THE SHEIKS OF SEDITION:
FATHER PROPHET MOHAMMED BEY,
MOTHER JESUS ROSIE BEY,
AND KANSAS CITY’S MOORS (1933–1945)

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Abstract: This paper examines the development of the Moorish Science Temple of America (MSTA), a Black American Islamic religious organisation from 1933 to 1945, a period largely unexplored by academics. Through the lens of Father Prophet Mohammed Bey and Mother Jesus Rosie Bey—two controversial vernacular Moorish-American leaders in Kansas City—I hope to illustrate how Kansas City Moors coped with the organisation’s fissiparous tendencies and exegetically revised and reframed Moorish-American Prophet Noble Drew Ali’s 1920s Black Asiatic Orientalist doctrines vis-à-vis the 1930s and 1940s subversive socio-political culture. In the process, both Father Prophet Mohammed Bey and Mother Jesus Rosie Bey shaped and advocated an early form of Black theology and Black power, though they differed in their modus operandi. While Father Prophet Mohammed Bey militantly confronted Kansas City’s local racist institutions, Mother Jesus Rosie Bey internationalized and politicized the Kansas City Moors to collaborate/contend with the looming spectre of Japanese agent provocateurs, America’s Selective Service Act, and Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) interrogations. While the size and scope of the Kansas City Moors remained limited, their unique orientation to militant Moorish Islam is vital for historians’ understanding of the re-flowering of Moorish-American Islamic activism in the 1930s as well as the eventual decay of the religious organisation by 1945, due in part to the theological softening of other Moorish communities.

Keywords: new religion, African-American Islam, Moorish Science Temple of America, racism, Kansas City history, religious violence, sedition, selective service act
Get this straight sergeant! I’m a prophet, not a preacher. And as for using a gun, I think the prophets of old—Mohammed, Moses, Buddha and Confucius would have been better off if they knew how to use a machine gun!
—Prophet Mohammed Bey, 1938

Traditionally, academic works on the Moorish Science Temple of America (MSTA) have uncritically written off the years following the demise of Moorish-American Prophet Noble Drew Ali in 1929 as the movement’s inevitable “collapse.” C. Eric Lincoln emphasized fissiparous tendencies between feuding contenders for the vacant Asiatic Islam throne as the raison d’être for the concurrent collapse of the MSTA and en masse conversion to Wali Farad’s Temple of Islam in the 1930s.

A rigorous scrutiny of MSTA history in the 1930s and 1940s, however, suggests that the “collapse” was myopic to the actual re-flowering of Moorish Islam characterized by expanded MSTA membership, exponential proliferation of more than sixty MSTA Temples (connected to richly diverse Moorish orientations) and an amplified Moorish-American political consciousness transcending Ali’s own tentacles of reach. Ironically, this was because Ali’s death in 1929 decentralized power and control beyond Chicago, prompting a mushrooming of Moorish theologians whose textual revisionism of Ali’s pre-1929 Apocrypha in the rapidly changing pre-WWII socio-economic environment engendered a second MSTA Golden Age from 1931 to 1945.

This paper throws light on Father Prophet Muhammad Bey (1888–1941), one of the nouveaux Moorish exegetes, frequently marginalized from the pages of history, but critical in understanding both the vibrant restyling of post-1929 Moorish Islam as well as furnishing insights into processes operating within the fluidic Moorish center-periphery Temples complex. In the aftermath of Drew Ali’s death, scholars have largely deliberated on violent events in 1929–1931 between Charles Kirkman Bey (1896–1959), Ira Johnson Bey (1879–1949) and Edward Mealy El (1870–1935) in Chicago as representative of MSTA decay. Nevertheless, Mohammed Bey’s controversial leadership in Kansas City, Kansas and Missouri, on the periphery of the Moorish center in Chicago, was symptomatic of a post-1929 Moorish theological revivalism between 1931 and 1945. Like other Moorish theologians, Mohammed Bey carved out unencumbered, subterfuged cosmological spaces, operating betwixt and

2Lincoln, The Black Muslims in America, p. 53.
3Evanzz, The Messenger: The Rise and Fall of Elijah Muhammad.
between the interstitial crevices of national Moorish debates while steering clear from Chicago’s myriad of legal intrigues.

While Chicago’s mainstream Sheiks denounced these vernacular Moors as deviant heretics, the latter group was responsible for re-shaping and galvanizing Ali’s Moorish theology into a more militant orientation as compared vis-à-vis to the more conservative interpretations of Moorish faith in Chicago. From the perspective of black power and black theology, Mohammed Bey’s jingo brand of Moorish Islam triumphed over Chicago’s national leaders’ by cogently mapping out a direct, dynamic co-relation between Moorish theology and black power, essentially serving as the embryonic proto-ideological forerunner of the eventual black religious nationalism demonstrated by the Nation of Islam (NOI) starting in the 1950s. Mohammed Bey transcended the Chicago Moors’ petty religious politics concerning the perplexing legitimacy of MSTA leadership and instead proactively reframed Ali’s ontological message of Asiatic Oriental Shrinehood into a powerful organ of religious protest against Kansas City’s structures of injustice by drawing on a revolutionary re-reading of the Moorish gospel and re-stylization of Noble Drew Ali as a prophet of protest. Hence, Bey’s Kansas City Moors should not be dismissed as an irrational, crackpot cult; but rather a genuine epistemological faith system thoughtfully fashioned to confront and Kansas City’s racist legal systems, educational institutions, police department, African-American community, and the War Department in the 1930s and 1940s, while transplanting them with the absolute sovereignty of Allah and Prophet Drew Ali’s theocracy.

Prophet Mohammed Bey was an African-American born in post-Civil War Mississippi who completed up to fourth-grade education. Paralleling others in the black urban Oriental religious market place between the 1920s and 1940s—an era when black and white America was “overrun by Messiahs”—the itinerant Bey adroitly re-invented his identity and faith. It seems likely that Bey began peddling Eastern Oriental wisdom from 1929 as Professor Mohammed Bey Toussant, an Arab donning a “crimson fez and vibrant Arabian whiskers” who studied the Occult in Calcutta, touring the world with a case crammed full of an “assortment of grains of paradise, herbs of magic
powder, oils from the deepest and darkest Africa.” In 1931, Bey underwent yet another metamorphosis after being arrested in Aug 1929 in Phoenix, Arizona, on charges of illegally peddling love potions and Hindu herbs, and again in April 1931 in San Francisco, California, as a crystal-gazing conman.

Sometime in 1931, Mohammed Bey converted to the MSTA under the leadership of Kirkman Bey, highlighting the highly diffusive cross-fertilization of religious ideas and followers between the black Eastern Orientalist world and the MSTA. To buttress Kirkman Bey’s evangelical efforts, Mohammed Bey traveled to Mississippi and other Southern states, but failed to form a MSTA temple. In 1934, Bey was incarcerated for four months in Cairo, Illinois, for teaching Islamism. Upon his release in October 1934, Mohammed Bey established Kansas City’s first MSTA temple at 1816 N Fifth Street under the aegis of Kirkman Bey’s banner. To commemorate their success, the Kansas MSTA advertised their services on The Plaindealer newspaper, urging readers to partake in meetings featuring solo and duet performances.

