlightenment-influenced politicians to express their belief that religious liberty must be applied even to Muslims. Those of a more literary bent, meanwhile, might have read in various American journals an occasional translation coming out of India of a poem by one of the famous Persian Muslim poets, usually Hafiz. Some writers, such as Royall Tyler in his *Algerine Captive* (1797), did not display deep knowledge of Islam but presented Muslim characters in favorable light to point out their own criticisms of what they considered problems in American Christianity. Of the Unitarians, perhaps the most well-known sympathizer of Islam was the respected abolitionist Col. Thomas Wentworth Higginson.

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1850s, first through the writings of leading Transcendentalist Ralph Waldo Emerson, who had been strongly influenced by the German embrace of Islamic poetry, and then in William Rounesville Alger’s popular *Poetry of the East* (1856), which contained French and German translations of Persian, Arabic, and Sanskrit religious poems.\(^{92}\) By the end of the 1850s, Persian Sufi Muslim poetry had become fairly popular in America—having even inspired imitators and plagiarizers—which made the country primed for the 1859 release of Edward FitzGerald’s Romantic rendition of the *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*. FitzGerald’s work won wide praise among American and English literary critics, and it rocketed Omar Khayyam to the position of the preeminent Sufi poet in the West. Towards the end of the century, an Omar Khayyam club would even appear in both England and the US, reflecting the poet’s achieved cult status in Anglophone culture.\(^{93}\)

However, despite all the praise for Islamic poetry, despite the many Unitarian and Transcendentalist statements showing respect for Islam and Muhammad, and despite the growing attitude of acceptance and interest in oriental religions, as we have seen, in the early nineteenth c. US converts to Islam were extremely rare. There is, furthermore, currently no evidence that more than a fraction of the few people who are known to have actually converted between 1830 and 1885 had been motivated by Transcendentalism or any other philosophically-based liberal religious feeling.\(^{94}\) In fact, the handful of extant reports about converts from the period indicate that these were primarily American men and women living in Islamic countries who had chosen to convert in order to marry a Muslim.\(^{95}\) It seems that neither increasingly widespread sympathy towards, nor intellectual interest in, Islam could be sufficient in

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\(^{92}\) Yohannan, *Persian Poetry*, 115–44.

\(^{93}\) See Chapter 6 for further discussion of these clubs.

\(^{94}\) There are in fact only two known cases of whites who possibly converted on American soil during this period. The first is that of John and Martha Simon, both West European immigrants, by 1871, had moved from the US to Canada where government documents listed them as “Mahometans.” The second case is that of A.K. Brown, who claimed, in 1893, that he converted to Islam upon reading the Qur’an in the early 1850s, although he did not give any more details about the conversion, including clarification about where exactly his conversion took place. See Daood Hassan Hamdani, “Canada’s Muslims: An Unnoticed Part of Our History,” *Hamdard Islamicus* 20, no. 3 (1997): 98; “Converted Years Ago,” *Moslem World* (July 1893).

\(^{95}\) See, e.g., “Conversion to Mohammedanism,” *Cincinnati Daily Press*, February 18, 1861, 1; “American Mohammedan Lives Happily with his Four Wives,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, April 13, 1902, 2. There is also a rumor that prior to Alexander Russell Webb another American consul to a Muslim country converted to Islam; see Howard MacQueary, “American Mohammedanism,” *Unitarian* 8, no. 3 (1893): 106.
in the country. However, after taking trips to Europe and, he claimed, North Africa and the Middle East, where he purportedly learned various occult teachings, Randolph’s ideas changed significantly. He, first of all, became convinced that American spiritualism was based on a fundamentally flawed understanding of the human soul. Randolph argued that the soul is not limited to the personality, which the spirits of spiritualism seem to represent, but is rather an infinite element, or ‘monad,’ of the universe, and this monad contains within it an infinite number of universes as well. Each soul also has a single ‘soul mate,’ and finding one’s soul mate while living in one’s physical body on Earth will produce great happiness and allow for the performance of practical occult powers through sexual intercourse. Indeed, Randolph now taught that the notion held by both mesmerists and spiritualists that the only way to contact the infinite universe or spirits was through the passive reception of an entranced subject or medium was incorrect—humans could, in fact, consciously and intentionally do this, and they would obtain occult powers in the process. Randolph encouraged the use of breathing techniques, hashish, magic mirrors, and sexual discipline to help in this practice, but he emphasized that the key for all of this was to focus on one’s will and to, as he put it, “Try!” The idea that a person could consciously acquire powers from the universe simply through the cultivation of their individual will and the manipulation of their bodies and objects surely resonated with many urbanized, individualized, and technicalized minds. In fact, all of Randolph’s concepts had already gained popularity in the various earlier nineteenth-century Western subcultures with which he had come into contact. Randolph’s ideas seem to have been largely a mixture of Andrew Jackson Davis’s spiritualist philosophy, certain Free Love teachings with which Randolph had been affiliated, and nineteenth-century French and English occultism. Nevertheless, Randolph was the first to combine these notions in this particular way, and he gave his teachings a unique identity by labeling them ‘Rosicrucian.’ In doing this, Randolph introduced an important Islam-connected current into America’s religious culture, thus further preparing the culture for non-Christian religious groups generally and the Islamic movement specifically.

Rosicrucianism is a European occult movement that dates back to the early seventeenth century, towards the end of the Renaissance-era European fascination with magic. It was in fact the first European movement that claimed

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30 Although Deveney’s biography of Randolph seems to imply that Randolph did in fact make at least one voyage to North Africa and the Middle East, in my opinion, the evidence leaves much room for doubt.

introduction, played an important role in the modern wave of European Islamophobia. While most of the translations made in Spain were of texts dealing with science, mathematics, and Greek philosophy, some of the translations were concerned with occult forms of magic: astrology, alchemy, and divination. Copies of these translations, along with translations of other Arabic occult texts from Italy, began spreading throughout Western and Central Europe and played a key role in the flourishing of occult thought during the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Renaissance.

Already by the thirteenth century, in fact, major Western thinkers, such as Roger Bacon and Albertus Magnus, had become very familiar with the Arabic occult tradition. This interest was continued by the principal Renaissance theorists of magic—including Marsilio Ficino, Pico della Mirandola, Cornelius Agrippa, Paracelsus, John Dee, and Elias Ashmole—who all had knowledge of a number of magic-related texts translated from Arabic. Through these writers and the translated books that they read, the Arabic occult writings had a major influence on several key elements of the Western occult tradition. For instance, the Latin version of the Ghāyat al-Ḥakīm, known as the Picatrix, was one of the most popular magic books during the Renaissance and served as the primary model of a text that could bring all the various magic sciences together into a somewhat coherent scheme. Westerners also relied heavily on Arabic sources dealing with talismans and amulets. But the most well-known influence of Arabic occult texts was in the fields of astronomy/astrology and alchemy; many of the most popular sources used in these fields were translations from Arabic, and Arabic writers like Abu Ma’shar and Jabir

35 Astrology was sometimes understood, by both early Arabic and medieval Latin writers, as part of astronomy, and, therefore, a legitimate science.
37 References to the knowledge of translations of Arabic occult texts are dispersed throughout most of the major studies of these authors’ writings.
39 See Pingree, “Diffusion.”
powers. “Ansairetic Mystery” notably also contains a few references to Islam and Muslims. At one point, Randolph mentions “ALLAH—God himself,” when discussing the creator of all things. The clearest reference, however, is in the title of the work: “Ansairetic” refers to the Ansaireh, a Shi’i group in the Levant that is today sometimes called the Alawites or Nusaris. In the nineteenth century, a few European writers who discussed esoteric topics, such as Geoffrey Higgins, began promoting the idea that this group (as well as the Isma’ili Assassins, who where often thought to have either influenced or been identical with the Ansaireh) was the possessor of key secret sexual magic rites.49 Although Randolph makes no mention of the Ansaireh in the body of the text, prior to the work’s appearance Randolph had promised he would “reveal the secret of the Ansairetic Priesthood of Syria,”50 and throughout the text he does state a few times that his magic is from “Oriental” people. Nonetheless, there is no strong evidence that suggests that Randolph was genuinely influenced by the group, whose teachings on sex probably played a minor role in its overall identity anyway.51 As has already been pointed out, Randolph, more than likely, came up with his ideas after working with and reading the writings of other Western writers who discussed esoteric topics, spiritualism, and Free Love, particularly John Murray Spear and mesmerists like Alphonse Cahagnet and Baron Du Potet. The members of Randolph’s occult groups, however, would not have known this. Being vaguely aware of the connection between Islam and Rosicrucianism, they would have most likely believed that their organization was in fact essentially an induction into the Ansaireh’s most important teachings. To a degree, then, they saw themselves as Ansaireh.

Randolph’s various orders, however, were never either particularly popular or long-lasting. Although precise numbers are lacking, he probably had no more than one hundred initiated followers over the years, and the majority of these had stopped following him before he released “Ansairetic Mystery.” His organizations, furthermore, were so little known that they did not inspire imitators during his lifetime and, when Randolph committed suicide in July 1875, his remaining Ansairetic group—for which there was no clear and able successor to Randolph—was not able to continue. Randolph, then, was not responsible

49 For a discussion, see Deveney, Paschal, 213–14.
51 Contemporary scholarship still knows almost nothing about what the group taught about sexual magic, and it is appearing likely that the nineteenth-century rumors were baseless; see Meir M. Bar-Asher and Aryeh Kofsky, The Nusayri-Alawi Religion: An Enquiry into its Theology and Liturgy (Boston: Brill, 2002), 154–59.
in foreign countries. Then, in December 1870, after having already established the sria, Little organized what was called the ‘Ancient and Primitive Rite of Misraim,’ a French-based Masonic rite that claimed connections with ancient Egypt. The vast majority of members of this group were already members of Little’s Red Cross, and some were also in the sria. Misraim and the Red Cross, however, were primarily appealing to Masons interested in partaking in exotic degree systems. Although there was some overlap, for the most part, they were different from the kind of people who joined the sria, which emphasized above all other things the recovery of hidden—esoteric—knowledge. Few could afford the time, money, and social embarrassment that might accompany publicly indulging in this eccentric field, so naturally the sria could not be as popular as Little’s other orders. Nevertheless, the sria’s having as leaders prominent Masons who occasionally also led other para-Masonic orders gave the group enough legitimacy to draw several dozen Masonic esotericists from throughout England in its first few years.

One of the prominent Masons the sria attracted was George Kenning. Part of the emerging business class, Kenning, the son of a candle maker and himself a former gold lace maker, had recently made a name for himself in England’s Masonic community by becoming one of the most important Masonic regalia and jewel suppliers in the country. Always looking for new clients and opportunities, Kenning surely realized the possibilities that could be had by aligning himself with the likes of Little and the other prominent Masonic esotericists. In October 1867, Kenning was initiated in the sria, and he immediately set to work cultivating his clientele. In July 1868, the sria produced the first issue of its journal, the Rosicrucian, and Kenning was its only advertiser; he would, in fact, remain the Rosicrucian’s only advertiser until he took control of the journal in the late 1870s. Undoubtedly, then, Kenning was also the exclusive regalia and jewel supplier for the sria and most likely sold Little and the

those who had heard about Blavatsky, particularly those connected to the SRia, spiritualism, and the Free Thought movement. The facts that a large proportion of each issue was devoted to Eastern religions, many articles were authored by Indians, and the movement's large Indian following was often mentioned, all lent Blavatsky and her Eastern-connection claims a great deal of legitimacy in the eyes of white Westerners. As a result, although the organized occult/non-Christian movement in the US was essentially dormant between 1877 and 1881, interest in Blavatsky, her writings, and her order began to be rekindled.

In 1881, the history of both Theosophy, and the American occult/non-Christian market generally, reached a major turning point. That year, Thomas Moore Johnson, a lawyer from a small town in western Missouri, sent a copy of the second issue of the Platonist—a Platonism-focused journal he had recently started—to the Theosophical headquarters in India. Johnson, who had been significantly influenced by Transcendentalism and Thomas Taylor’s translations of the Idealist Plato, was not himself a Theosophist, but one of the main contributors to his journal, Alexander Wilder, was, having played a major role in helping to popularize Blavatsky by editing Isis Unveiled. Johnson was of the belief that Platonism was the one true philosophy, and that there were various manifestations of it throughout the world in esoteric teachings, which should be brought to light. The Theosophical Society saw similarities between theirs and Johnson’s projects and suggested that they advertise in each other’s magazine.92 Johnson agreed, and this new relationship eventually led to him becoming one of the most important figures in the expansion of Theosophy in the US.93

It was at this time that other Americans also started gaining enthusiasm for Theosophy, and organizers—who were almost always strong believers in the idea that American culture needed spiritual reforming—led the reemergence of the American side of Theosophy. In 1882, Rochester was the site of the first branch to be established outside of New York City. Its founder was Josephine Cables, a philanthropist and spiritualist who felt “pity for the world and desire to serve and save it and affection for those holy people [in India].”94 She gathered

92 Damodar Mavalankar to Johnson, May 31, 1881, Thomas M. Johnson Papers (hereafter, TMJ Papers), Thomas M. Johnson Library and Museum, Missouri State University Department of Special Collections.
93 Johnson exchanged letters with a number of prominent Theosophists throughout 1882.
almost no Theosophist members, was largely composed of people interested in Mind Cure and New Thought. This included the former Christian Scientist Mary D. Fisk, one of the most well-known followers of spiritual healing in the American West. At the time, Denver was in fact an important center for a growing New Thought movement led by the Brooks sisters of Pueblo, Colorado (a town one hundred miles south of Denver), who had been influenced, like Cramer, by the teachings of Hopkins. Soon, probably through Fisk, who was in contact with Cramer, the Brooks sisters would unite their Colorado movement with Cramer’s to form a national Divine Science organization. Through Theosophy-influenced New Thought, then, the American occult and non-Christian market had discovered a strong organizational base for promoting diverse religions and occult and non-Christian religious ideas.

