CHAPTER 6

The Post-Movement Years

In the fourteen years that followed the folding of Webb's third Islamic newspaper, while a few Muslim and Sufi groups for white Americans appeared, nothing that could be considered an actual conversion movement existed in the US. This was not due to a lack of effort, however. Several of the people who had been directly and indirectly connected to Webb's Islamic movement—including Webb himself—continued to attempt to persuade white Americans to embrace Islam, or at least Islamic and Sufi teachings. Some of these individuals—including, again, Webb—tied themselves directly to a new Western occult organization, Papus' Martinist Order. But even this was not sufficient for reviving the Islamic movement. Meanwhile, there were a number of international Muslim missionary efforts in the country, and at least a few people converted to Islam on an individual basis. Still, no one had the ability to create a movement anywhere close to what Webb had fostered between 1893 and 1896. Overall, these were quiet years for conversion to Islam.

Interestingly, though, these were not quiet years for conversion to other non-Christian religions. Particularly after 1894, the turn-of-the-century US witnessed a sudden, major wave of Americans embracing Asian-majority religions, such as the Baha'i faith, Buddhism, and Vedantic Hinduism. It is not at all a coincidence that the US movements connected with these religions were tied to some of the very same organizations, religious currents, events, and people with which Webb had been affiliated. Indeed, several of these movements were able to thrive precisely because they were better at the very things Webb had attempted to do, such as convincingly presenting their religion as the true version of America's esoteric and New Thought teachings, and persuading prominent members of those groups to join their religion. Their relative success in these activities was so significant that by the beginning of the twentieth century, the American religious landscape had come to look very different than it had in the mid-1870s when Rev. Norman had failed in his attempt to spread Islam. The country would now be peppered with numerous non-Christian religious organizations and teachers, a situation that generated even more competition and, as a result, the expansion of the non-Christian religious market. These conditions would make conversion to Islam after 1910 something very different than it had been in the 1890s. The emergence and success of these other non-Christian groups in the years following the collapse

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of Webb's movement are therefore instructive not only for understanding the relative failure of Islamic groups during this period, but also for revealing factors contributing to the changes in Islamic conversion that would appear in the twentieth century.

Vestiges

Keep, Nabakoff, and Lant probably did not have the backgrounds—in terms of either experience or connections—that would have been necessary for starting new successful Islamic movements. Out of the three, only Lant had strong ties to the kind of movements—spiritualist and Free Thought groups[1]—that would show an interest in Islam, but the people in these movements were not the type to convert exclusively, as they would be primarily interested in Islam from a liberal, inclusivistic perspective. Lant, furthermore, does not appear to have maintained ties with the old Randolph-influenced Rosicrucians, who would have been much more receptive to the notion of exclusive conversion to a non-Christian religion, particularly Islam. Still, it was probably Lant's background in liberal movements and his abilities as an editor that led him to be, out of the three dissenters, probably the most active in working for Islam in the US after 1896. In 1897, for instance, Lant attempted to help secure the release of detained Muslim immigrants.[2] Then, in 1900, Hamid Snow's Church of Islam permitted Lant to start an American branch of the group and to be its first 'pastor.'[3] Nothing is known about the Church of Islam activities in the US, but, about a year later, Lant had appeared with Nabakoff and Theodore Price, one of Lant's convert supporters since the First Society days, in Manila where they were working with Snow to spread Islam.[4] Interestingly, while Snow was said to be the Indian director of the effort, the organization sponsoring their work was not the Church of Islam, but rather Nabakoff's old International Moslem Union, and Nabakoff, not Lant, was head of the Manila mission.[5] At some

1 Lant was speaking in front of spiritualists even as late as April 1894; see "The Anniversary," *Banner of Light*, April 14, 1894, 6.

2 Lant to unnamed recipient, March 24, 1897, John A. Lant Papers.

3 Hamid Snow, "A Voice from India," *Crescent* 16, no. 415 (1900): 407.

4 "Mohammedanism and Romanism in Manila." This convert was Theodore F. Price, now known as Mohammed Price.