By 1935, Bey had seceded from Chicago’s headquarters (without informing his followers) and cultivated his distinctive brand of Moorish faith, restyled himself as Father Prophet Ali Mohammed Bey. For the next decade, Bey and his wife, Mother Rosa Woods Bey (1901–1975), attracted between 500 and 3000 devout converts who venerated Bey as “Jesus.” While his followers were largely from Kansas City, Kansas and Missouri, news of Prophet Bey’s charismatic leadership reached as far as South Bend, Indiana, when an inquisitive African-American wrote to the Pittsburgh Courier in 1936 requesting Bey’s address. To distinguish his followers from orthodox Moorish doctrines preached in Chicago, Bey revised several tenets of Moorish faith, prompting academics to take this as evidence of Moorish center-periphery tensions, while Chicago Sheiks impugned such acts as impermissible blasphemous manipulation. Nevertheless, from the macro-black-American Islamic perspective, such theological revisionism divulges the underlying protean, elastic quality of Moorish beliefs to be localized and adapted into new environs by exegetes

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who selectively imported and doctrinally negotiated between different and conflicting Moorish schools of thought before selectively weaving them into their own religious corpus.

First, Bey deified himself as “Father Prophet,” legally declaring it his occupation in the Kansas City Street Directories and US Federal Census rather than conventional designations like Grand Sheik and Mufti.14 Mohammed Bey’s self-divination transgressed legal injunctions filed by Kirkman Bey in 1934 to curb the mushrooming numbers of Moorish Prophets and Reincarnated Drew Alis. Because Kirkman Bey’s legal pursuit mainly targeted Chicago-based Prophets—including William Gravitt El, John Givens El and Edward Mealy El—Mohammed Bey escaped legal indictment ironically due to the limited reach, influence and threat from the periphery.15

Second, Mohammed Bey visually presented his group as a puritanical, disciplined cadre of Moors. He prohibited his male members from shaving, leaving them heavily bearded and mustached, while insisting that female neophytes’ dresses cascade down to their ankles, preserving conservative Victorian standards of womanhood. Also, he insisted his congregation don red fezzes at all times, unlike mainstream Moorish groups who only donned religious insignia during ceremonies.

Mohammed Bey’s reformation of the Moorish religious-body complex through disciplining their Moslemized black bodies, engendered intra-Moorish tensions and sometimes violated Kansas state laws. Sister Grand Governess R. Jones Bey of Newark, New Jersey, a defender of MSTA purity, castigated bearded Moors in the 1935 Moorish Guide, reminding her audience that “our Prophet did not wear beards on his face; he was a very neat and intelligent man. Those who have strayed away from our Prophet had better fall in line.”16 To circumvent theological accusations, Mohammed Bey iconoclastically transmogrified the cover of the Circle Seven Koran by caricaturizing Drew Ali wearing a long beard. The dogmatic insistence on fezzes transgressed state courts’ dress codes, such as when a follower, Lonnie Bey, of 2812 North Fifth Street, Kansas City, Kansas, was jailed in July 1938 for refusing to remove his fez in the North Side Court on a speeding violation.17

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14Bey, Mohammed, Prophet. 604 Miami Avenue, 1937 Kansas City Directory, p. 50.
Public knowledge of Mohammed Bey first surfaced in December 1935 when he controversially acted as attorney for Phillip Jetter El, a follower charged for prohibiting five children from attending public school. In the subsequent media coverage in *The Plaindealer* that amplified the visibility of his movement, Bey dealt with authorities based on a curious blend of prophetic protest and pragmatic accommodation. As the defendants appeared in the city court and Judge Harvey J. Emerson read out the charges, supporting Moors howled vociferously when Emerson refused to address the Jetters by their religious surnames. The Jetter Els defended their actions based on their Moorish religious principles, asserting, “Our Koran does not permit any other religion. The schools of Kansas City, Kansas teach Christianity and Mohammed won’t stand for that, Your Honor.” Emerson dismissed the Els’ claims, declaring they better get a lawyer, but the Els requested “I just want Prophet Mohammed Bey!”

After some delay, Mohammed Bey arrived in court with twenty-five “red capped [followers in] red cheese cloth headdress” before pontificating his divine origins from 1600 years ago. He clearly utilized the legal stage as a pulpit to expound the grandeur of his Prophethood and the superiority of Moorish, liberating theology in Kansas City, but the unimpressed Judge interjected, “you haven’t said anything yet that will save this couple from jail. You’d better advise the Jetters to send their children to school or they are going to jail.” Prophet Bey pragmatically deferred to prevent his members’ apprehension, asserting “I want my people to obey the laws of the land.” Finally, in a dramatic gesture of patriotism, Bey removed a small encased American flag from his pocket and pinned it on his lapel. The case seemingly ended amicably with Judge Emerson advising the Jetter Els to place their children in school by a deadline of December 20, 1935.

However, this compromise proved short-lived, as ten months later in 1936 another of Bey’s followers was arraigned for refusing to send four children to attend public school in Leeds, Missouri. Prophet Mohammed Bey again stood as a witness for the defendants, beseeching the judge that their boycott fell within their religious rights as Moors, but his efforts proved futile. Fifty of Mohammed Bey’s followers rioted in protest against Judge Ray G. Cowan’s decision, prompting the sheriff deputies to hustle them out.

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19 Ibid.
20 Ibid.
In the aftermath of Father Prophet Mohammed Bey’s controversial court appearances, an entire anti-cult complex comprising local journalists, clinical psychiatrists, judges, and politicians churned out prefabricated narratives of embarrassing revelations, scoffing at Bey’s religious authenticity and psychological rationality. Paradoxically, this unveiled more about the anti-cult activists’ racist stereotypes and fears. Local Kansas City journalists from *The Plaindealer* and *Joplin Globe*, dented Bey’s religious legitimacy by caricaturing him as a self-styled cult leader who propagated un-Christian, quirky religious idiosyncrasies and sardonically remarked that, “he didn’t say why he had been sent here [by Allah] and nobody asked.” The journalistic demonization of Mohammed Bey is lucidly illustrated in the following passage from a *Plaindealer* article:

The self-styled Prophet is reported to have 3000 or more followers cloaked under pseudo-Mohammedanism to escape racial identity as Negroes. He brings Allah’s purported message to his followers, exhorting them to claim their rightful heritage as Asians, renounce the name “Negro” and evacuate the Christian churches. His chief stock in trade is his claim he can change Negroes into Moors by identifying them with his outfit. His followers are seen on the streets with red rags on their heads, commonly called sacred fezzes. Many of the men wear beards in the manner of the old Hebrews, indicating the mixed character of the cult. . . . Complaints from time to time have been made that members of the cult have indicated a tendency to run over the rights of other citizens because the Prophet told them that no law could harm them.