Meanwhile, as occultism and non-Christian religions were influencing New Thought, New Thought was influencing the American occult and non-Christian religious community. In 1884 another former follower of Eddy, Sarah Stanley Grimké, had relocated to California, where she became friendly with Cramer’s friend Miranda Rice as well as the local Theosophists. In 1886, Grimké, who had previously published her own New Thought booklets, followed along with several California Theosophists (as well as, probably, Chainey and Kimball) and joined the H.B. of L. by 1887, after apparently becoming the mistress of H.B. of L. leader Thomas Burgoyne, who had moved to California, Grimké’s two booklets were made required reading in the occult order, and she would eventually have considerable influence over the ideas in the 1889 book attributed to Burgoyne, Light of Egypt, which came to be seen as the main text of the H.B. of L.

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117 See, e.g., Henry Liddell to Johnson, January 14, 1886, and compare with H.B. of L. ‘diplomas’ in the TMJ Papers.
118 Fisk’s H.B. of L. diploma is dated January 15, 1887, TMJ Papers.
119 For more see K. Paul Johnson’s forthcoming book on Grimké.
120 Grimké’s relationship with Theosophists can be inferred from the fact that her H.B. of L. ‘diploma’ in the TMJ Papers was signed in Los Angeles and its date is very close to those of the local Theosophist members of the H.B. of L.
121 Her diploma is dated April 3, 1886.
122 See “Circular No 1” in the TMJ Papers.
123 The H.B. of L.’s later leader—when then group was revived under the name Brotherhood of Light, and, later, Church of Light—Elbert Benjamine, asserted that Grimké wrote half of Light of Egypt. See C.C. Zain [Elbert Benjamine], Laws of Occultism: Inner Plane Theory and the Fundamentals of Psychic Phenomena, Rev. 2nd ed. (Los Angeles: Church of Light, 1994), 156—a claim that had been circulating privately since the 1890s.
help reveal to people their divine nature. And, because it claims to heal people of their illnesses, whether physical, psychological, social, or economic, it is vastly more attractive for the average person than occult teachings that simply promote practical occultism for specific—and what most would consider unbelievable—magical powers. This ‘mental picture theory,’ then—whether derived from Grimké and/or the H.B. of L., independently realized, or subconsciously followed—helped further the diversification of the occult revival in the US.

Ultimately, what this all meant was that as the result of the connecting of New Thought to the occult/non-Christian market via Theosophy and the H.B. of L., by the late 1880s there was a highly viable and potentially incredibly diverse occult/non-Christian market. It also meant that for the next decade or so—before the American religious market changed again—the style and success of those who wanted to spread non-Christian religions in the US would be greatly dependent on the degree to which they appealed to the core components of the American occult/non-Christian market: Theosophy, the H.B. of L., New Thought, and spiritualism. Indeed, starting in the late 1890s there were numerous attempts to build on it and further diversify the growing occult revival/non-Christian religion market, but the most successful usually were those able to connect themselves to all of these elements.

The development of the American occult revival out of nineteenth-century liberal religion, mesmerism, spiritualism, and esoteric Freemasonry was a complex—if not chaotic—process of de- and reterritorialization. It was the product of numerous interactions between a large number self-interested and altruistic promoters, leaders, and thinkers; the creation and combination of countless theories and organizations; and the constant circulation of people and ideas across time and space. It was indeed a great mess. But this mess had laid the foundation for a real market for organizations based around non-Christian religions, and it was within the early years of this market’s growth that the ideas and resources for the first American Muslim conversion movement were generated and came together.
Before Islam

Alexander Russell Webb was born in Hudson, New York on November 9, 1846. In 1847, his father, Alexander Nelson Webb, purchased the temperance newspaper for which he had worked as a printer, the Columbia Washingtonian, continuing its publication and, at the same time, establishing a secular news-focused newspaper, the Hudson Daily Star. Webb later remembered his father as being “outspoken and fearless,” and his newspapers became the mouthpieces for expressing his Jeffersonian Democratic views. Alexander Nelson remained in the newspaper industry until his retirement in 1873, at which point Alexander Russell’s brother, Herbert, inherited the business.

Alexander Russell, meanwhile, chose to not follow in his father’s footsteps. Webb, it seems, had a rather creative and independent spirit. As a child and young man, for instance, having no interest in religion, he tried to avoid attending his Presbyterian church and Sunday school as often as possible, and instead began attending an Episcopalian Sunday school simply to meet girls. Intellectually, he was similarly independent-minded. Webb reportedly composed essays and short stories as a teenager and he attended Claverack College and Hudson River Institute, a school that was known for encouraging intellectual freedom and liberal values. After leaving school and attempting to find a career, instead of apprenticing with his father, he chose to learn the jewelry trade under a jeweler whose shop was in the same building as the office of Alexander Nelson’s newspaper.

In 1869, Webb moved to Chicago where he worked as a jeweler, married, and then partnered with his new father-in-law to start a jewelry business. When the business was destroyed in the Great Chicago Fire of October 1871, he went home to Hudson for a few years, where his father secured a job for him as a jeweler. In 1873 Webb returned to Chicago to be with his wife and newborn son, but by the end of the year, his wife’s father, who had moved to Unionville, Missouri, had purchased interest in a local newspaper and invited his son-in-law to be its assistant editor. Webb, an able writer who surely had learned much about the newspaper editing business during his youth, accepted the offer and moved his family to the northern Missouri town. For the next two-and-a-half years, he faithfully and capably edited the paper. This was not an easy job, however. The

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needs to be pointed out, first, that in 1887, while many of the early Theosophists who had joined up with the H.B. of L. had now, due to pressure from the Theosophical Society leaders, abandoned the Hermetic Brotherhood, Johnson had stayed behind. He was still the head of the American side of the movement, serving as its president, and, as the letters to him indicate, he was still taking its teachings seriously, probably being convinced that this was a possible path to the divine insight he believed Platonism offered. Johnson's favoring the H.B. of L. over Theosophy in 1887 is reflected in the fact that the *Platonist*, more so in that year than in any other, published a number of articles with occult themes, several of which were written by H.B. of L. members. There were also more articles that year that dealt with Asian-majority religions, and, again, H.B. of L. members like C.H.A. Bjerregaard seem to have played a role in this.

It may not be a coincidence, then, that in 1887, Islam-connected notions were getting more attention within both the *Platonist* and the H.B. of L. community itself. As will be recalled, the H.B. of L.'s early teachings were largely based on Randolph's sexual magic, which, as discussed in Chapter 2, Randolph dubiously claimed to have come from the Islamic sectarian group known as the Ansaireh. In early 1887, when the H.B. of L. reformed its secret teachings, it produced a manuscript entitled “The Mysteries of Eros,” which was largely a reworking of Randolph’s sexual magic as explained in his “Mysteries of Eulis” and “The Ansairetic Mystery” teaching documents. In the “Mysteries of Eros,” furthermore, the instructions for the H.B. of L.’s second of three degrees was called the “Ansairetic Arcanum.” Also in September of that year, when Johnson was performing the order’s highest ritual in an attempt to obtain his ultimate initiation from the group’s unseen adepts, Johnson’s guru, Thomas Burgoyne, advised him that the spirit Johnson would be communicating with would be that of an Arab. Then in December, the group’s true head, Max Theon, moved to Algeria, where he would eventually study under a local spiritual teacher and start a new occult movement. According to historian Christian Chanel, this move was precipitated by anti-Semitism in France, where Theon, who was from a Jewish background, had been living. However, Theon had already been living in France for some time, and he had already moved to southern France in early 1887—which suggests that the move to Algeria was not a reaction to certain anti-Semitic events, but part of a pre-planned journey south. The full

57 Godwin et al., *Hermetic Brotherhood*, 81, 213–79, esp. 234–60; Bowen, introduction to *Letters to the Sage* vol. 1.
58 Burgoyne to Johnson, September 4, 1887, TMJ Papers.
truth behind Theon’s motives, however, will most likely remain unknown, as 
will that of the H.B. of L.’s influence on Johnson’s Islamophilia in 1887.

Another possible explanation for Johnson’s 1887 Islamophilic Theosophy 
was that he was influenced by the same material that had supposedly sparked 
Webb’s interest in Islam. In the fall of 1886, Johnson, like Webb, would have 
read in the September issue of the Theosophist Henry Olcott’s introduction of 
one Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. Ahmad, a Muslim scholar and mystic from the 
north Indian city of Qadian, had sent Olcott two circulars concerning his new 
book, *Burahini-i-Ahmadia*, which Olcott reprinted in his journal. In these 
circulars, Ahmad claims he was inspired and commanded by God to help 
human-kind achieve salvation by showing them that Islam is the only true religion 
because it is the only religion through which a person can come to truly know 
God. The Qur’an, furthermore, is the only written true word of God. Islam, 
than, is the only “Truth.” In order to spread this message, Ahmad asserts was 
inspired and directed by God to “compile” the *Burahini-i-Ahmadia*, which 
would eventually be, he promises, a 4,800-page book, although only 532 pages 
were being published at this time. This book contains, Ahmad asserts, two 
approaches for showing Islam is the only true religion. The first is to give a 
set of logical argumentations for which he offers a reward of 10,000 rupees for 
anyone who can refute them. The second approach is to present discussions of 
various divine signs. These are the miracles performed by Muhammad, as 
recorded in hadith; certain “marks” in the Qur’an; and “marks” in the lives 
of believing Muslims. To prove the reality of the “marks” in believers’ lives, 
Ahmad says he will demonstrate miraculous powers—including evoking 
spirits—in Qadian for those who study under him for a year and promise, 
through a written contract, that they will convert after witnessing these 
feats. He invites any and all to come, guaranteeing them free food and

60 H.S. Olcott, “Two Messengers of God,” *Theosophist* 7 (September 1886): 747–52. Singleton 
notes in his English translation of an Urdu translation of Webb’s first letter to Ahmad, that 
the name of the “newspaper” that Webb had first read Ahmad’s circular in was “unclear, 
however it mentions a Mr. Scott” (see *Yankee Muslim*, 275). While the presence of the word 
“newspaper” and a “Mr. Scott” do not seem to reflect the *Theosophist*, these more than likely came from problems in the original translation into Urdu. However, even if there 
was indeed a distinct newspaper connected to a “Mr. Scott” that ran Ahmad’s advertise-
ment, if Webb was reading even half as much Theosophical literature as he claimed he 
was at the time, he would have definitely been reading the *Theosophist* and would have come across the Ahmad information in that journal as well.

61 For an introduction to Ahmad and his Ahmadiyya movement’s doctrines, see Yohanan 
Background* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).
Webb argued that the “universal brotherhood” for which Theosophy strove could not reach the “common folk” through Theosophy’s teachings, particularly after the group had moved away from offering practical instructions and towards an emphasis on reading of what were often very dense philosophical and religious texts.97

It is likely that Webb’s view of Islam’s unique ability to reach all members of society had been influenced by a brief discussion of the religion that appeared in an article in the April 1888 issue of the Theosophical journal *Lucifer*. This article presents an extended quote from an 1887 paper by Canon Isaac Taylor, a British divine who was attempting to explain Islam’s much greater success in converting Africans than that had by Christianity. In the *Lucifer* excerpt, Taylor, whose views had been influenced by the writings of Bosworth Smith, Edward Blyden, and Joseph Thomson, argues that

> The faith of Islam is spreading over Africa with giant strides. Christianity is receding before Islam, while attempts to Christianise Mohammedans are notoriously unsuccessful. We not only fail to gain ground, but even fail to hold our own. ... An African tribe once converted to Islam never returns to Paganism and never embraces Christianity. When Mohammedanism is embraced by a negro tribe devil-worship, cannibalism, human sacrifice, witchcraft, and infanticide disappear. Filth is replaced by cleanliness, and they acquire personal dignity and self-respect. Hospitality becomes a religious duty, drunkenness rare, gambling is forbidden. A feeling of humanity, benevolence, and brotherhood is inculcated. ... The strictly-regulated polygamy of Moslem lands is infinitely less degrading to women and less injurious to men than the promiscuous polyandry which is the curse of Christian cities, and which is absolutely unknown in Islam. The polyandrous English are not entitled to cast stones at polygamous Moslems. ... Islam, above all, is the most powerful total abstinence society in the world; whereas the extension of European trade means the extension of drunkenness and vice and the degradation of the people. Islam introduces a knowledge of reading and writing, decent clothes, personal cleanliness, and self-respect. ... How little have we to show for the vast sums of money and precious lives lavished upon Africa! Christian converts are reckoned by thousands; Moslem converts by millions...98