The media grossly misrepresented the community’s doctrines as a crackpot faith, as opposed to a legitimate religious edifice accruing Moorish merit. By re-casting the group as a religious anomaly, this increasingly reinforced the resistance against Kansan Moorish epistemological *weltanschauung*, punishing “deviant” Moorish-Americans back into docile bodies.

Psychiatrists clinically associated Moorish deviance with mental insanity, as indicated in 1933 when Dr. S. F. Gilchrist and Dr. Charles Burr categorized another vernacular Moorish Prophet—Sheik Joshua Traylor Bey (1880–1938) who, like Mohammed Bey, legally defended Moorish followers for not sending their child to public school in Philadelphia—as a “paranoid mystic type (suffering) mental aberrations.”

Even defenders of black reputability hoped to curb Moorish fanaticism during a 1934 International Convention of the Negro Peoples of the World,

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22 Ibid.
when a delegate from Gary, Indiana, castigated the growing phenomenon of Negroes growing beards, refusing to cut their hair, changing their Christian names to “Mohammed Ali or Mohammed Bey or some peculiar Moorish or Mohammedan religious mystical name” as detrimental to the black image in white American minds. As a consequence of Kansas City’s “leading citizens” lobbying Mayor Don McComb to outlaw Mohammed Bey’s group, and an investigation by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Prophet Bey became a fugitive and went into hiding in 1938.

Though stemming from different causes, the demonization of Mohammed Bey was rooted in a common reluctance to acknowledge un-Christian religious experimentation as a genuine religious endeavour or intellectual demonstration of spirituality, ignoring the fact that Mohammed Bey’s actions were grounded on firm Moorish religious theology, based on his enactment of Noble Drew Ali’s religious edict in Act Five of the *Questionnaire and Additional Laws for Moorish Americans*, mandating that Moorish adherents’ youth attend Moorish School. Clearly, Mohammed Bey’s religious acts should not have been persecuted but protected by the American constitutional right to religious freedom.

From 1936, Mohammed Bey reacted belligerently to the bigoted courts’ dismissal of their religious rights, radically shifting the Kansas Moors’ orientation from compromise to unflinching confrontation against civic, state, and national status quo, and in the process becoming symbiotically stereotyped with violence. On March 18, 1936, Father Prophet Bey’s religo-militant orientation was involved in a shootout over a trespassing incident on his temple’s sacred grounds. Henry Johnson, an African-American neighbour, objected to a religious gathering, and confronted Bey who “first bowed politely before his neighbour, repeated several passages from the Koran and the Bible and said ‘Allah be praised and you shut your mouth!’ The verbal epithets escalated into a shootout in which both fired off bullets at close range, resulting in Johnson being injured in both legs and Bey arrested.

When Mohammed Bey was interviewed by police officials, hundreds of disciples swarmed the district police station, begging the commanding officer to release “Jesus.” Bey justified his actions on the basis of self-defence,

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26 Ibid.
28 Mohammed Bey Held for Shooting: Negro Known as ‘Jesus’ to Followers,” *Daily Capital News*, Mar 18, 1936, p. 6
29 Ibid.
“I just did my best to kill that man. I figured it would be easier to kill him than to have him kill me and my wife.”

But any sense of sympathy dissipated when Mohammed Bey grandiosely proclaimed metaphysical claims to cosmological pantheons of Moorish divinity. Such episodes, in which he miraculously survived a shootout, amplified his prophetic stature amongst his community and sympathizers who fearlessly defended them from authorities and enemies trampling their religious rights. One such supporter included Harrison Green El, who left home at fourteen years to find employment before serving in the US Army as a Quartermaster in Shreveport and Los Angeles, California, during World War I, from 1917 to 1918. After his discharge, economic troubles prompted a slide towards criminality, being booked in 1926 in Kansas City, 1927 in Shreveport, 1933 in Mangum, Oklahoma, and 1936 in Leeds, Missouri, for a multiplicity of charges that included “con man,” “fraud” and “theft.” While working as a truck driver in 1935, he chanced upon Mohammed Bey’s MSTA gospel. His entire family, consisting of Mary Bey (mother), Nellie Harrison El (wife), and three brothers, John Harrison El, Joe Harris El and Matthew El, embraced the new faith.

The streak of violence led to followers such as Harrison Green El being arrested for assault in the vicinity of Bey’s temple on February 19, 1937.

The wispily bearded Green El attended a Temple Meeting at 2404 North 5th Street, Kansas City and witnessed James Buford, of 2419 North 4th Street, consuming alcohol and urinating in front of the temple premises. Outraged, Green El insisted Buford leave the holy premises, but the latter instead mocked Bey’s red fez. Green El, egged on by Prophet Bey and other Moors, threw a punch above Buford’s eye, cutting open a slight laceration. Kansas City Police Officer Frank Parker witnessed the melee, exhorting Green El to surrender, but the commotion attracted other Moors who demanded the release of their brother. Fearing for his safety, Parker relented, but returned with reinforcements who broke into Prophet Bey’s temple. After police officers encountered difficulty identifying Green El, as “there was much similarity because of the long beards,” they apprehended him for physical assault and displaying a pistol.

30Ibid.

31Ibid.

32Prisoner’s Interview, Kansas State Penitentiary, Lansing, Kansas, Harrison Green El Prison Files (HGEPF).


34Prisoner’s Interview, Kansas State Penitentiary, Lansing, Kansas, Harrison Green El Prison Files.

35“Mohammed Bey Follower Remains in Jail.”
Green El was fined $200 and given a jail sentence with a bond set at $2,500. Enraged at being confined in Wyandotte County Jail, Green El created a ruckus, screaming that all police officers would drop dead in 48 hours unless he walk free. In spite of his curse, nobody died, and his legal case took a turn for the worse after he was charged with the more serious crime of assault with murderous intent. Hence, on June 15, 1937, Green El was tried and sentenced to Kansas State Penitentiary for a minimum of one and a maximum of five years on a guilty verdict of “wounding and inflicting great bodily harm upon James Buford, under such circumstances that had death resulted, the defendant would have been guilty of manslaughter.”

This was because Arthur J. Stanley Jr., County Attorney of Wyandotte, District Court Division Three favoured Buford’s narrative, in which he innocently stood near the temple waiting for a friend before the unprovoked Green El assaulted him.

The outcome of Green El’s court trial was unfair, since the county judges were persecuting him for perceived cultish deviance, rather than reviewing the incident in a neutral manner. A summary report from Judge Harvey Emerson pigeonholed Green El as naïve and devoid of true spirituality, rationalizing the incident as having “naturally” stemmed from the typically violent incidents involving Prophet Mohammed Bey’s cult:

this defendant is and has been for past two years a member of a Negro religious cult who styles himself Mohammed Bey The Conqueror, and who claims to

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37List of Prisoners Received June 1937, p. 431, Harrison Green El Prison Files; The State of Kansas (Plaintiff) vs Harrison El Green (Defendant), No: 13477-Cr (HGEPF).