98 Canon Isaac Taylor, “Christianity and Mohammedanism” quoted in “Christian Lectures on Buddhism, and Plain Facts about the Same, by Buddhists,” *Lucifer* 2, no. 8 (April 1888): 142n. The ellipses are those used in the excerpt as it appeared in *Lucifer*. 
Webb undoubtedly found Islam’s ability to both convert and (what he would have understood as) ‘civilize’ Africans’ society and religiosity—making these, in the process, fertile grounds for spiritualism- and Theosophy-like esotericism—as proof of the religion’s universal usefulness and applicability. In 1892, Webb wrote his own article for *Lucifer* in which he asserted, quoting Syed Ameer Ali’s *The Spirit of Islam* (1891), that “common” people need more than “mere philosophy; they require practical rules and positive directions for their daily life,” 99 and that only Islam and the Qur’an adequately offer this. In 1893, Webb further explained—using concepts reminiscent of Taylor—that Islam’s prescriptions for belief in one God, prayer, cleanliness, fasting, almsgiving, and pilgrimage all were ingeniously-inspired practices that would enable anyone, from any social position, to achieve a true knowledge of God. Islam, furthermore, emphasized the concept of fraternity, which Webb innovatively claimed was one of the five pillars of Islam. 100 So, because, at a practical level, its instructions reached all classes of people, and because fraternity was one of its core principles, Islam was the religion that could best achieve the ‘universal brotherhood’ that Theosophists promoted; a true Theosophist, then, Webb insisted, would have to be a follower of Islam. 101

Reaching these intellectual conclusions was the only motive Webb publicly admitted to having caused his conversion. However, Webb seems to have intentionally framed his ideas in the most appealing way possible, and they appear to have not entirely reflected his true feelings and experiences. For instance, later he would insist that he was not personally interested in helping the ‘common folk’ learn about Islam; and in fact he had a rather low opinion of the uneducated and non-whites. 102 Furthermore, in his speeches, writings, and interviews, he never offered a picture of himself in which he was constantly breaking from the practices and ideas of the people around him in order to blaze his own creative, entrepreneurial trail. His conversion narratives almost always presented him as a highly rational person who had been dissatisfied with Christianity since a young age, but had a spiritual thirst that was only quenched when he, almost independently, discovered Islam after years of

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102 Singleton, introduction, 47. Also, Webb emphasized the idea that Islam should be approached intellectually; he therefore looked down on the illiterate, lower-classes, which he believed should raise themselves through philosophical study. See Muhammad Webb, “Muhammadan Society and its Pressing Needs,” *Moslem Chronicle and the Muhammadan Observer*, March 29, 1902, 170.
abroad, which she presented as proof of her own travels. Later, Rawson also told people that Richard Francis Burton—the man whose account of his surreptitious visit to Mecca had initiated a wave of interest in the connection between Freemasonry and Sufism—was a personal acquaintance. Despite the fact that all of these claims are highly questionable, Rawson had successfully exploited this reputation as an expert on Islam and in 1877 started working with the Shriners, supposedly translating the Arabic-language documents they possessed describing the workings of their order. He was made an official member in 1878 and thereafter he elaborated the group’s rituals and claimed to receive letters from Abd el-Kader about the world-wide Shrine order. This apparently led to a significant increase in the order’s popularity among Masons, although it does not seem to have led to the Shriners becoming part of the American occult revival—even despite Rawson’s affiliation with Theosophy and the fact that one of the Shriners’ founders, McClenachan, would soon become a leading figure in the Societas Rosicruciana.

Judging by the dates given later by John Yarker in a 1907 article, Rawson’s own Masonic-like organization was probably established in the late 1870s. This group, which was originally known as the ‘Sheiks of the Desert’ and later the ‘Guardians of the Kaaba & Guardians of the Mystic Shrine,’ most likely developed after Rawson had become involved with Theosophy and the Shriners. Almost nothing is known about it; most of the information we have comes from Yarker’s short article and a slightly different manuscript version of the

26 It is highly unlikely that Rawson had in fact traveled to the Near East in the 1850s. For a fuller discussion of the Rawson-Blavatsky connection, see Deveney, “The Travels of H.P. Blavatsky.”
30 See the manuscript “Ancient Oriental Order of Ishmael: history laws etc. from W. Wynn Westcott & J. Yarkers’ mss, [and], Rite of Swedenbourgh” (unpublished manuscript, 1907), 1–3; this is in the possession of the library of the United Grand Lodge of England. This version clarifies a confusing issue in Yarker’s 1907 article: the two different names of the group. Yarker’s article states that the group was known as “Sheiks of the Dessert [sic], Guardians of the Kaaba, Guardians of the Mystic Shrine,” and then says that these were two—not three—different names used by the group at different points. In this manuscript version, however, the two versions of the group’s name are made clear; the original name was “Sheikhs [sic] of the Dessert [sic]” and the later name was “Guardians of the Kaaba & Guardians of the Mystic Shrine.”
Quilliam would become an important figure in the history of the first American Muslim convert community. He apparently met and corresponded with Webb on a few occasions, but, more importantly, he supported Webb's detractors—including Rawson—when they rebelled against Webb, even setting up an American branch of the LMI. Quilliam thus served as an additional important link between Islamophilic Masonry and American conversion to Islam. In fact, as we will see, the emergence of the first white American convert movement was not the product of isolated, unconnected individuals who had an interest in Islam and somehow serendipitously found each other. On the contrary, its creation came about by the linking of several sub-subcultures that were all connected to the larger Anglophone occult revival religious market. Indeed, without the occult revival and groups like those of the Islamophilic Masons, early American converts to Islam might never have even formed communities in the nineteenth century, and Webb’s efforts would have been staved off or ended before they had started.

(n.b. 12). Unfortunately, these documents tell us basically nothing about Quilliam beyond the fact that he was a leading Ancient and Primitive Rite member and sided with Crowley about W. B.’s successor.
Without having planned for it, then, Webb had returned to the US at an ideal moment in history, and—as a member of the early Johnson-influenced Theosophical Society—in an ideal position for taking advantage of this expanding occult revival. Had he, like Henry L. Norman, tried to start his mission at an earlier period in American religious history, Webb probably would have been completely shunned and mocked. Had he joined Theosophy later in its existence and in a lodge other than St. Louis', even with his creative, ambitious spirit, Webb probably would not have felt the freedom and confidence to explore and commit exclusively to Islam. Due to historical forces beyond his control or knowledge, Webb and his Islamic mission were poised for success.

For the first nine months of the mission, in fact, Webb’s achievements were unprecedented, and it appeared as if he were about to lead the first truly successful US movement for conversion to a non-Christian, widely-practiced religious tradition. But, just as it was beginning to take off, the movement’s growth was cut short by significant leadership and financial problems. By early 1896, the first Islamic conversion movement in the US was dead, and a new one would not appear for several more years.

The Mission Begins

When Hajee Abdulla Arab visited Webb in Manila in the spring of 1892, the two men, in the presence of a Muslim witness, created a contract for Webb’s future mission, which would be called the ‘American Islamic Propaganda.’ Initially, Arab “agree[d] to advance $13,500 for the American Propaganda, for the establishment and maintenance of its publication department and lecture course for one year and, if necessary, $10,000 for each of two subsequent years for the maintenance of the same.” The length of the subsequent payment was then expanded to four years, and Arab also agreed to pay Webb a salary of $2,000 per month, starting in September of 1892. That was, basically, it. Webb was, it appears, confident that he had the knowledge, skills, and connections to make this skeleton of a plan successful.

Initially, however, Webb had a somewhat rough going. When he arrived in New York City in mid-February 1893, he had not yet received his money from

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2 Again, for this chapter I am indebted a great deal to the previous research of Singleton and Abd-Allah, as well as to the help of Muhammed al-Ahari.


4 Ibid.
in India, Turkey or Egypt.”24 Potential circle members were reminded that they were not required to subscribe to any religious doctrine

nor accept any creed or tenet that is not in harmony with his or her reason and common sense; [and] that each will be absolutely free to accept or reject anything or everything that may appear from the studies and discussions of the societies.25

In their setup, in their fundamental philosophy, and even in their names (which invoked the Theosophist ‘universal brotherhood’ concept), the AIP and American Moslem Brotherhood seem to have been modeled primarily on the Theosophical Society, and perhaps the Sufic Circle to a lesser extent. This should come as little surprise. Webb had witnessed firsthand the rapid expansion—from almost nothing—of Theosophy in the US in the 1880s. He saw how having loose restrictions on the local groups, absence of requirements for adhering to religious creeds, and encouraging the creation of groups based on personal social networks were tools that could draw in religiously-curious intellectual liberals. He had observed the important role played by the Theosophist and Johnson’s Platonist in terms of helping like-minded people across the US connect with each other and build up a community. He had seen how presenting the movement’s authority as being based in the East—in India—could be a benefit because it could reduce the ability of the rank-and-file to attack international, supposedly official, leaders. Theosophy had given Webb the blueprint; all that was left to do, then, was to start recruiting.

Expanding with Islamophilic Freethinkers

The two most important Americans who would align themselves with Webb in the first months of his movement, Albert L. Rawson and John A. Lant, were both strongly connected to New York’s Free Thought community that used the Truth Seeker as its main organ.26 In fact, Rawson and Lant shared a deep bond

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25 Ibid.
26 Over the last twenty-five years, Albert Leighton Rawson has received attention from researchers who have primarily looked into his early involvement with the Theosophical Society, the Shriners, and the Sheiks of the Desert (see Johnson, “Albert Rawson”; Johnson, Masters Revealed, 25–30; Deveney, “Nobles of the Secret Mosque”; Deveney, “Travels of H.P. Blavatsky”; Nance, How the Arabian Nights, 92–97). While these ties are certainly very
read about his activities and ideas, and were probably discussing them with each other.

Then, in June, the newest issue of the *Moslem World* gave an update on the progress of the Moslem Brotherhood:

To A.L. Rawson, Esq., of Woodcliff, N.J., belongs the credit of having organized the first Circle of the Moslem Brotherhood in America, to which has been given the name of Mecca Circle No. 1, of New York City. The charter members are: A.L. Rawson, Walter M. Fleming, M.D., Charles T. McClenachan, J.B. Eakins, and W.S. Paterson. [...]

Mr. Rawson has also organized two more Circles composed of the following gentlemen: A.W. Peters, Chas. H. Heyzer, Geo. W. Mill[a]r, James McGee, Wm. D. May, Saram R. Ellison, M.D., Robert P. Lyon, James W. Kirby, Edgar M. Ayers, and Edward S. Ismet, all residents of New York City.40

There are several points worth mentioning here, beyond the fact that Rawson was the person responsible for organizing the first three circles for Webb’s Brotherhood: in the first place, every single one of these men was a Shriner and belonged to the ‘Mecca’ Temple—the first Shriner temple—in New York.41 Moreover, the men who were in Mecca Circle No. 1 were all—with the exception of Rawson—founding members of the Shriners,42 and most of the men in the other two circles were at that time officers in the Mecca Temple.43 The fact that not just Rawson and a few friends, but the *founders and leaders* of the New York and national Shriners organizations were the first members of Webb’s very serious movement casts much doubt on the persistent academic characterization of the Shriners as people who simply made a joke of Arabic and Islamic culture. The fact that Charles T. McClenachan, a founding member of the Shriners who was also in the first Moslem Brotherhood study circle, was also a founding member of New York’s Societas Rosicruciana and Rawson’s Sheiks of the Desert should lend even further support the idea that the Shriners—or at least some of its leading figures at the time—were serious about Islam.

41 See Ancient Arabic Order of the Nobles of the Mystic Shrine, *Mecca Temple, Ancient Arabic Order of the Nobles of the Mystic Shrine, Its History and Pleasures*, together with the *Origin and History of the Order* (New York: Press of A. H. Kellogg, 1894), passim.
42 Rawson did not become affiliated with the Shriners until 1877, but after that point Shriner histories started referring to him a founder.
The naming of these three—and the fact that their residences corresponded with the residences listed in 1896—suggests that the group had grown out of the Johnson-Bjerregaard Islamophilic Theosophy and Johnson's Sufic Circle of 1887, and it therefore strengthens the possibility that Webb may have in fact been involved with it. Unfortunately, none of Johnson's extant letters discuss these manifestations of the Sufi-focused group. Indeed, a 1906 letter from Gould to Johnson indicates that they had not spoken for several years, so it seems that the order was not particularly active.\footnote{Gould to Johnson, December 18, 1906, TMJ Papers.} Still, it seems that either Gould or Johnson had attempted to make the order more than a paper organization. In his 1912 autobiography, Bjerregaard revealed his contempt for the group—an emotion that does not seem to be proportional for a group that never actually produced any activities.\footnote{Bjerregaard writes: “An attempt was made some years ago to introduce what was called Esoteric Mohammedanism, but Esoteric Mohammedanism is not Sufism [sic] proper. And that brand which was offered presented the grossest form of the Koran and did not contain any of the beauty or the philosophy which has come into Sufism [sic] from her Platonic sources. Esoteric Mohammedanism was only an attempt to introduce Mohammedanism. It failed on account of the utter incapacity of the missionaries who seemed to be men without any impulse, without any proselyting disposition, without any fire or intensity. When I think of Mohammed, pictures immediately arise of Desert-life, Arabs kneeling in the burning sun saying prayers or camel-camps at night or the Muezzin's everlasting call to prayer, and over all the thoughts which rise is spread and furore and a fanaticism; but all these things were missing in these fat-bellied Americans, who couldn't even pronounce Arabic nor Persian correctly and had neither linguistic nor ethnological knowledge” (Bjerregaard, “Auto-Biography,” 54). Interestingly, while Bjerregaard is clearly discussing Johnson and Gould—as Webb certainly had a “proselyting disposition”—as I have shown above, Webb did sometimes claim to be promoting “Esoteric Mohammedanism.” This, then, is further evidence that there was some link between the Sufic Circle/Order of Sufis and Webb.}
Interestingly, the one seemingly independent turn-of-the-century convert for whom we have a little more information did not marry a Muslim woman and, unlike most independent converts, appears to have been motivated by ideology. It is not surprising, then, that there is some evidence suggesting that he may have been indirectly connected to Webb, although all indications point to his conversion and life as a Muslim as being for the most part independent of American ties. On October 27, 1907 a story filed by an American newspaper correspondent stationed in Tangier revealed that local resident George Knox MacIlwain was an American Muslim convert with a Roman Catholic Mexican wife.85 The red-bearded, thirty-one-year-old “son of a wealthy American” was from Philadelphia and therefore had possibly been involved with the city’s small secret convert community.86 MacIlwain, however, appears to have severed ties with Philadelphia, leaving a white American wife behind when he moved to Tangier in about 1905. Once in Morocco, he traveled to Fez to meet with the sultan, and, after purchasing many goods from the ruler and making donations to a mosque and to poor locals, he “read the Koran in translation through an interpreter” and formally converted to Islam.87 At that point, MacIlwain, now known as Hadj Omar, left for England for six weeks to have, as one reporter explained, “one of the ironclad rules of Islam complied with in London”—perhaps referring to a Muslim marriage ceremony.88 Next, he returned to Morocco to live in the northern town of Tetouan where he reportedly “began observing the rules of Mohammedanism with more punctuality than most of the Moors themselves,” giving generously to street beggars, performing his five daily prayers, and regularly practicing Arabic presumably to help him read the Qur’an.89 MacIlwain attempted to take the hajj in 1908—which, if he succeeded, would have made him the first known American convert to have performed this pillar of Islam—and then he returned to Morocco, where he lived until his death in March 1910.90

86 Emerson’s “Thirstier’n Suez” says MacIlwain’s family was from “one of the New England states,” but MacIlwain was actually from Philadelphia; see “Wife, in u.s., Gets $100,” Special to the Washington Post, February 4, 1911, 1.
88 “American Risks Life for Mecca.” MacIlwain later showed people his Islamic marriage certificate.
89 “American Risks Life for Mecca.”
take another six years and an additional failed international Muslim propaganda effort for Barakatullah to finally make his way across the ocean.