38Prisoner’s Interview (HGEPF).
be “Jesus Of Nazareth Incarnate”. . . . The members of this cult are absolute believers in the divinity of their leaders and the charge which resulted in the conviction of this defendant originated in the practise of the members of the cult resenting the fact that other Negroes loitered around their meeting place. This defendant is a fanatical believer in all of the teachings of the Prophet, and it is probably true that this fanatical belief led to the crime for which he was prosecuted.39

Thus, Prophet Bey’s demand that Green El be tried under religious laws of Allah revealed a vast chasm between the Moors’ preferred religious justice mechanism and the Kansas State Court’s legal system. Furthermore, the verdict surprised the Moorish devotees who “had been taught that their faith was beyond the reach of the law. . . . [I]t was impossible for the long hands of the law to reach out and jail one of their flock.”40 To further rub salt into his wounds, Judge Emerson denied Green El his religious identity as a Moorish-American when passing the sentence by reminding the latter that “he was a NEGRO, and would remain a Negro.”41

Notwithstanding the verdict, the court procedures featured a messy negotiation between the amorphous boundaries of Kansan court etiquette and Moorish theological orthopraxy.42 Bey’s first hearing was declared a mistrial when the defendant left the courtroom as the testimony was being presented, preferring to exit the courtroom rather than remove his fez.43 During the second trial, Bey’s supportive followers again turned up, but were ordered by Judge Emerson to remove their “red hats.” Faced with a dilemma between court ethics and religious obligations, they chose the latter, leaving the courtroom still wearing their fezzes. To prevent a reoccurrence of the first trial, a special concession was granted to Green El, allowing him to don his red fez since its removal was tantamount to a “violation of the laws of the creator of the universe.”44

While authorities judged that his cultish beliefs contributed to his arraignment, Green El did not allow incarceration to erode his faith, and conversely transplanted his Moorish beliefs into the Kansas State Penitentiaty.

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39 Judge Harvey J. Emerson, Information for Prison Board Required by G.S. 62-1523 (HGEPF).
40 Ibid.
41 “Mohammed Bey’s Follower Draws 5 Years: Judge Gives Green a Good Talk; Tells Him He is a Negro,” The Plaindealer, Jun 18, 1937, pp. 1, 5.
42 “Five Years in Prison for H. Green: Follower of Red Fez Cult Convicted of Assault Last Week,” The Call, Jun 18, 1937, p. 11.
43 “Prophet’s Law Fail to Save.”
44 Ibid.
As Kansas State Prisoner #5858, Green El actively maintained connections with the outside Moorish community, writing and receiving letters from fellow Kansas Moorish brethren including Prophet Mohammad Bey (to whom he wrote seven times between 1938 and 1939) and non-Moorish friends.\footnote{Letter from William R. Barker, Record Clerk, Kansas State Penitentiary to Richard P. Sprinkle, Attorney at Law, Sprinkle, Carter, Sprinkle and Larson Law Offices, Re: Harrison El Green KSP No: 5858, Oct 27 1961, Harrison Green El Prison Files; Letter from Clyde N. Wilson, Superintendent of Records and Paroles, Kansas State Penitentiary, Lansing, Kansas to Dwight Brantley, Special Agent in Charge, FBI, Dept. of Justice, Kansas City, Missouri, 04-22-1943 (HGEPF).} Though the contents of the letters were perused by prison authorities, it was significant in spiritually transcending the physical confines of the prison walls to maintain his Asiatic faith.

Despite the incarceration of Green El, Kansas Moors were undeterred by prosecution and got involved in series of religion-associated incidents of violence. On January 5, 1939, Isaiah Harrington Bey, sixty-six years old, living at 813 Everett Avenue, a Moorish elder and veteran of Spanish-American Civil War, was pummeled to death by Daniel Thompson with a claw hatchet, after menacingly demanding that Thompson embrace the Moorish faith while wielding a gun, “if you don’t join us and follow our god, I’ll kill you for we believe that it is the death or Mohammed.”\footnote{“Daniel Thomson Admits Murder of Isaiah Harrington Bey,” \textit{The Plaindealer}, Jun 23, 1939, p. 8; “Iziah Harrington Bey of Mohammed Cult, 66, Found Dead,” \textit{The Plaindealer}, Jan 13, 1939, pp. 4, 8.} Though Kansas City detectives apprehended Thompson within six months, charging him with first degree murder, the loss of an important leader sapped the movement.\footnote{“Seek Slayer of I. Harrington Bey, Mohammedan Cult Leader,” \textit{The Plaindealer}, Jan 27, 1939, p. 5.}

On October 12, 1939, Sheik Henry Ross Bey was gunned down and left lifeless at the bottom of a trash can at Fairfax Industrial District’s city dump by Wyandotte County officers Joseph Pollock and Stanley Laskowski.\footnote{“Mohammed Bey Follower Killed in Gun Struggle with Officers: County Officers Kill Cult ‘Sheik’ at City Dump,” \textit{The Plaindealer}, Oct 13, 1939, p. 1.} The unemployed Bey was collecting iron scraps to sell for food. But after a complaint lodged by Charles Pope, caretaker of the city dump, there was a confrontation during which authorities shot the Sheik for illegal picking and drawing a .38 caliber revolver from his knapsack.\footnote{“Struggle on City Dump Ends in Death for a Member of Red Fez Cult,” \textit{The Call}, Oct 13, 1939, p. 11. The other two Moors were unarmed.} Though the Moors protested against police brutality, arguing that Bey was shot down after surrendering, and the President of the local chapter of the NAACP, R. B. Brown
aligned with the Moorish cause, declaring that “the religious beliefs of the man are of less importance than that he was a Negro who might have been given the chance to live and speak in his own defense,” the county prosecutor brusquely blamed the loss of life on Bey’s resistance against a police officer.\footnote{50}

On November 27, 1942, Bey’s seventy-year-old follower, Sam Matthews, was arrested for fatally gunning down his fourteen-year-old son with .45 Colt right after beating his daughter.\footnote{51} The Plaindealer noted that apart from wicked parenting and intimidating public behavior, the accused indulged in “queer” religious behavior, including a polygamous marriage with four to five wives who bore him twenty-six children.

To compound problems further, from 1939 Prophet Bey’s movement disintegrated due to secessionism and a mass exodus of devotees. Following a Sister’s fortuitous discovery of another chartered Moorish temple in Atchison, Kansas that had links to Chicago, Illinois, she contacted Chicago headquarters, which vilified Mohammed Bey as a heretical Moorish \textit{kafir} (apostate) for siphoning financial contributions.\footnote{52} She spearheaded a purification campaign, convincing others to embrace Moorish orthodoxy by realigning with Kirkman Bey’s Temple #46, Satellite Temple #46 and Temple #47 instead. Many felt duped, paying $2.00 admission charges and a weekly tithe of $0.50. One divulged that they had parted with more than $800 in three years. In 1938, a follower was even prodded by Prophet Mohammed Bey to fund a $200 contribution for purchase of religious farmland in Mexico as a colony to relocate his followers: “Brother, I need two hundred dollars at once please send me the money soon. I have a place for you all, it is good for farming Land. I need this money to build House for you all.”\footnote{53} Deserters admitted they were “crazy” and should have been admitted to an asylum for believing Father Prophet Bey.\footnote{54}


\footnote{51}“Mohammed Bey’s Follower Jailed; Charged with Murdering Son,” \textit{The Plaindealer}, Dec 3, 1937, p.1.

\footnote{52}FBI File on Col. C. Kirkman Bey, Et al, MSTA, Inc., Character: IS-J, Selective Service Act, Sedition at Kansas City, for Period: Feb 1943, Mar 1, 1943.


\footnote{54}FBI File on Col. C. Kirkman Bey, Et al, MSTA, Inc., Character: IS-J, Selective Service Act, Sedition at Kansas City, for Period: Feb 1943, Mar 1, 1943.
By 1941, Prophet Bey was barely clinging on to less than fifty dedicated cadres who slammed the deserters as “sinners” for cutting off their hair and not wearing their fezzes properly.

In March 1941, Mohammed Bey passed away leaving religious leadership in the hands of his wife, Mother Prophet Rose Woods Mohammed Bey (b. 1901–1975). She stepped into the leadership vacuum as Mohammed Bey prophesied before his death that no one would succeed him. Mother Bey was similarly ostentatiously garlanded with divine religious designations as “Mother Prophet” and “Sister Jesus” by her followers. While Mohammed Bey’s rule was punctuated by confrontations with the judiciary, county police, community, and Kirkman Bey’s Chicago leadership, Mother Prophet Bey’s primary challenge was to theologically reconfigure Noble Drew Ali’s 1920s doctrines and re-position her Kansan Moors’ relationship vis-à-vis other Moorish communities, fellow Asiatics and America.

Exegetical revisionism was required owing to Moorish politicking (1929–1945) that bifurcated Moorish theology in complex multifarious directions, as well as rapidly developing international events. For example, the outbreak of World War II in 1939 and the bombing of Pearl Harbor in December 1941 indicated a need for Moorish theologians to re-read, re-interpret, and refurbish Noble Drew Ali’s 1920s doctrines to make sense of the new socio-politico environment for their congregations. By the 1930s, Noble Drew Ali’s doctrines, anchored in Oriental esoteric New Age wisdom to earn black respectability, were anachronistic and outdated. For example, in 1920s Chicago when Ali prepared the Circle Seven Koran, he incorporated the Japanese within “Chapter XLV: The Divine Origin of the Asiatic Nations” by racially categorizing the Japanese with “the Egyptians who were the Hamathites [sic] and of a direct descendant of Mizraim, the Arabians, the seed of Hagar, Japanese and Chinese.” But Ali could not have foreseen the permeating influence of Japan’s Black Dragon Society propaganda, which cajoled Negro organizations in the 1930s towards pro-Japanese proclivities in the event of a Japanese invasion of America. Also, there was a need to definitively decide on MSTA’s degree of patriotism towards America, since Noble Drew Ali’s attitude towards America oscillated from a brief flirtation with anti-American sedition in 1928 to overt gestures of American fealty.

55Ibid.
56Noble Drew Ali, Circle Seven Koran (Chicago, n.d).
by 1929. Confronted with the dominant narrative of Japanese agent provocateurs’ 1930s imagined pan-Asian international order spearheaded by Japanese hegemony concurrent with American collapse, Moorish-American theologians like Mother Bey could no longer depend on Noble Drew Ali’s outdated 1920s matrix of a Moorish double consciousness of constitutional adherence to America and a mytho-genealogical Asiatic brotherhood embrace with the Japanese.

From her pulpit at 604 Miami Avenue in 1941, Mother Bey internationalized her movement by symbiotically synthesizing and intertwining Moorish Science theology with Japanese-Asiatic subversion motifs. Hence, she preached Kansas City Moorish political activism in World War II based on a politicized, subversive reframing of Drew Ali’s imagined biological-racial Asiatic heritage. Additionally, Mother Bey re-evaluated the dialectic relationship of her local religious group with orthodox national Moorish organisations. In contrast to Mohammed Bey’s aloofness from Chicago, she leveraged Kirkman Bey’s publication, the Moorish Voice, for theological exegesis and direction while remaining organisationally independent from Chicago.

In particular, Sister Bey was drawn to the internationalist, pro-Japanese arguments put forth by Sister Folsom Bey, a female writer for the Moorish Voice and firm advocate of Moorish-Science partnership. Inspired by Folsom Bey’s radicalism, Mother Prophet Bey expounded on the genealogical-racial compatibility between Kansas Moors and the Japanese Army, “The Japanese are the Eastern Hamitites [sic]. We [Moorish Americans] are the Western.” On the basis of this supposed biological link, Moorish-Americans were subtly nudged toward an anti-American, pro-Japanese stand as masters of their own glorious destiny alongside Japan, rather than remaining fatalistically passive awaiting Allah to reverse the status quo. “This is a new era of time now, one in which Moorish-Americans must take a leading part. Our children must measure head and shoulder with the children of other leading Asiatic races.” Bey delineated parallels between Japan’s modernisation and military rise vis-à-vis Western nations with the Moorish-Americans’ own racial upliftment vis-à-vis white America as a prophetic rationale to justify rapprochement with the Japanese war effort in World War II. “It is significant that many years ago when Japan won freedom from mental slavery, we gained physical freedom, and when Japan won her first battle over the Europeans, we won our first mental battle, and gained the right to become a National through our Prophet Noble Drew Ali. Now Japan has reached the position where she can hold her

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59Sister Folsom Bey, “We Have the Rights,” Moorish Voice 2 (Aug 1941).
own with all European nations, say and do what she pleases, our people are aroused to the need of sticking together.”

Yet within this Moorish-Japanese nexus, Japan was superiorly positioned above other inferior Asiatics (including Moors), relegating the latter to a subordinate position within the Asiatic hierarchical order of races. This was explained using the apocryphal astrological relationship of a paternalistic Eastern Asiatic power (Japan) tutoring the Western Asiatics (Moorish-Americans). “The sun rises in the East and casts its warm nourishing rays towards the West. . . . Always since the beginning of civilization, the East has taught the West its learning.”