This additional failed international propaganda effort was the creation of another Muslim who had visited the 1893 World’s Fair: a North African named Hassan Ben Ali, one of the many Muslims who had traveled to the US since the 1870s to perform in Arabian troupe shows. Since the 1870s, Arabian troupes had been successfully incorporated into the expanding American entertainment industry, as they—dressed in their robes and turbans and performing exotic rituals, dances, and acrobatics—were understood by common Americans as real-life representatives of the Arabian Nights-like East. Ben Ali was one of the handful of immigrant Muslim recruiters and managers who had discovered that the best way to convince Arab and North African tribes to allow their best acrobats to join him was by telling tribal leaders and local rulers that he was going to use these people to spread Islam in the US. Arriving around 1885, Ben Ali became the head of one of the most popular and largest troupes of Arab performers in the country—a troupe that was often being replenished during his frequent trips to North Africa for training and recruitment.

Probably in 1894, after the World’s Fair had ended, Ben Ali began attempting to secure further support for his business from Muslims around the world by telling potential backers that, after being inspired by the mosque constructed at the World’s Fair, he was preparing to build a real mosque in New York, primarily for the 600-odd Muslims he believed were living there. Ultimately, seven international Muslim societies pledged support, and England’s Mohammad Barakatullah—probably because of his having been appointed the Nawab of Rampur’s American ambassador—was invited to help

96 See Nance, How, 115–35.
99 Unfortunately, the US consulate dispatches from before 1907, while they confirm that Ben Ali maintained business activities in Morocco, reveal very little other information about his activities. The only report concerning Ben Ali that I have found deals with his Moroccan brother-in-law who, it appears, stole Ben Ali’s money that was sent to the brother-in-law for business purposes; see Report of Consular Agent at Mogador, May 4, 1903, United States Consulate, Despatches from United States Consuls in Tangier 1797–1906 (Washington: The National Archives, National Archives and Records Service, General Services Administration, 1959).
various people he encountered in New York, which were primarily Syrian and liberal white American Christians. It appears that at the time Kheiralla had little to no success in converting others, but through his efforts he was able to make many new friends and business connections. In the summer of 1893, just as Webb’s Islamic movement was getting off the ground, Kheiralla entered into a partnership with a local Syrian merchant with whom he would, for the remainder of the year, travel throughout Michigan selling various oriental wares. Haddad stayed behind in New York, where, as mentioned in Chapter 5, he became involved with Webb’s group, giving speeches at the American Islamic Propaganda’s lecture hall and even working with Lant on the Muslim-American trade bureau.145

When Kheiralla went to Michigan, he gave a number of public lectures on Middle Eastern religions, possibly as a way of generating interest in the goods he was selling. He also continued a practice he had started in New York, talking with people privately about religion. This was done with both members of the general public and local Protestant religious leaders, for whom Kheiralla carried letters of introduction that he obtained from the religious leaders he had befriended in New York. The existing evidence suggests that while Kheiralla’s public lectures did not address the Baha’i faith, he did speak about it in these informal conversations, and some of those whom he met in Michigan were possibly among his first converts. Grand Rapids, in particular, seems to have been especially warm to Kheiralla, and in Kalamazoo, Kheiralla reportedly became involved with a group that practiced “healing the sick by metaphysics, by laying on of hands.”146

In early February 1894, Kheiralla arrived in Chicago accompanied by friends he had made in Michigan who were plugged into the region’s New Thought and esoteric community. Kheiralla’s friends began introducing him to various groups and leaders. In less than two weeks, he obtained an L.L.D. degree issued by the New Thought-based American Health University. One of the ‘doctors’ who signed his certificate would eventually play a leading role in his Baha’i organization, as would another New Thought/homeopathic doctor whom Kheiralla met in his first few months in the city.147

Kheiralla’s connections also gained him entrée with some of Chicago’s leading liberal religion writers, spiritualists, astrologers, and esotericist figures, such as the popular medium Cora L.V. Richmond and William Phelon,

145 “Headquarters Opened”; Kuddus Badsha and Hadi Badsha to Lant, November 2, 1893, John A. Lant Papers.
head of both Chicago’s Theosophical community and of an offshoot of the H.B. of L., known as the Hermetic Brotherhood of Atlantis, Luxor, and Elephante. With their help, Kheiralla spoke before many Chicago groups and made a host of new friends, including J.R. Francis, a prominent spiritualist who had started a popular spiritualist newspaper, the *Progressive Thinker*. Just a few years before Kheiralla’s arrival, Francis had become involved with another emerging esoteric organization, the Grand Rapids-based Oriental Order of the Magi, which Francis had convinced to move to Chicago where he made the *Progressive Thinker* the group’s official organ. This was to later become an important connection for Kheiralla.

In June 1894, Kheiralla taught his first class on the Baha’i faith and, reportedly, every person who attended was involved with New Thought, esoteric, or non-Christian religion studies, and many were interested in all three of these topics. Kheiralla, believing his faith’s teachings to be from a secret order and not reveal all he knew to his students, and, as was his mode of operation later, probably interviewed them before deciding who of his students was permitted to be taught what he believed were the most secret instructions of the faith. His students, however, also introduced Kheiralla to new ideas, encouraging him to read New Thought and Western esoteric writings, which Kheiralla, not having a strong understanding of the intricacies of Baha’i thought to begin with, began incorporating into his teachings.

Progress was slow at first. By the end of 1894, Kheiralla probably had only about four converts; by January of 1896, probably around a dozen. To support himself in these early years, Kheiralla started charging people who came to him for his healing powers. In the meantime, he began corresponding with inquirers from throughout the US, and, as word got out about Kheiralla, more people attended his classes. By late 1896, there were around thirty American Baha’is, most of whom were people already involved in alternative religions; by April 1897, about sixty, and financial contributions to the group had apparently become so numerous that they were now being recorded. Eighteen ninety-seven was in fact the year the US Baha’i movement went from being one of the several small new Asian-religion groups in the US to the first truly major one.

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150 Stockman, *The Baha’i Faith in America Volume 1*, 37.
151 Ibid., 33–39.
152 Ibid., 30–31.
153 Ibid., 40, 85, 102–03.
would buy each of his pamphlets on various esoteric topics. Still, people did apparently come to his Chicago ‘studio,’ where he reportedly hosted Sufi whirling Dervish performances. Interestingly, while in 1924 el Adaros emphasized his affiliation with Hindu and Egyptian themes, by 1927, after moving to New York and reaching out to the black community, he now used a more Muslim-sounding name, ‘Abd-el Rahman El Adaros, Effendi,’ and was depicted in his advertisements wearing both turbans and an Arab-style scarf (keffiyeh). Just how organized or successful his efforts were, however, is unknown.

Perhaps one of the more successful of the interwar ‘Muslim’ mystics was Hazrat Ismet Ali. In 1926, advertisements for the long-haired, beard- and turban-wearing, self-proclaimed “oriental mystic” began appearing in Midwest newspapers announcing his lectures on “New Revelations That Will Revolutionize Your Whole Existence!” By early 1927, Ali had established in Chicago an organization known as the Himayat Society, which he moved to New England where it claimed as followers a black reverend, Rev. Father Hollinsed, and a black poet, George Reginald Margetson. Ali was one of the mystics who capitalized on having an ambiguous religious identity; although he told people he was Indian and sometimes added that he was Hindu, he also on occasion promoted himself as a “Sufi Mystic,” and at other times appears to have insisted that the topics of his teachings would not conflict with any religious creed—a theme that was becoming increasingly popular among self-proclaimed Sufis probably partly due to, as we will see, the popularity of Inayat Khan. Ali developed followings in New York, Buffalo, and Detroit, and by 1928 was calling his organization the Islam-themed name the Kaaba Alif

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15 See his advertisements in the New York Amsterdam News in August and September of that year. He also appeared in Los Angeles the previous May, all while keeping his Chicago address.
16 The earliest advertisement I have found was in the Milwaukee Sentinel, July 28, 1926, 7.
18 “Sufi Mystic to Give Oriental Interpretation of ‘Bible” (advertisement), Detroit Free Press, September 22, 1928, 8; “Hasret Ismet Ali Will Lecture Here Monday.”
numerous visitors. In fact, Khan verifiably converted a few people in New York, some of whom would prove to be long-lasting Sufis. It was in New York, too, where Khan met Ora Ray Baker, second cousin to Christian Science founder Mary Baker Eddy and half-sister to Pierre Bernard, the founder of the oriental-themed occult group called the Tantrik Order of America. It was Bernard who originally arranged for Ora Ray to study with Khan, and soon after meeting, both Ora Ray and Khan came to believe that they had previously seen each other in visions, so Khan proposed marriage. Then, against Bernard’s wishes, Ora Ray joined Khan and his entourage when they left for London in the spring.

Khan spent the majority of the remainder of his life in Europe. At first, he lived in London and cultivated friendships within the local Muslim community, but he also started developing strong ties with the Theosophical Society, which increasingly influenced his teachings to make them less Hindu and therefore less attractive for the Muslims. Khan found a movement whose universalist message was close to his which Khan was himself drawn, plus its followers were the people most interested in and supportive of his teachings. His European presentations were often arranged by Theosophists, and many of his leading followers were former Theosophists who were perhaps seeking something that they felt the Society lacked. Since the 1880s, Theosophy had not maintained a strong, consistently-respected esoteric initiatory order. The H.B. of L. was the first to take advantage of this lacuna, followed by the Martinist Order, the Order of the Magi, and other New Thought-influenced esoteric groups. What made Khan’s movement stand out from all of these was, first of all, that he was an authentic Eastern adept, which

58 See “Metaphysicians and Teachers,” Bulletin Board 1, no. 6 (March 1912): 13 in J. Gordon Melton and University of California, Santa Barbara Library, American Religions Collection, American Religion Collection Series 1: Nontraditional American Religions: Western Esotericism from Witchcraft to the New Age (Woodbridge, CT: Primary Source Microfilm, an imprint of Thomson Gale, 2005), reel 91.

59 Khan, Biography, 126, 169.

60 De Jong-Keesing, Inayat Khan, 106–07.

61 Ora Ray—who took the name of Ameena Begum—would write numerous poems, several of which were published in Rosary of a Hundred Beads: By “Sharda” to “Daya” (Zurich: Edition Petama Project, 2007).

62 Including Quilliam, who by this time was using the name Henri de Leon; see Khan, Biography, 147.


64 For a technical discussion of the Khan’s thought, and its relationship with Theosophy, see Inayat-Khan, “A Hybrid Sufi Order,” 277ff.
Worship—all of which appears to have led to an increase in membership.\(^81\) After Khan's tour, in fact, several American converts either accompanied him to Europe or went there later to see him.\(^82\) The American community was also growing organizationally: Khan was able to start a new group in Los Angeles,\(^83\) and by 1925, there were additional new groups in Detroit, Michigan and in Santa Barbara and San Fernando, California.\(^84\) When Khan returned again to the US in late 1925, his popularity had increased further, with more and more people joining the movement and his lectures even better attended than they were in the past—he even gained the attention of New York's Jewish and black nationalist communities.\(^85\) Khan left the States for a final time in June 1926, but in 1928, when the Movement was perhaps at its pre-World War II peak in the US, there were at least 236 American members and thriving Sufi centers in New York, San Francisco, and Chicago.\(^86\)

Khan died on February 5, 1927 without having ensured that there was a widely-accepted successor. He had personally told Rabia on several occasions that she was to assume the role, but—as Zia Inayat-Khan has pointed out—anti-Semitism appears to have turned many among the group's international leadership in Geneva against Rabia, and it was decided that the successor should be Inayat-Khan's brother, Maheboob.\(^87\) By 1930, this had caused a schism.