Though Folsom Bey’s article was rooted in Kirkman Bey’s Chicago headquarters, it was Mother Bey who implemented the magazine’s pro-Asiatic rhetoric into reality. Fealty to Prophet Bey’s indigenized brand of Moorish Islam spelled an explicit disassociation with America’s foreign policy in World War II, which translated into Kansas Moors’ reluctance toward Selective Service registration and military induction. This starkly illustrated the unique relationship between Moorish center and periphery, where the latter appropriated and actualized pan-Asiatic jingoist theology from the center vis-à-vis the Moorish center that made an abrupt about-face, settling for conservatism.

However, the Kansas Moors’ pan-Asiatic stance engendered a wave of arrests in 1942. Mother Rose Bey’s politicized matriarchal leadership first came onto the radar of the Kansas City authorities by fortuitous accident. On January 12, 1942, an inebriated Kansas Moor was arrested by the Missouri Police Department on a charge of drunkenness and careless driving. While booking the offender, the police officer realized the Moor did not possess a Selective Service Registration Card. Intriguingly, the Moor dismissed any need to register with his local draft board owing to his religious beliefs. As a result, the Moor was booked by the Federal Grand Jury at Kansas City and prosecuted for violating the 1940 Selective Service Act. To escape the more serious charge of sedition, the Moor pledged his desire to immediately register and was thus lightly let off the hook and placed on probation for two years.

Despite the compromise, the authorities’ fears regarding the Moorish Science Temple of America’s position towards Japan and the United States did not dissipate, but conversely heightened considerably between January and June 1942 with reports of seditious Moorish activities. On April 8, 1942, FBI Agent A. H. Crowl of Springfield, Illinois, identified and brought to light connections between the MSTA and The Pacific Movement of the Eastern World, an overtly subversive group. In the same month, two Moorish leaders in the South, Sheik Jim Barnes El and Ruben Payne El, were arrested for

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60Ibid.
attempting to persuade Southern African-Americans in Yazoo, Humphrey, Belzoni, and Milestone, Mississippi, not to register for Selective Service, hence violating Chapter 178 of Mississippi Sedition Laws. By May 16, 1942, George W. Hinman Jr., Lt. Colonel, G.S.C., Executive Officer, G2 confirmed that the MSTA championed a policy of “non-resistance to the Japanese among the colored people.” It was at this stage that the FBI Chicago Office began thoroughly investigating the MSTA, though perplexed FBI agents failed to track the movement’s origins, nor could they fathom the fissiparous Moorish mutations into core-periphery after 1929. Yet they illogically concluded the group possessed seditious tendencies in a report on MSTA on June 12, 1942. “Noble Drew Ali reported to be dead. Subject organisation was set up in November 1926 . . . unable to draw line of distinction between numerous organisations active in this city. . . . [I]t is very difficult to make a distinction as to the various groups inasmuch as they all seem to have the same outlook on the present conflict and they advocate a Japanese victory.”

With looming belief in MSTA sedition, Kansas City FBI agents visited Mother Mary Bey’s Temple on June 16, 1942, discovering and interviewing members who evaded Selective Service. The FBI Agents warned the congregation of their duty and obligation as American citizens to register with their Local Draft Boards, lest they be prosecuted. After a month, the Kansas Moors still held their ground, prompting Dwight Brantley, SAC Kansas City and Brigadier General M. R. McLean, Director of Selective Service at Topeka, Kansas, to lay the groundwork for prosecuting “non-registrant delinquents” while US Assistant Attorney Lester Luther filed a complaint with the US Commissioner at Kansas City, Kansas, to secure a warrant for taking the recalcitrant Kansas Moors into custody.

So on July 24, 1942, shortly after 6pm, FBI agents, Sheriff Zimmer and the Deputy US Marshal raided the Temple at 604 Miami Avenue in the Armsdale District at 3rd and Richmond, forcing entry using tear gas and riot guns. The Kansas City Kansan newspaper described Mother Bey’s unit

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62 Letter from George W. Hinman, Jr., Lt. Colonel, Executive Officer, G2, to Assistant Chief of Staff, Subject: Moorish Temple, Chicago, Illinois, May 16, 1942.
65 Ibid.
as cosmologically transformed into an esoteric-exotic temple whose “front of the white cottage bearing this painted insignia: ‘Allah, Unity and Islam’ . . . the interior of the house was decorated with red and green crepe paper, covered particularly over lathes on which were pictures of members of the cult. Electric light bulbs in the house were green and red in keeping with the cult’s colors. Mrs Rosie Bey’s bed was covered with a brilliant green silk spread with a 6-pointed red cult-star on it and the crescent Islam moon half encircling a star embroidered on the part covering the left pillow on the bed.”

The dragnet caught the Moors, who had just finished celebrating a religious festival, totally off guard. Mother Rosie Bey, who was draped in a white satin robe, was quickly shielded by crowd of protective Moors. A male Moor was still showering in the rear of the house when discovered and ordered to end his bath and dress in order to be taken into custody. After a thorough search of the house yielded two pistols, several knives, and religious literature, the officers proceeded to 730 Montana Avenue, 8th and Haskell, to arrest another follower waiting for a bus. A total of fourteen were hauled in amidst heavy police reinforcements.

While Mother Bey was questioned concerning her movement’s subversive beliefs, the Moorish matriarch escaped incarceration owing to her pragmatism during interviews. FBI agents interviewing Mother Bey found it an incoherent cumbersome affair as she was “exceedingly difficult to interview” due to “the fact she appears to be a religious fanatic.” Yet, she was ideologically flexible in furnishing politically correct answers. She denied ever counselling her male followers to evade the Selective Service Law, which was true since such beliefs were actually “textually diffused” from Kirkman Bey’s Moorish Temple, rather than originating from her own. Therefore, US Attorney West conceded that “successful prosecution against Bey could not be maintained . . . [because] the investigations of this case did not disclose that the Moorish Science Temple, located at Kansas City was promoted by or influenced by any Japanese representative.” FBI officials concluded, “no evidence was developed that Bey consulted members of her organization to evade prosecutions of the Selective Service Act.” The prosecution was dismissed when the United States Attorney at Kansas City declined prosecution upon

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the failure to prove Bey’s implication in the alleged violation of the Selective Service Act.⁷⁰

Throughout the 1942 legal imbroglio, the Plaindealer now sensationaly
demonized the “red-capped Negro Mohammedan” organization not only as a violent cult but also as a seditious, un-American faith; largely because such biased media reporting was ignorant of the Kansas Moors’ political consciousness as symbiotically rooted in essentially religious beliefs.⁷¹ Throughout their incarceration in Wyandotte County Jail and Kansas City Jail, the Kansas City Moors remained defiantly uncooperative. When interrogated about their ages, several replied that they were either eighteen or eighty-eight years of age, placing them outside of the Selective Service criterion, but FBI agents explained away these claims as desperate sleights of hand. Hence, Kansas City Police described them as “religious fanatics and apparently somewhat mentally unbalanced . . . either assume fictitious names or add to their own names in such manner as to make them meaningless and sound somewhat Arabic,” asserting instead that they were southern Negro immigrants from Louisiana, Mississippi, or Texas.⁷² Frank Moore Bey asserted that the draft registration card was religiously bigoted since “there was no space on the blank for a Moslem to indicate his race or faith” as Asiatics.⁷³

The next day, on 25 July 1942, twelve of the Moors (Will Jackson El, 53; Otha McGee Bey, 43; Paul Jackson El, 42; Roy Lee Boyd Bey, 20; Joseph Wilkerson El, 51; W. Boyd Bey Sr, 39; John Hunter El, 47; James Bass El, 53; Lenzie David Bey, 31; Robert F. Donahue Bey, 55; Frank Moore Bey, 62; W. Boyd Bey Jr., 19) were arraigned before the United States Commissioner P. W. Croker and charged with violation of the Selective Service Registration Law.⁷⁴ All those cited admitted they did not register because they believed that religious persons were excused from registration. They explained that as “Asiatic Moslems” rather than Americans, they possessed no interest in what they perceived as a Euro-centric conflict, hence dismissing the value of registering or participating in America’s war effort.⁷⁵ Each of the defendants’ bond was fixed at $10,000 and set for a federal grand jury in Wichita,

⁷¹“FBI Nab Red Caps.”
⁷³“Arraign 14 Cultists in Draft Case.”
⁷⁴Memo from S. Culbertson.
The case of the thirteenth Moor, Howard Heard El, age sixty-seven, was delayed pending investigation after a debate over the accused’s true age. The fourteenth Kansan Moor, John Ernest El, was discharged after the Commissioner deemed the seventy-year-old Moor too old to register. The Commissioner reminded Ernest El that “you are discharged not because you are a Moor or a Moslem or anything else, but you are just too old,” de-emphasizing his religious beliefs or racial identity.

On August 1942, Wendell Berg, Assistant US Attorney-General instructed Honorable George H. West, US Attorney at Topeka, Kansas, Assistant US Attorney-General to release six (Will Jackson El; Joseph Wilkerson El, John Hunter El, James Bass El, Robert F. Donahue Bey, and Frank Moore Bey) of the twelve arraigned Moors as they were over forty-five years of age. Instead, the six were to be registered under the 4th Registration (for Americans between forty-five to sixty-five years) and released from federal custody. Despite the opportunity of a reprieve, they rejected the authorities’ offer of an olive branch, insisting that registration transgressed their religious convictions. Hence, US Attorney West deployed Kansas City FBI agents to Wyandotte County jail to cajole the Moors to register, but his persuasion fell on deaf ears once more. To circumvent the impasse between orders to register and the Moors’ persistence, Wyandotte prison authorities registered the Moors “on their behalf,” after drawing the required information from their jail records. While the Moors did not pass up the opportunity to walk free, they symbolically maintained their religious tenets by refusing to collect their Selective Service Cards when walking out, as a defiant-yet-powerful gesture of their religious determination.

In November 1942, the remaining seven (Winfred Boyd Bey Jr., Winifred Boyd Bey Sr., Roy Lee Boyd Bey, Otha McGee Bey, Paul Jackson El, Lenzie David Bey, and John Hunter El), were indicted by a Federal Grand Jury and sentenced by Federal Judge Richard J. Hopkins to four-year terms and instructed to pay a fine of $1000 at a US District Court. Their fates were effectively sealed on November 5, 1942, after George Johnson Bey (the son of prominent MSTA Reincarnationist Leader Ira Sheik Johnson Bey) voluntarily gave a statement to the FBI detailing the links between the MSTA and the Pacific Movement (led by his half-aunt, Madam Mittie Lena), intricately woven together by Ashima Takis, an agent provocateur who instructed (i) all members not to join American military forces in the future war between USA and Japan that would take place in 1944, (ii) to produce a “colored revolution”

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76Memo from RH Cunningham to Mr. Ladd, Aug 6, 1942.
(“We want you to have enough members by then to overthrow the government”) while most white Americans were away in foreign lands, in exchange for (iii) a better future in the aftermath of prophesied Japanese military victory.\footnote{78}{FBI Report on Peace Movement to Ethiopia, aka Ethiopian Peace Movement; Mittie Maud Lena Gordon, with aliases on IS-J, Sedition on Nov 13, 1942 for period Nov 6, 1942 made at Springfield, Illinois, pp. 1–6; FBI Files on Pacific Movement of the East 1039474–000-100-HQ-124410, pp. 118–123.}

Mother Bey’s politicized re-interpretation of Ali’s mytho-genealogical and eschatological doctrines was significant on three levels. First, her theological revisionism emphasized the fluid and syncretic ideological interaction between her local Kansas Moorish Temple, the national Chicago Moorish Science Temple and Japanese agent provocateurs. Second, her alignment with the Japanese-Asiatic bloc was philosophically nuanced by transforming Moorish-Americans into empowered black-Asiatic Orientals, running against the grain of Edward Said’s theory of the Oriental East as a passive object of Western domination. Third, her Kansan Moors’ unflinching anti-American stance marked a bold uncompromising approach as compared to other Moorish-American groups who softened their rhetoric following harassment by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).

While larger Moorish groups flirted with the Japan’s heady politico-religious pan-Asiatic message, these larger Moorish communities backed off from their original rhetoric once confronted with FBI interrogations and threats of arrests in 1942. From 1934 to 1942, Kirkman Bey’s satellite Temples gravitated towards the symbiotic draping of a Japanese pan-Asiatic blueprint over Drew Ali’s Asiatic Moslem core. For four years from 1936 to 1940, Grand Sheik Tamad Frederick Turner El’s Hartford Temple hosted representatives from the Japanese Chamber of Commerce to address their congregation on the history and culture of Japan, and the future outlook of the Asiatic throughout the world based on Japan’s program for the establishment of a new order in Asia.\footnote{79}{FBI Report lodged at NY City on Apr 8, 1940 for Period Mar 1940, Title: MSTA, Character of Case: Subversive Activities, pp. 1–2.} In 1941, Robert Washington El instructed African-Americans in Mound City, Illinois, to enrol in the MSTA, which fought for the betterment of the colored race through supporting the Japanese in WWII—re-configured as a color war between the European and Asiatic race in which the Japanese Army would truck all Moorish-Americans into a safe zone and bring them back at the end when MSTA members “would be made masters instead of servants as they had always been in the past.”\footnote{80}{FBI Report at Springfield, Jan 28, 1942, for period Dec 1941, Jan 1942, The MSTA, Robert Washington-Organizer, Character of Case, Internal Security, pp. 1–2.; FBI Report}
Hope, Bartholomew County, Indiana, between 1941 and 1942, Sheik Ruben Frazier Bey, a rural farmer who adorned his living room with a tapestry embroidered with a Black Dragon and Japanese scripture, transformed his home into a safety zone for MSTA members where “you better come out there and stay because when the Japanese start bombing the United States, we will run up our flag and they will know we are their friends and won’t bomb us [for those] who knew the symbols of the church.”