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81 See, e.g., the “Sufi Movement” advertisements that ran in the *New York Sun's* religion section from late 1923 through 1924. In 1924, advertisements were also run in the American New Thought press; see, e.g., the advertisement in *Herald of Light* 6, no. 11 (November 1924): 4 in Melton, *American Religion Collection Series 1*, reel 101.


83 Khan, *Biography*, 172.

84 William C. Hartmann, ed., *Hartmann's Who's Who in Occult, Psychic and Spiritual Realms* (Jamaica, NY: Occult Press, 1925), 154. The list of Sufi groups given in this 1925 book does not mention the Los Angeles group, which was verifiably active, but struggling, in 1925 (see Inayat-Khan, “A Hybrid Sufi Order,” 181). However, since the Los Angeles group had been started by E.P.A. Connaughton, who was listed as the head of the Santa Barbara group for 1925 (and this group was confirmed to exist in 1930—see Inayat-Khan, “A Hybrid Sufi Order,” 226), it seems that the Los Angeles group had already grown enough for Connaughton to appoint a successor—although leadership problems in the group would soon rear their heads; see Khan, *Biography*, 172, 181, 494.


86 Inayat-Khan, “A Hybrid Sufi Order,” 226. I have deduced that these three cities were the locations of the group’s major centers from the fact that it was only these locations, and not the other centers, that were being listed as the American distributors for the organization’s materials in its 1920s journal, *Sufi Quarterly*.

magazine's publication, Chicago, and he is reported as helping Sadiq with his correspondence—which would, logically, be done primarily in Chicago, where Sadiq received his letters. Establishing his location may be of some value because Mott, who was said to belong to the Masons “and several other fraternal organizations,” if he can be connected to Chicago, can be linked to one of the important early esoteric groups: the Hermetic Brotherhood. In the early 1900s, a J.L. Mott was the head of the Chicago branch of Phelon’s Hermetic Brotherhood of Atlantis, Luxor, and Elephante, a break-off from the H.B. of L.

In Chicago, Sadiq’s American mission had one important additional development. During his first stay there, he converted an African American man named Andrew Jacob, renamed by Sadiq Muhammad Yaqoob, who became the city’s most active proselytizer when Sadiq left a few months later. Sadiq’s Ahmadi movement was therefore now a religious organization, but had both black and white members—an extremely rare occurrence in early twentieth-century America. Nineteen-twenty was the climax of what has been called as the ‘nadir of race relations’ in the U.S. Oppression of and violence towards African Americans had finally reached its post-slavery peak, with hundreds of lynchings and countless acts of terror from appearing throughout the country, but particularly in the South. Early in response to this, but also due to the increased demand for labor during the First World War, tens of thousands of American blacks had migrated northward where, after the war, racial tensions intensified. In the summer of 1919—the ‘Red Summer,’ as it has been called—numerous violent race riots erupted in the North, further deteriorating race relations. Since, even prior to this period, integrated American religious communities were extremely rare, the fact that Sadiq had started converting both whites and blacks was a significant achievement. It was also one that would redefine the importance of his movement, as over his first two years promoting Islam, Sadiq began to see that African Americans were much more interested in the religion than whites. There were multiple reasons for this phenomenon, but a major one was the presence of the relatively widespread notion—at least in that racially-polarizing period of U.S. history—that

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104 “Mr. J.L. Mott”; Moslem Sunrise 1, no. 1 (1921): 14.
105 “Mr. J.L. Mott.”
108 See HCTUS vol. 2.
the Muslim immigrants—were fairly resistant to intermarriage with non-Muslim Americans. A 1947 study of Chicago Palestinians found that only seven out of 128 married exogamously; in Springfield, Massachusetts, none of the Muslim immigrants in the first generation did, and only about ten percent of all married men did so in the next generations; in Ross, North Dakota, only three out of thirty families were mixed; and in the Detroit metropolitan area, for the first generation the rate was about eleven percent.\(^5\) Among Indian Muslims and in a few other Arab Muslim communities—such as those in Toledo, Ohio and Cedar Rapids, Iowa—the rate for the first generation was slightly higher, closer to twenty to twenty-five percent, and overall the rate seems to have increased to nearly forty percent for the second generation of all US Muslim immigrants.\(^6\) On average, then, we could estimate that about fifteen to twenty percent of the settled, pre-World War II Muslims—or about 3,450–4,600 people—married Americans.

The available evidence suggests that these American spouses were, for the most part, white Christian females. This generalization is based on several clues. First is the fact that at least three studies noted that in some of the larger Arab communities there were no cases of pre-1965 Arab Muslims marrying African Americans (although Indians did, on some occasions) and there were only a few known instances of marriages to Latinos and Jews—the rest were to Christian whites of various ethnicities.\(^7\) As far as gender is concerned, there are three reasons few of the non-Muslim spouses were male, particular early on. First, the majority of Muslim immigrants were male and either did not already


high percentage, though, since male non-Muslim spouses were far less common than female ones—a reality exacerbated by the fact that in Shi‘i communities all women were required to be at least nominally Muslim in order to marry a born-Muslim male\textsuperscript{13}—this phenomenon presumably did not have a tremendous impact on the overall percentage of non-Muslim spouses who converted. Only one study—that based on the Cedar Rapids community, which had higher-than-average rates of exogamous marriage—gave an overall percentage of non-Muslim spouses who converted: thirty-eight percent of Cedar Rapids’ second-generation non-Muslim spouses (gender was not identified) converted, while sixty-two remained Christian.\textsuperscript{14} It is reasonable to estimate, then, that, on average, about thirty percent of all non-Muslim spouses of the first and second generation immigrants converted, which would be—given the estimate above of 3,450–4,600 total non-Muslim spouses—about 1,200 total converts through marriage in the pre-World War II period. While we can confidently say that these converts through marriage were, at least among the dominant Arab population\textsuperscript{15}, all white (at least among the dominant Arab population)\textsuperscript{16}, we cannot be sure about the gender distribution. It should also be pointed out that although this is little more than a highly tentative, very rough estimate, interestingly, in 1933, Ahmad Nadji, one of the few American Muslim proselytizers at the time, claimed that there were in fact 1,000 white converts to Islam in the US.\textsuperscript{17}

These converts’ sincerity and commitment to Islam might not have been particularly strong. In almost every discussion of early American males who converted through marriage it is pointed out that the man converted specifically for the purpose of marrying; there is almost no indication that these men had an independent desire to follow Islam. Other anecdotal evidence suggests that the same was true for women as well—at least the wives of Shi‘i Muslims, who were also expected to convert.\textsuperscript{18} For female Sunnis, while there was no religious legal reason why they had to convert, conflicts over how to raise children, the studies suggest, may have led Christian females to convert to Islam for the sake of family stability—a phenomenon similar to what has been


\textsuperscript{14} Swanson, “Mate Selection,” 75. Interestingly, this was the only study in which informants indicated that convert spouses were made to feel unwelcomed, which, one might assume, would inhibit conversion.

\textsuperscript{15} “Contemporary Thought and Life,” \textit{Muslim Revival} 2, no. 2 (1933): 170. It is unclear if Nadji was including Qadianis in this number, but he almost certainly was \textit{not} including Sufis.

\textsuperscript{16} Eide Alawan a prominent member of the pre-1975 Detroit Shi‘i community, phone interview with the author, May 21, 2014.
the time, as we have seen, were very isolationist, and generally did not desire to bring white American Christians into their communities. Although we know from other sources that there were at least a few converts who were not married (see below), the fact that they are not mentioned at all in the studies of early immigrant communities suggests that these types of converts were extremely rare. However, at the same time, they were also highly important, both in terms of the historical dynamics they reflected and their roles in the Muslim communities.

Perhaps the most distinguishing feature of these ‘friend converts’ was that, while a few of them—we know of at least two—had been interested in esoteric or alternative ideas prior to conversion, evidence suggests that most others had not. This makes sense, considering that Muslim immigrants, including their imams and others who proselytized, generally were neither interested in such topics nor knowledgeable enough to discuss them with potential converts. Ultimately, this characteristic suggests that, unlike their married counterparts, even these friend converts were different from previous Muslim converts in this important respect.

It is true that friend converts, like their nineteenth-century predecessors, seem to have been people who had a desire to join non-mainstream religious communities, perhaps due to unhappiness in mainstream society or due to a religious or psychological need to look at the world from an alternative perspective, common motivations for white American religious converts. Indeed, it is suggestive that some of the most prominent Muslim and Sufi friend converts of the 1910–75 era came from Jewish backgrounds. Whether they faced anti-Semitism or simply felt ‘out of place’ in the United States, it is understandable that they and similarly marginalized whites might have sought out new identities to better adjust to their social and psychological situations. It is likely, though, that if these twentieth-century converts were living in the 1890s, they would have been committed spiritualists or esotericists, and not necessarily Muslims. Going from those ‘gateway’ groups to Islam was an extremely rare phenomenon—one that often had personal contact with Webb as a prerequisite; and it would have been especially rare for American Jews, as none are known to have become Muslims during that period. Other twentieth-century

religious holidays, and establishing a Pan-Islamic organization called the Young Moslem Society of America.43

Protestantism and supporting Pan-Islam, however, were not activities restricted to Palestinians. Particularly after World War I and the dismantling of Ottoman power, the desire to cultivate Muslim unity with the hope of pushing back European colonialism was spreading rapidly across Muslim lands. Among Indians, one of the most popular forms of Pan-Islam was known as the Khilafat movement, which aimed to preserve the Islamic caliphate in Turkey. This movement both supported and was supported by the broader Indian nationalist movement, which found common cause in the groups' anti-colonial stance.

In the US during the 1920s a handful of independence-minded Indian Muslims based in New York began encouraging Pan-Islamic cooperation and by 1930 they had established an organization in Harlem known as the Moslem Brotherhood of the U.S.A. (MBUSA) (no relation to the Hassan al-Banna's similarly named Egyptian organization). Through this group, Glick explicitly backed the Khilafat head and friend of the Supreme Muslim Council, Shaikh Allie; encouraged Pan-Islamic activities in New York; and proselytized to local African Americans and West Indian immigrants.44

Glick had probably come into contact with more than one group of New York Muslims by the mid-1920s. He definitely had contact with Turks; he began using the name ‘Selim’ and its English spelling that was common for Turks and he would later be known to affiliate with Turks in New York. However, there is evidence he may have also had ties with Indians during the mid-1920s in New York—and he certainly did while living in California in 1928. Records of Glick during that decade show that he moved back and forth between New York and southern California, where his brother, Edward, had achieved a successful career in real estate and his sister, Ann, had married a wealthy businessman. In April

43 “Islam in New York City”; “Riff Sympathizers.” This group, which would later be known as the Young Men’s Moslem Association (and presumably connected with the Egyptian-based organization of the same name), was established in 1924 with the help of the Palestinian immigrant Akel Allie; see “A Brief Biography of Akel Allie,” Muslim Star 6, no. 22 (1966): 6; IMJC Papers, Box 8, BHL.

44 Its original address was 9 West 111th Street and soon after it moved to 58 La Salle Street, both in Harlem, a borough where many Indian immigrants settled in New York. The leaders of this group were all fairly well-known in New York for being exponents of Indian independence and interfaith dialogue the 1920s and 1930s, including Syud Hossain and Tafazzul Hussain Khan (T.H.K.) Rezmie. See V.V., “Le associazioni islamiche degli Stati Uniti d’America,” Oriente Moderno 12, no. 11 (1932): 524; “What Is Going on This Week,” New York Times, April 19, 1931, 52; “Moslems Hold Annual Rally,” Brooklyn Standard Union, May 9, 1930, 18; Dunlap, “City’s Moslems.”
garner more support and attention for both the difficulties Muslim immigrants faced and for the organization itself, Glick wrote letters to prominent intellectuals who had shown an interest in the lives of Muslims.53

The timing of Glick’s late 1920s return to New York was beneficial for his efforts in the name of Islam. By 1929, one additional international Pan-Islamic organization with ties to both the Khilafat movement and the Supreme Muslim Council had become an important part of the New York Muslim community: the Young Men’s Moslem Association (YMMA). The YMMA was organized in Cairo in 1927 for the purpose of countering Christian missionary efforts in Muslim-majority lands.54 It had four principal aims: teaching Islamic morals and ethics; spreading knowledge suited to the modern way of life; discouraging dissensions and abuses among Muslims; and using the best of both Eastern and Western cultures, while rejecting that which was considered bad in each. Led by ambitious, influential men from a variety of professions, the YMMA had immediate success. By 1928, it was being praised and promoted by Khilafat leaders as well as the president of the Supreme Muslim Council. In fact, at the time, the two communities were already talking with each other about using the YMMA as the main international organization for fostering Pan-Islamic unity.55

As far as is currently known, nothing came of these talks other than an increased desire for Pan-Islamic unity. Nevertheless, the Egyptian YMMA was so popular that it was still able to start expanding to non-Muslim-majority countries. Unfortunately, we do not know how exactly the YMMA was brought to the US, nor the exact relationship between this organization and the known New York-based YMMAS. In 1929, al-Kateeb’s group, which at the time was involved in pro-Palestinian, anti-Zionist efforts, was variously referred to in local newspapers as the Young Men’s Moslem Association of America and the Young Men’s Moslem Society.56 And in April that year, a ‘Moslem Yong Men’s Society of New York City’ hosted a meeting, which was attended by many Muslim delegates from other American cities, during which the group made