The most politically seditious of Kirkman Bey’s Moors was in Flint, Michigan, where Major Satohata Takahashi, the chief Japanese agent provocateur in black America, addressed Grand Sheik James Nelson Bey’s Flint Moors in 1934 because the Flint Moors had been “looking for the prophet (Drew Ali) to return and we thought that the Jap (sic) was the prophet.” Instead, Takahashi urged Moors to align with the Japanese Army. “I came here to organize the colored people. Flint is the hardest place I struck. I have people all over the US organized, I [even] have them in the South, if you people don’t organize, it is going to be too bad for you because I am leaving for Washington and then I am going home. Our first stop is in India, then when we leave India, we are coming to America. You are the same people that we are and if you are not organized together, you will have to suffer with the rest of them.”

Though Takahashi was eventually deported by US authorities, Sheik Nelson Bey escalated pro-Japanese proclivities, keeping a picture of General Tojo in his house and sharing newspaper clippings of Japanese naval victories in the Temple. Sheik Tom-Rhodes Bey, another Flint Sheik, insisted on a strategic alliance with the Japanese for (i) pragmatic survival when “the skies were going to be dark with airplanes; that Japan was going to strike from the north, and come south to America; The best thing for you folks to do . . . is put up all something to eat you possibly can until the ships come from Egypt. And when they [Japan] arrive, they will have food for everybody, and this stuff will be come in front of the temple and it will be divided out to each one his share”; (ii) and to accrue socio-economic benefits from Japanese benevolence. “Japan had 52 nations behind him and we will be protected by the Japanese. When we became strong enough that we could take over everything in this country, we could even go down town to buy houses and live . . . the Japs

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82 Ibid
83 FBI Files MSTA Part 27 (Exhibit No. 3), and MSTA Part 26, pp. 28–30.
would take over the plants here in Michigan and give them [to] the Moorish Science Temple and that everybody would have to work for us.”

Kirkman Bey’s group reversed its pro-Japanese proclivities in a knee-jerk manner on November 1942 when FBI Officials, investigators from the US Air Force, and Detectives from Michigan State Police, questioned Kirkman Bey. More than twenty Flint Moors and other informants were questioned on the exact nature of their relationship with the Japanese, and threatened with incarceration. In the same month, Kirkman Bey’s publication, the *Moorish Voice*, presented a clear paradigm shift from earlier pro-Japanese articles to patriotically announcing that Kansas MSTA #46 possessed members in training camp, such as Brother Charles Figuous El. By February 1943, *Moorish Voice*, presented articles highlighting double-barrelled compatibility between Moorish members’ religious consciousness and their Americanness by featuring Moors currently in the US Military, including Private-Brother Bonney Jones Bey (from Philadelphia MSTA Temple, who served in the US Army at Camp Pickett, Blackstone, Virginia and attended MSTA events on weekends) and Brother R. Arlington El (MSTA Temple #25 Detroit, Michigan and US Army Member stationed at Camp Stewart, Georgia). In a section called “Announcements,” the Grand Mufti and National Chairman Brother M. Fuller Bey also solicited information from members ostensibly to highlight their contributions to the US Army in future editions: “You must send in the name of all the members drafted into the military Services of the United States of America to your National Chairman. This information should be filed in our National Records at once, also any enlisted person to any branch of the Military Service. State Ranks, where located, serial and order number, when inducted, USA or Foreign Land, at this date.”

The organizational makeover was complete by 1949, when Kirkman Bey characterized his family as the embodiment of Moorish-American patriotism by publishing heroic Moorish contributions to the US military campaigns in the popular African-American newspaper *The Chicago Defender*: “Many of the male members are veterans of both World Wars. J. Mc Gintis, El and Sultan Kirkman saw action with the famed 92nd Division in France during World War I. Kirkman was wounded by bomb fragments in the bloody Argonne forest battle. He has two sons in the navy. E. Johnson El was stationed in Casa Blanca with the 385th Engineers of the 92nd Division in World War II. A Currin El was a master mechanic at Fort Benning and received a medical

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84 FBI MSTA Part 26.
discharge due to illness received while working relentlessly to keep the Caissons rolling.”

While Kirkman Bey totally extricated its Japanese leanings, Ira Johnson Bey’s Reincarnationist Moors negotiated, navigated, and sought compromise through the treacherous terrain of Moorish theology and Selective Service legislation. On the one hand, the Reincarnationist Moors positioned themselves in between Kirkman Bey’s brand of Moorish patriotism and Mother Bey’s anti-American Moorish zeal. On November 1, 1941, Eddie Stephens Bey, a Reincarnationist Moor reported to Fort Dix, New Jersey military training camp, shocking his instructors with his physical appearance of a full-beard and shoulder-length locks that were topped off with a red fez. As a “Mohammedan,” Bey refused to wear a necktie, swap his fez for an army helmet, consume army chow, or trim his beard, earning him a two-week confinement. Eventually, a compromise was reached after Sheik Frazier Bey, Camden, New Jersey, granted Private Bey dispensation to relax orthodox religious prohibitions concerning food and the fez. However, his beard was not to be shaved completely, but simply trimmed over very lightly with clippers.

While the Fairbanks Daily News Miner portrayed Reincarnationist Moorish flexibility as a defeat for the religious movement and a triumph for US Army citing, “The Mohammedans have succumbed to the needs of national defense” and the Jefferson Bee favoured Moorish victory claiming in its sub-headline, “Draftee Wins,” both journals missed the larger point on religious accommodation and state negotiation of amorphous legal boundaries in order to enable Bey to adapt to a duality of identities. Also, the Reincarnationist Moors’ nuanced accommodation represented a subtle form of religious protest that simultaneously enabled them to escape prosecution while steering clear of projecting a weak image.

Though such a radical re-orientation of Kirkman Bey’s and Reincarnationist Moors towards American fealty represented an apt strategy in the short-run by preventing a similar fate to other incarcerated religious groups such as Prophet Mohammed Bey’s Kansas Moors and Elijah Muhammad’s Nation of Islam, the 1940s Moorish mainstream conservatism served only to sever and disconnect themselves from the pulse and feel of black urban America.

87 “Moors Mark Anniversary,” The Chicago Defender, Jan 8, 1949, p. 9.
that emerged from the World War, which was increasingly livid with the racial hypocrisy of white America, by the 1950s, was confronting the racist structures through sit-ins, stand-ins, and ultimately Black Power protests. Hence, I posit that the Moorish “decline” lay not so much in 1929 with death of Drew Ali and subsequent splintering, but rather due to the “softening” and “moderation” that turned MSTA into a passive movement with a growing need to be accepted by white mainstream America. In hindsight, what could have perpetuated Moorish vitality after World War II was for Kirkman Bey and Ira Johnson Bey to embrace Father and Mother Prophet Beys’ proto-Black Power radicalism from the Moorish vernacular in Kansas City.

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