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53 E.g., Glick to Ross, May 22, 1929 and Glick to W. Ernest Hocking, April 20, 1931.
55 Kupferschmidt, Supreme Muslim, 193; Rizvi, “Muhibb Al-Din Al-Khatib,” 76–78.
56 “Arabs Here Assail Jewish Riot Views,” New York Times, August 29, 1929, 2; “Arabs Ask Stimson to Aid in Palestine,” New York Times, September 7, 1929, 3. At the time, the group’s secretary’s name was Abd M. Kateeb.
was part of a small group of Muslim converts in the city who wanted to get together with Harry to start an Islamic mission.\textsuperscript{94} Harry of course replied—in a letter that was, again, published in the Review—that he was eager to do this; and a Los Angeles Sunni Muslim convert community began to blossom.\textsuperscript{95}

At the time, Glick and the Nadjis were avid readers of the Review, and by late 1932 they had apparently already recruited some of its correspondents into the AIA, which was now headquartered at Ahmad's home in Holyoke.\textsuperscript{96} The WIA's head, Sheldrake, had been involved with the Woking mosque practically since the beginning of its revival in 1912 (led by the Lahori Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din), and Glick would have surely come across its publications anyway, either through his Muslim News Bureau activities or due to the fact that by the early 1930s Lahori-influenced publications were the main type of Islamic publications being read by practically all the American Muslims with whom he had contact.\textsuperscript{97} The AIA, then, was fully aware of Harry and the Los Angeles Muslims, and in June 1933 Ahmad Nadji, writing from the AIA's new base in Massachusetts, encouraged Harry to do Islamic propaganda, and sent him an advanced copy of Glick's Congress Advocate, for which Harry praised its creator.\textsuperscript{98} Subsequently, Harry and Glick began exchanging letters. By this point, Harry had had, just as had Glick and Sheldrake before him, disheartening experiences in trying to gain support and cooperation from the local immigrant Muslims for Islamic propaganda work—so he was happy to join up with the convert-heavy AIA, taking the position of secretary.\textsuperscript{99} Around this same time, another white convert living in Utah by the name of H.C. Stevens was made the WIA's official US representative,\textsuperscript{100} thereby ensuring that the AIA would both be fairly evenly distributed throughout the country and have strong white convert representation outside of New York State—two important accomplishments that Webb himself had failed to achieve. The AIA had therefore developed the rudiments

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext[94]{\textit{Ibid.} 21, no. 7 (1933): 240.}
\footnotetext[95]{\textit{Ibid.} 21, no. 7 (1933): 240–241.}
\footnotetext[96]{I am making these claims based on three pieces of evidence: (1) Glick's claim, which was published in 1932 (in V.V., “Le associazioni islamiche”), that the group was mostly composed of converts who were living in various states—the Review would be the most likely candidate for how whites from different states were able to have first learned about and contacted the AIA; (2) the same 1932 article, which indicated that Glick was aware that most American Islamic groups (including his own) used English-language Lahori (-influenced) publications as their primary Islamic reading materials; and (3) Muharrem's claim that he began reading the Review shortly after moving to Mansfield in 1927 (\textit{Islamic Review} 44, no. 7 [1956]: 35).}
\footnotetext[97]{V.V., “Le associazioni islamiche.”}
\footnotetext[98]{\textit{Islamic Review} 21, no. 7 (1933): 241–242.}
\footnotetext[99]{\textit{Ibid.} 21, n. 11 (1933): 391–392.}
\footnotetext[100]{Khalid Sheldrake, “The Muslim Creed,” \textit{Japan Times}, September 15, 1933.}
\end{footnotes}
of what might have possibly become the first successful Sunni organization with multiple white convert leaders.

However, just as the foundations were solidifying on both the national and international fronts, the WIA and AIA began experiencing difficulties. The breakdown began at the international level, shortly after making what at first appeared to be a positive accomplishment. In April 1932, news reports were indicating that there were plans for a full-fledged WIA mission in the US. Earlier in the year, Gladys Palmer, a wealthy British former Christian Scientist who was at that time the Dayang Muda of Sarawak in Malaysia, converted to Islam in a ceremony conducted by Sheldrake while flying over the English Channel. As reported in the New York Times, she announced that her plan was to set sail

for the United States in August with Dr. Khalid Sheldrake, president of the Western Islamic Association, and Michael Peltov, editor of Moslem Information, a magazine which she supports. Her aim was the spread of Mohammedanism, which she hailed as “the only religion I’ve found which allows me to have a mind of my own.”

Palmer, however, never started this mission. In the next year was announcing in a popular Lahori magazine that she had never intended to travel with Sheldrake and preferred to dissociate her name from his activities. Sheldrake responded by pointing out that she had never actually helped the WIA in any way.

In the US, meanwhile, Glick moved back to Lyons Valley, apparently after suffering a nervous breakdown. The dates are somewhat hazy in Glick’s FBI file, but it seems he stayed in his shack—receiving no visitors, but frequent letters from East and South Asians and various Muslim organizations—for a brief period, and then opened a post office box in order to have all his mail forwarded to his new home in Los Angeles. For the next few years he lived

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103 “Princess Sarawak’s Disclaimer,” Light, July 16, 1933, 4.
104 “Dr. Sheldrake’s Letter,” Light, October 8, 1933, 7.
105 Glick FBI file, Report, 6/25/1940, Los Angeles file 65–205, 2. It is not clear when exactly Glick moved back to California, several dates between 1931 and 1934 are given in his FBI file, but he is listed in a New York City directory in 1933 (see Ancestry.com).
Islam and Sufism were not accepted by all Muslims as Islamic, and they most likely happily welcomed the Los Angeles Sufis into their community. It is clear, then, that while the AIA as an organized entity seems to have failed to remain intact, by using its Ahmadi and Sunni connections, the network it had fostered was continuing to expand. The AIA had ultimately linked and united Muslims across the country and internationally, and cultivated a type and level of outreach to white converts that had no parallel in the orthodox American Muslim community at the time.

As the decade drew to a close, the country witnessed the eruption of a new world war that would have a significant impact on the future of not just the AIA-connected community, but also that of American conversion to Islam more broadly. Even before the war started, however, inklings of this new transformation could be seen in a few peculiar events.

Towards the end of 1938 someone posted an unusual sign at a Los Angeles train depot:

**KALIFAT—NEBI JEFFERSON**

Yearly pilgrimage of Muslims of Kalifat No. 5, known as North American Kalifat No. 5, will be concluded in Civic Center, Los Angeles, during the 30 days of the month of Muara.

The purpose shall be educational.

This pilgrimage should particularly remind Muslims of the teachings of America’s first Karajite leader, Thomas Jefferson, loyal successor of George Washington, tried-and-true founder of the Republic.

Terminating the pilgrimage, Muslims should make the circuit of the Los Angeles Federal Building which is situated in what is henceforth to be known by Muslims as Jefferson Square. They may make the circuit as many as seven times, but it is not their duty to make it even once, since they should make it only of their own free will and according to their ability.

Muslims who make the pilgrimage to Mecca should make that to Los Angeles also.

Muslims who make the pilgrimage to Los Angeles should also make that to Mecca.

**BISMILA**

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and Nadirah maintained a strong connection to at least two other Islamic groups in the city: Kheirallah’s MBUSA and an organization known as the Moorish National Islamic Center (MNIC), for which Nadirah frequently lectured.\textsuperscript{13}

The MNIC, located at 1 East 125th Street and led by Grand Sheik Walter Price Bey, was originally part of an African American Islamic sectarian movement, the Moorish Science Temple (MST).\textsuperscript{14} According to the group’s literature, the MST was “founded” in 1913 in Newark, but it only “organized” while in Chicago in 1925, in the wake of the Qadianis’ successful wave of proselytization. Its leader and prophet, Noble Drew Ali, published a “Holy Koran” that was largely composed of uncredited excerpts from two popular esoteric texts of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Perhaps because it more thoroughly aligned itself with Marcus Garvey’s black nationalism and African American religious currents, Ali’s movement was even more successful than the Qadianis in convincing African Americans to take on an Islamic identity. However, in early 1929, a debilitating schism developed. The MST’s leader in Detroit, James Lomax (later, Muhammad Ezaldeen) apparently became influenced by immigrant Muslims and broke away from Drew Ali, taking several MST temples with him. The split led to violence erupting in multiple temples across the country, so, fearing for his life, Lomax eventually went to Egypt where he connected with the YMMA before returning to the US in December 1936. Meanwhile, Drew Ali died in July 1929, leading to even more schisms.

The MNIC was originally part of the dominant post-Drew Ali faction of the MST, the Moorish Science Temple of America, Inc., which was led C. Kirkman Bey. But beginning at least as early as 1935, a number of immigrant Muslims joined and sometimes acted as teachers for the New York group, which had about fifty to sixty regularly-attending members.\textsuperscript{15} One Egyptian immigrant laborer later told the FBI that when he was a member, from 1935 to 1941, he “taught a class of approximately fifty children the Arabic language and Moslem religion.” By 1940, the MNIC was leaning even more towards international Islam. It appears that, for example, sometime during that year Walter Price Bey adopted the Arabic name of Abdul Wadood Bey,\textsuperscript{16} probably under the influence

\begin{itemize}
\item Osman to Akram, 1, 4.
\item On the MNIC and MST, see Bowen, “Search for ‘Islam,’” 275–276 and HCTIUS vol. 2.
\item See Bowen, “Search for ‘Islam,’” 275–276; and HCTIUS vol. 2.
\item In a 2012 article (Bowen, “Search for ‘Islam,” 275), the relationship between Walter and Abdul Wadood Bey was not fully understood. However, the existing evidence tells us that (1) Wadood Bey was a convert (and the ‘Bey’ in his name suggests he was from the MST); (2) Wadood Bey’s wife was known as Rezkah; (3) Walter also had a wife known as Rezkah;
\end{itemize}
Islam Association of America (IAA)\textsuperscript{38}—stated on its cover page that it was “For Moslems in the United States Armed services, but free to all who request.”\textsuperscript{39} This emphasis on the military was reinforced by Glick’s use of the word ‘chaplain’ to describe American Muslim religious leaders. Early American Muslim imams did sometimes use English Christian terms, such as ‘reverend’ and ‘priest,’ to describe their position in the Muslim community, but ‘chaplain’ had probably never been used before. And, unlike the other two words, ‘chaplain’ is a term that implies the specific role of a religious leader who serves a more or less secular organization, such as the military.

The creation of this journal sprang out of an earlier related effort. In 1941, the Webb Memorial Mazjid—in other words, Glick—had established what he called the American Moslem Committee for Defense, an organization designed specifically to address American Muslim issues related to the war.\textsuperscript{40} Perhaps in an attempt to protect the practice of Islam in America during wartime, when the religion might have been perceived as a threat, Glick, as Kearful reported, drew up a constitution requiring that all American Moslem officials be American citizens, that American Moslems refrain from “gambling, selling liquor, and similar enterprises,” and that a finance committee be set up to administer the organization’s funds.\textsuperscript{41}

Then, in 1943, Glick—presumably through his Committee for Defense—was initiating a campaign to try to make the US military recognize and provide support for the religious beliefs and requirements of Muslim soldiers. Besides his \textit{Chaplain Letters} propaganda, there are two known aspects of Glick’s campaign. First, he had the IAA issue medallions, to be worn with Muslim soldiers’ dog

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{38} There are only two pieces of evidence that the AIA—under that specific name—continued to function after 1933, and they are both rather weak, as evidence goes. The first is a 1943 reference made in an Indian Muslim journal that sometimes reworded English-language phrases (“Islam Mission for America,” \textit{Light}, May 16, 1943, 3) and the second is a mention of the AIA, WIA, and the New York American Islamic Social Centre located in a single paragraph giving an overview of Islam in the US, published in an Italian-authored book in 1942 without citation, so it is not certain as to whether the author was relying on new or old information (Carlo Gasbarri, \textit{La via di Allah: origini, storia, sviluppi, istituzioni del mondo islamico e la sua posizione di fronte al Cristianesimo} [Milano: Ulrico Hoepli, 1942], 279–80).
\item \textsuperscript{39} MOA FBI file, Report, 1/15/1944, Pittsburgh file 100–6685, 3.
\item \textsuperscript{40} Kearful, “The Saga.”
\item \textsuperscript{41} \textit{Ibid}.
\end{itemize}
It does not seem to be a coincidence, then, that it was around the time that
the FBI discovered Glick and Muharrem's materials in the African American
Sunni community that that same community had established its own national
organization to unite Muslim organizations throughout the country. The
Uniting Islamic Societies of America (UISA) was established in 1943 and would
hold four annual meetings before its dissolution in 1947. The man who had
reportedly originally come up with the idea of the UISA was Nasir Ahmad, an
African American Muslim whose first exposure to Islam was in Pittsburgh in
the late 1920s when he joined the MST. Soon, however, several people in his
MST branch were upset with what they believed were the exploitive practices
of the branch's head, and so, particularly after the MST's prophet died, many
quit the Pittsburgh temple. In 1930, Muhammad Yusuf Khan, the Qadiani mis-
sionary who had spent years converting African Americans, arrived in town
and came into contact with former MST members, and made Nasir Ahmad (for-
merly Walter Smith Bey) the head black Qadiani in the Ohio River Valley
region. Building off the remains of the fractured MST, Ahmad quickly estab-
lished several mosques and connected himself to other existing Muslim
communities in the region. But, however, that Khan was threatened by
Ahmad's power, and in 1934, out of a desire to see Ahmad's influence reduced,
decided to send him to Philadelphia, which would have been too far away from
Pittsburgh for Ahmad to maintain a real effect on the Ohio River Valley
Muslims. This would prove to be a poor decision for Khan, however, as in
Philadelphia Ahmad became affiliated with a well-connected Egyptian Muslim
who was possibly associated with the Supreme Muslim Council. Within just a
few months, the Egyptian helped Ahmad lead a revolt against Khan and con-
vert most of the Pennsylvania Qadianis to Sunni Islam. Before full stability
could be achieved, however, in the fall of 1935 yet another split occurred in the
community when a Yemeni proselytizer was able to convince a small contin-
gent to break away and incorporate as the Moslems of America. Soon after,
another group of Pittsburgh Muslims joined up with the Indian Lahoris with
whom Harry and the Nadjis had been corresponding. Then, to make matters
more complicated, in late 1936, Ezaldeen, the former Moor who had spent sev-
eral years training with the YMMA in Egypt, returned to the country, connected
with various Islamic organizations in New York City, and subsequently joined
up with Ahmad to create the AAUA in Camden, to which Ahmad helped con-
vert several MOA members in various cities. Meanwhile, in Cleveland, Wali

59 Dannin claims that the group did not hold a meeting in 1945, but this is inaccurate; see
"Honoring Mohammed," Pittsburgh Courier, March 3, 1945, 10. The UISA will be discussed
in much greater detail in HCTIUS vol. 2.
many years: helping to unify a large, multiethnic American Muslim community. The ability of the former AIA network to connect with African Americans was partially due to their sharing mixed influences from Ahmadis and Sunnis, but also the fact that, like Glick’s AIA network, the African American groups were mostly populated by converts. Unlike most Muslim immigrants of the period, these converts had concerns that were reflective of a people thoroughly familiar with American society.

There was one important additional connection between the UISA and the now enlarged former AIA network. New York’s Saudi Sheik al-Rawaf was appointed to be the UISA’s “liaison officer to maintain relations with foreign-born Muslims.” The wealthy son of a governor in southern Saudi Arabia, al-Rawaf first came to the US in 1935 to pursue various business and educational ventures. However, during his fifteen-year stay, al-Rawaf did not limit his activities to worldly ones; he visited several US Muslim communities, including those in Detroit and California, and in 1936–37, he was the imam for the Cedar Rapids mosque, one of the oldest mosques still in use in the US. Then, in 1943–44, after briefly joining the US Army, he served as a treasurer and Arabic instructor at the Academy of Islam and interacted with many

71 However, the desire to work with whites was not at all unanimous among African American Sunnis and Lahoris. Indeed, this was a topic of much tension during the 1940s. For more on this topic, see HCTIUS vol. 2.

72 AUAFA FBI file, Report, 10/9/43, Philadelphia file 100–19940, 21; “Moslems Chant Prayers”; Dannin, Pilgrimage, 52. Dannin incorrectly identifies al-Rawaf as an “Indian immigrant who operated a trading concern in midtown Manhattan.”


74 “Emir Saud to Fly.”

75 See Harsham, “Islam in Iowa,” and Aossey, “Fifty Years.”
renamed the National Opera and Ballet). After over three years working in these positions, Nilla resigned from them all and founded the independent Studio for the Revival of the Classical Arts of Iran, in which she taught and trained numerous Iranian dancers. After receiving funding from the Iranian government, the studio commenced a tour of Middle Eastern and eastern Mediterranean countries. Nilla's impact on her dancers was itself significant; her studio had in fact initiated an important movement within Iran's postwar cultural revival.

After 1950, Nilla's interest in Islam seems to have waned, as there is little evidence that she continued to consider herself a Muslim beyond that date. Even during the 1940s, though, Nilla's Muslim identity was highly unorthodox and was, it seems, a practical, temporary manipulation of her universalistic views. Not being a religious leader, Nilla, furthermore, left little-to-no lasting religious impact. It appears, in fact, that her Islamic religious influence peaked with promises of the publication of her Qur'an translation just prior to the end of the war.

**After War**

As soon as the Second World War came to an end in 1945, the US saw the reappearance of two Islamic organizations that had had a presence during the Great Depression and were attempting to once again to both unite Muslim immigrants and converts. Although during the interwar period both groups had focused their proselytization efforts on African Americans, now white converts played important, if sometimes small roles.

The first of these was an organization whose name had appeared repeatedly in the context of American Muslim converts in the 1930s and 1940s: the YMMA. There was the early branch in New York that Glick had ties to, Ezaldeen had been trained by it in Cairo, and through al-Rawaf it was linked to various elements in the multiethnic Islamic network of the 1940s. As far as is currently known, the group also made at least one additional significant attempt in the

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114 Nilla and her studio are discussed in detail in the memoir of Nesta Ramazani, *The Dance of the Rose and the Nightingale* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2002), passim.
By late 1953, nearly four years before the building itself was even completed, the Islamic Center had achieved an important feat when it established an ‘Islamic Institute’ that supported study of issues related to Islam and the Muslim world.\(^\text{14}\) Despite what was an apparently short life span, this Institute far surpassed Glick’s failed ‘Shieka Selim Institute’ and it may have even been the first functioning national Islamic institution of its kind in the country. Then, in 1957, after years of strenuous planning, construction, and fundraising, the Center had its official opening, complete with major fanfare and invitations to virtually all Muslim organizations in the US. The current US president, Dwight D. Eisenhower, gave a speech at the occasion, as did several Muslim ambassadors. The ornately-decorated Center, which immediately became a popular tourist attraction, was an immense source of pride for American Muslims, many of whom had donated their own money to the project in the first years of its development. But it was not just the Center’s location that had influence—so did several of its leaders, particularly when they were able to connect with the FIA network. For example, one of the early members of the Center’s board of directors was Dr. Mahmoud Youssef Shawarbi, a figure who was well-known in the New York Islamic community and later became president of the FIA-affiliated New York Muslim Council; Shawarbi was a frequent guest of the FIA conventions until he was made its permanent director in 1964.\(^\text{15}\) The Center’s imam-directors, meanwhile, were respected Muslim scholars from the Azhar University who made numerous efforts to connect with the various US Muslim communities and organizations, including the FIA. Through these educated figures and their ties to the FIA, the Islamic Center became an important source of religious authority in the country, further establishing a sense of unity and adaptation for American Muslims of different generations and ethnic backgrounds.

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\(^{14}\) This has been inferred from clues in Robert F. Ogden, *The Place of Sufism in Islam* ([Washington, DC]: Islamic Center, January 12, 1954).

was even repurposed to serve a multiethnic audience and was published in collaboration with the FIA under the name *Muslim Life*.

Many of the Albanian immigrants to Detroit, however, were not followers of Sunni Islam, but were instead practitioners of Bektashi Sufism. Unlike Inayat Khan’s Theosophy-influenced universalistic Sufism, Bektashi Sufism is explicitly Islamic, although it is an order that contains elements of Shi’ism and Christianity, and therefore has typically been seen by Sunnis as lying outside the boundaries of orthodox Islam. So, while Imam Vehbi and his followers maintained a cordial relationship with the Bektashis, the latter group followed their own Azhar-educated Albanian religious leader, Baba Rexheb.36 Rexheb, like Ismail, initially came to Detroit by the late 1940s;37 in 1953 his community established a Sufi center (*tekke*) in the town of Taylor, just south of Detroit. Through the 1980s, the vast majority of Detroit’s Bektashi initiates were people who were born in the Balkans; only two were white Americans.38 Despite this small number, however, the Bektashi *tekke* in Michigan is probably technically the US’ first Muslim Sufi center to have white American converts.

The third influential trained religious leader in postwar Detroit was Shaykh Mohammad Jawad Chirri, a Shi’i scholar from South Lebanon.39 Chirri had graduated from the Islamic Institute at Najaf, Iraq and afterwards worked alongside Shaykh Mughniyya, a highly influential Lebanese Shi’i cleric. At the time, the Shi’ah of greater Detroit had a religious leader—Shaykh Khalil Bazzy—who had been serving the community since the late 1910s. Shaykh Bazzy, however, had almost no formal religious training, and the new generation of Shi’i immigrants—many of whom were the children or grandchildren of earlier immigrants, and, like many of the other second-generation Muslims, frequently had college educations—desired to have a more educated religious leader who might be able to better mobilize and connect their community to Muslims both in America and internationally. Almost immediately after his arrival in 1949, then, Chirri was able to win the confidence of many of the community’s younger Sunni and Shi’i Muslims, who were all drawn to his modernist views. Chirri soon announced ambitious plans to initiate reforms for

the United States was to obtain a degree from a Western university.\footnote{Reynolds, “Foto Facts”; Tobenkin, “Moslems Here.”} In fact, after graduating from the University of Iowa in 1952, Dahbour ended his activities as a religious leader for US Muslims, and moved to Washington where he earned a master’s degree from George Washington University and commenced a long career as a language specialist and political liaison for the US government. In his focus on college education and employment, then, Dahbour was a link between the new influx of trained religious leaders and the postwar development that had the most direct impact on white American converts: the international Muslim student boom.

**A Key Change: International Students**

The postwar period’s trained religious leaders and new national institutions were primarily focused on serving the US’ first and second generation immigrants Muslims. This essentially meant that their main focus was on ensuring that Islam was practiced in, and adapted to, an American setting without becoming too watered down by US culture. Most of these new religious leaders and groups, then, were not particularly interested in converting Americans, who, through marrying Muslims, were often thought to be a major source of the dilution of Islam in the country. It was partly for this reason, in fact, that at least some imams, including the very influential Imam Chirri, refused to marry a Muslim with any American—male or female—unless that person at least nominally converted to Islam.\footnote{Eide Alawan (a prominent member of Imam Chirri’s Dearborn community since the early 1960s), phone interview with the author, May 21, 2014. Of course, in not marrying women who did not convert, Chirri was following standard Shi’i practice, as was noted above. Imam Karoub, meanwhile, only refused to marry men—not women—who did not convert; see Naff, *Becoming American*, 245–46.} Nevertheless, the intermarriage rate increased with the second and third generations,\footnote{See the discussions of mixed marriages in Chapters 8 and 11.} and a new cohort of Muslims was significantly contributing to the transformation of the character of the white convert community in the 1950s and early 1960s: international Muslim college students.

Prior to 1945, no Muslim-majority country sent more than 138 students to the US in any one year, and most typically sent fewer than fifty.\footnote{Herbert H. Williams, *Syrians Studying Abroad: A Comparison of Factors Influencing the Numbers of Syrians Studying in the United States and Other Countries*, Occasional Paper Number 2 ([New York]: Institute of International Education, 1952), 4. For figures by year, see the Institute of International Education’s annual reports for 1926 to 1949.} As soon as the
Students’ Association of United States and Canada (MSA). The MSA developed out of a fall 1961 meeting at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign between Muslim students from various schools who desired to establish a central meeting place so that they could, as the researcher Herman Bowers put it, “gather, become acquainted, and learn of the customs of each other’s country.”\footnote{Bowers, “A Phenomenological Study,” 108.} Discovering how other Muslim students successfully navigated life in America was an important need for these international students, many of whom were not only the first people in their families to attend college, but sometimes the first to leave their homelands. About 75 students, representing 10 Muslim college organizations, met again in December 1962, and officially organized as the MSA on January 1, 1963.\footnote{Bowers, “A Phenomenological Study,” 108; Larry Poston, \textit{Islamic Da’wah in the West: Muslim Missionary Activity and the Dynamics of Conversion to Islam} (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 102.} Word about the organization spread quickly; by 1964, 38 student groups had joined; 58 had joined by 1965, and in 1968, there were 105 Muslim college groups and 1,000 dues-paying members in the MSA.\footnote{Muslim Students’ Association, \textit{MSA Handbook} (Ann Arbor: Muslim Students’ Association of the US and Canada, [1968]), 28, 35.} With its significant size and reach, it was inevitable that some of the white converts affiliated with local Muslim student groups would join the MSA.\footnote{Astrid-Herma Smart became a prominent member in the University of Illinois’ group (see her “How and Why I Adopted Islam,” \textit{Al-Ittihad} 2, no. 1 [1965]: 8–11), Linda Clark was made secretary of the MSA of Southern Illinois University (see her “How I Became a Muslim and Embraced Islam,” \textit{Al-Ittihad} 2, no. 1 [1965]: 41), and Omar Theodore Kilgore of the University of Michigan was made head of the national MSA’s committee on Education, Libraries and Lecturing (see “Resolutions Passed at the Convention of Muslim Students’ Associations of the United States & Canada,” \textit{Al-Ittihad} 2, no. 1 [1965]: 14).} By 1964, in fact—just 1 year after its founding—the MSA had gained several white members, at least 2 of which served in official roles with either their local or the national MSA.\footnote{Bowers, “A Phenomenological Study,” 108; Larry Poston, \textit{Islamic Da’wah in the West: Muslim Missionary Activity and the Dynamics of Conversion to Islam} (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 102.} After 1964, as we will see in Chapter 11, white converts would only become more prominent in the MSA, reflecting the growing importance of the connection between international Muslim students and American converts.

From Unity to Division: The Efforts of Abdul Basit Naeem

Some international Muslim students, meanwhile, were organizing and connecting with American Muslims outside of the college setting. This was the case with the Pakistani Abdul Basit Naeem, who briefly became one of the...
wholly new and important current in American Islam. They had institutionalized in America what Nilla Cram Cook was striving for abroad in the 1940s: The combining of modern esotericism with the liberal desire to create justice in the world by intentionally focusing on affiliation identifying with the ‘untouchable’ castes.

The emergence of these independent converts and movements reveals that something new was taking place in the postwar period. What was, for the most part, a simple bifurcation of white Muslims and Sufis in the early twentieth century was becoming much more complex. Now, Sufism, which was coming from a variety of sources and levels of religious training, was making contact with white Muslims in religiously and ethnically diverse settings, producing a wide variety of views on what it meant to be both a Muslim and a Sufi. As this was happening, the numbers of conversions through marriage continued to increase and the demographics of spouses and friends were more and more leaning towards the college-educated. This, in turn, was leading to some white converts taking leadership roles in the growing, modernist-leaning US and global Muslim communities. And, in addition to all of this, although there had already been white Sunnis who tried to lead independent Islamic groups, some were now, it seems, actually able to lead and actually found real and somewhat long-lasting Islamic institutions. Ironically, then, the significant reterritorialization of the US Muslim community in the postwar period had created the conditions necessary for allowing white conversion to Islam to deterritorialize at a tremendous rate.

It needs to be clear, however, that this religious deterritorialization was primarily taking place on the fringes of the United States Muslim community. The main trends were in fact showing increasing prominence and consistency. Although it is true that this period saw the emergence of more varieties of white Islamic identities than there had been before, more and more, growing numbers of white converts were affiliating with a particular type of Muslim. By 1965, in fact, a trend that had emerged in the postwar period would come to dominate and define the white convert community: contact with college-educated immigrants.
Interestingly, although as a Shi‘i mosque, Chirri’s Islamic Center of America was not typical in its requiring all female non-Muslims to convert for marriage, the only serious attempt to count white American converts around that time found this proportion to be fairly consistent for Muslim converts throughout the country. M. Arif Ghayur’s 1981 study determined that about 15 percent of white American converts were male, and that of the 85 percent who were female, most “apparently converted at the time of marriage to Muslim professionals.” As was pointed out in Chapter 10 and as will be discussed below, there is good evidence that by the early 1970s the population of unmarried friend converts, especially college-educated types, was also increasing.

Ghayur estimated the combined number of male and female white American converts came to 3 percent of the total US Muslim population in 1980. Since he believed that the total population at the time was 1.2 million, he put white converts as coming to about 40,000. However, this estimate seems high for two reasons. First is that, while Ghayur’s total population number is consistent with the early 1970s findings of the Washington, DC Islamic Center, this number is not consistent with the data concerning Muslim immigration cited above and in previous chapters nor is it consistent with high quality studies of the US Muslim population conducted twenty years or more after Ghayur’s, all of which suggest that the estimate of 1.2 million for 1980 was probably too high. Second, at least two other studies of the US Muslim community from the 1970s through the early 1980s suggested that the white convert population was significantly smaller than 40,000 people. However, the

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10 Ghayur, “Muslims,” 158.
13 The Muslim World League conducted a study in late 1973 and their published report did not include any mention of white Muslims, and in fact said that the US Muslim community “may be roughly divided into two groups, one consisting of the immigrants and the other of the […] Afro-Americans”—a rather surprising statement if there were truly tens of thousands of white converts. However, as pointed out in the following note, their methodology was more than lacking; see “Muslims in America,” Al-Ittihad 11, no. 3 (1974): 15–16. In 1982, Yvonne Haddad reported that throughout history there had been only an
MSA’s magazine *Al-Ittihad*. Islamic calligraphy, meanwhile, is claimed by contemporary American Muslims to have been first brought to the US around the 1960s by another white convert, Mohamed Zakariya, a California native who had studied the art in Morocco under an Egyptian calligrapher, Abdussalam Ali-Nour. Calligraphy and other forms of Islamic art were also promoted by Dr. Lamya Lois Isben al-Faruqi, the convert wife of the prominent immigrant Muslim scholar Dr. Isma’il al-Faruqi. Like her husband, Lamya was a long-time intellectual, and was even a published advocate for women’s rights prior to her receiving her PhD in 1974. The arts, however, were her main passion. Lamya had begun studying music at the college level in the 1940s, and after finishing her doctoral dissertation on music in Islamic culture, she wrote a number of scholarly works and taught courses concerning music in Islam in both secular and Islamic settings. Lamya served, in addition, on multiple boards for nonprofits that worked towards the preservation and promotion of Islamic arts.

Lamya of course was not alone in her valuing education as it related to Islam. As it was for Lisa, Richard, and Nusrat, studying Islam and its traditions was an important component of the ‘way of life’ of many converts. Although few pre-1975 converts learned Arabic—the resources for which were extremely rare—many obtained copies of English translations of the Qur’an, usually Yusuf Ali’s. Since probably a large percentage of 1965–74 converts were not affiliated with a mosque, and since, even for those who were, most American mosques at the time did not have, as many do today, courses for converts to study the Qur’an and Islamic history, converts typically developed their understanding of their religion through discussion with their spouses, Muslim in-laws, and convert friends, and occasionally by reading scholarly works on Islam. Still, during the 1965–74 period, Islamic instruction was slowly developing; the MSA commenced distributing English-language teaching materials as did the Islamic Center in Washington, DC and a few other small American mosques and international Islamic organizations. Converts, then, occasionally had access to more well-developed Islamic knowledge. Some white Muslims,

27 See below for more on Lutz’s poems.
29 For a brief introduction to the writing and lives of both, see “Notes of the Quarter,” *Muslim World* 76 (1986): 251–52 and Charles D. Fletcher, “Isma’il al-Faruqi (1921–1986) and Inter-Faith Dialogue: The Man, the Scholar, the Participant” (PhD diss., McGill University, 2008). For more on Lamya, see the November 1986 issue of *Islamic Horizons*.
individuals were probably like Lisa in that they were primarily drawn to the social and spiritual aspects of the community; intellectual religious development and participation in the organization's leadership were at best secondary issues for them. Nevertheless, some converts regularly read the group's publications and were highly involved with its administrative activities. Converts, in fact, began to take on an increasingly prominent role in the MSA community during this period, reflecting both their growing contact with international students and the changes in the ways white Muslims were impacted by immigration over the years.

One can easily observe the post-1964 transformation in white convert demographics and social networks by looking at trends in the presence of white converts in national Islamic organizations since the interwar period. The interwar network of Louis Glick and Muharrem Nadji had put moderately-educated, immigrant-connected white Muslims to the forefront, but this network had begun disintegrating prior to the Second World War and was all but disappeared by 1961, the year both Glick and Nadji died. In the postwar period, highly educated white converts connected to Muslim college students, like Guertin and Irving, served as FIA vice presidents and were prominent figures at national FIA-connected gatherings. However, between 1965 and 1974 no white American convert served as an officer in the national FIA. Moreover, despite facing declining membership and support from immigrant Muslims, white converts were rarely mentioned in the FIA’s magazine, the *Muslim Star*, and they were no longer featured speakers at the organization’s conventions.

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37 Guertin, as was pointed out in chapter 10, presented at multiple conventions and Irving lectured at least for the FIA’s Islamic Youth Association’s conclave in 1963, during his term as FIA first vice president; see “Report on November: I.Y.A. Youth Conclave,” *Muslim Star* 5, no. 1 (January and February 1964): 3, IMJC Papers, Box 8, BHL.

38 The FIA’s declining membership and support is suggested two things: First, the decrease in density of articles in the *Muslim Star*, which suggests few contributions were being made. Second, the 1972 urging for increased membership and complaints of financial difficulties; see “Increase in Membership Mandatory,” *Muslim Star* 13, no. 84 (1972): 1, IMJC Papers, Box 8, BHL.

39 I have found no post-1965 issues of the *Muslim Life*, the journal that Irving had started editing by 1964. Irving does, however, have a book review that appeared in one of the last known extant issues of the *F.I.A. Journal* (1, no. 2 [January-March 1965]:26–28, IMJC Papers, Box 9, Misc. Islam Organizations’ Newsletters, BHL). In late 1967, the *Muslim Star* also ran a few advertisements for Irving’s partial translation of the Qur’an, which he had published by the Cedar Rapids mosque in 1968 (see above for a discussion). For the most part, though, mentions of white converts were extremely rare in the *Star* during this period, and they were almost never featured in a prominent story in the magazine.
intellectual backwardness. In the years to come, these themes would be repeated over and over throughout the community of white converts. Of course, the MSA was not solely responsible for the popularization of this view of Islam, which had been present to some extent since Webb’s day. And, as Lisa Alfassi’s conversion story demonstrates, not all potential converts—not even all of those who were members of the MSA—were directly influenced by this intellectual model. Nevertheless, the group’s significant influence on the very immigrant populations that were most likely to be interacting with white converts during and after college undoubtedly served to strengthen this view’s popularity.

An additional reason for publishing the writings of white converts in Al-Ittihad was that in some cases—most notably with Jameelah and Irving—the white converts were known and respected in both the broader US Muslim community and international Pan-Islamic circles, which therefore lent the MSA greater legitimacy amongst its readership. Due to her earlier articles in Islamic periodicals and her moving to Pakistan with the support of Mawdudi, by 1962, Jameelah had already become the world’s most famous living white American convert. She would hold this position for several years by producing an enormous output of published writings on Islamic topics. Besides her many books in the early 1960s, Jameelah appeared in numerous issues of the Siddiqui-influenced Voice of Islam as well as the London- (and, later, Pakistan-) based Muslimnews International. Starting in 1965 she was also featured regularly in the South Asian English-language journals Yaqeen International and the Minaret—another Siddiqui-influenced periodical—and in the early 1970s, her work frequently appeared in the Mawdudi-affiliated Criterion. Most of Jameelah’s writings conveyed a very conservative Islamic view strongly influenced by Mawdudi and other conservative Muslim thinkers of the period.44

She, for instance, follows the modern Salafi approach in defining ‘true’ Islam as not only that which is recorded in the Qur’an and hadith, but also only that which existed in the early Muslim centuries—prior to the ‘corruption’ of Islamic civilization by the West. According to Jameelah, furthermore, Islam is the only truly ‘spiritual’ religion that enables humans to love and care for each other in a complete way by providing clear codes for behavior. This is radically different from and superior to Western ‘materialist’ culture, which, she claims, promotes the destructive concepts of individualism, feminism, progress, and hyper-rationality. All pain and suffering in the world is attributable to following these non-Islamic values; therefore, there can be no compromise between Islam and the West.

Irving, meanwhile, was far more liberal, and was in any case much less interested in theology-type writing, focusing more on Islamic history and the adjustment of immigrant Muslims and their families to living in the West. He was often featured in the Sheikh Muhammad Ashraf’s Al-Ittihad, a journal that sometimes exchanged articles for reprinting with Al-Ittihad. Other less popular white converts also made occasional appearances in these journals as well: Joseph DiCaprio and the msa’s Linda Clark had articles reprinted in the Islamic Literature, a journal that sometimes exchanged articles for reprinting with Al-Ittihad. Other less popular white converts also made occasional appearances in these journals as well: Joseph DiCaprio and the msa’s Linda Clark had articles reprinted in the Islamic Literature;\footnote{DiCaprio: 7, no. 10 (1966): 37; Clark: 7, no. 1 (1966): 43.}

It helped the msa further connect and legitimize the msa for its readership already familiar with these converts (especially Jameelah and Irving). On the other, it helped broaden notions about Pan-Islam for the magazine’s Muslim readers who were not familiar with these converts. Pan-Islam was in fact a very

\footnote{Lutz is identified in the first two of these journals by his Muslim name: Abder Rahman. \textit{Yaqeen International}: November 7 & 22, 1966, 84; October 7, 1967, 81; \textit{Muslimnews International}: August 1963, 29. In the \textit{Muslimnews International} piece, which was a letter written to the magazine, Lutz identifies himself as a representative of an "International Council of Islamic Minorities" based in Berkeley, California. This, and the fact that Lutz was a known affiliate of the msa, suggests that Lutz is the author of a 1974 piece about the Philippines, which appeared in the \textit{Criterion}, was distributed by the msa at Berkeley, and used a Berkeley address for a Philippines relief fund; “The Philippines: A Rebellion that Won’t Go Away,” \textit{Criterion} (Karachi) 9, no. 4 (April 1974): 32–34.}

\footnote{Between 1967 and 1971, \textit{Yaqeen International} published over a dozen pieces written by white converts to Islam explaining their conversions. The majority of these were by Europeans, but at least a few were written by Americans.}
Columbia Chess Chronicle
Daily Review (Decatur, IL)
Detroit Free Press
Dobbs Ferry Register (New York)
Dubois Courier (Pennsylvania)
Dunkirk Evening Observer
Equinox
Evening Independent
Flag of Our Union
Forum
Frank Leslie's Weekly
Freemason
Freemasons Chronicle
Freemason's Magazine and General Miscellany
Freemasons' Monthly Magazine
Gnostic
Godey's Magazine
Gonzales Tribune
Grand Rapids Daily Democrat
Great Britain and the East
Harper's New Monthly Magazine
Hartford Courant
Hartford Herald
Herald of Light
Hobbies
Inter Ocean
Japan Times
Joplin News Herald
Journal of the American Geographical Society of New York
Le Grand Reporter
Light in the West
Long Island Star-Journal
Los Angeles Times
Lucifer
Mansfield News
Mansfield News Journal
Masonic Illustrated
Miami Herald
Milwaukee Journal
Miscellaneous Notes and Queries
Islamic Books, Unpublished Works, and Published Collections


Nadji, Muharrem, ed. *Islam or Christianity*. Mansfield, CT: Centre of America, 1954.


Ogden, Robert F. *The Place of Sufism in Islam*. [Washington, DC]: Islamic Center, January 12, 1954.


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