5 *Ibid.* In early 1896, Lant and Snow had joined with several other Indian and British Muslims in supporting the expansion of the Union into India; see "'The International Moslem Union.' A Suggestion," *Crescent* 7, no. 158 (1896): 469–70.

point, Lant moved back to the US, and at least through 1905 occasionally published pieces on Islam.[6] He died at his home in Florrisant, Missouri on January 17, 1913.[7] Nabakoff's post-1896 activities, meanwhile, are less well known; he participated in at least one ecumenical event, but there is no other information on any Islamic missionary work he may have done in the US.[8]

Keep, for her part, did attempt to start a new US mission. After moving to Liverpool in early 1895, Keep relocated to London where she met a pair of wealthy Egyptians with whom she moved to Egypt, living there for a few years.[9] By late 1899 she had returned to London, where she connected with the local Muslim community. There she learned about an American Muslim who wanted to donate fifty acres of land to form a Muslim colony in the US and promote conversion to Islam.[10] Keep announced her plans to lead this mission in a widely circulated news article. However, it seems that nothing ever came of it and Keep faded into obscurity.

Somewhat surprisingly, Quilliam's Institute continued to have a small American presence for a few years, even after the departure of Lant, Nabakoff, and Keep. It seems, judging by the number of appearances of Americans in Quilliam's journal, the *Crescent*, by 1895 it had become the main competitor for Webb's Islamic newspaper. That year, Quilliam's magazine published numerous stories and news briefs concerning Nabakoff, Lant, and Keep, as well as several letters from Americans—including converts, Muslim immigrants, and non-Muslim sympathizers—known to be associates of the three Webb dissenters.[11] One of these people was Dr. C.F. Elsner, a Chicago pharmacist, who in early 1895 donated money to Lant's American Moslem Institute.[12] Soon after this, Elsner joined the Institute community, and, at least through 1899, helped keep the American branch of Quilliam's organization alive.[13] In July 1898, Quilliam's Islamic publication made the announcement that

6 Lant had a piece published in Quilliam's second Islamic journal, the *Islamic World*, in August 1905.

7 "Editor John A. Lant Dead," *Dobbs Ferry Register* (New York), January 24, 1913, 1.

8 Singleton, "Brothers at Odds," 483–84.

9 "A Moslem Crusade in Free America," *Utica Sunday Journal*, February 11, 1900, 15.

10 *Ibid*.

11 E.g., Joseph M. Wade and Muhammad Najb.

12 See Carl Stephens, *The Alumni Record of the University of Illinois, Chicago Departments, Colleges of Medicine and Dentistry, School of Pharmacy* (Chicago: University of Illinois, 1921), 336; "Editorial Notes," *Crescent* 5, no. 111 (1895): 89.

13 "Answers to Correspondents," *Crescent* 7, no. 159 (1896): 488; "Answers to Correspondents," *Crescent* 13, no. 336 (1899): 392.

Dr. Elsner was one of two American honorary presidents for the Liverpool Muslim[14] Institute.[15]

The other American honorary president in 1898 was Dr. Edouard Blizt from Nevada, Missouri. Unlike Elsner, Blizt almost certainly had come into the international Muslim convert community via Webb. Blizt was a Belgian Mason who had studied Theosophy and had been initiated into both the Yarker- and Quilliam-connected Memphis-Misraim Rite[16] as well as a new occult group called the Martinist Order.[17] Martinism was an eighteenth-century French Masonic movement that followed the esoteric teachings of Martinez de Pasqually. Although it had lost much of its following by the early nineteenth century, in the late 1880s the movement was revived and popularized as the Martinist Order by Papus (Gerard Encausse), the single most influential French esotericist of the late nineteenth century.[18] Starting in the mid-1880s, when barely twenty years old, Papus joined and helped start numerous esoteric groups in France, including the Theosophical Society and the H.B. of L. He hoped to connect all these organizations as part of a larger program to promote both interfaith cooperation and the notion of the essential unity of all traditional religions.[19] Some of the organizations he started, such as Groupe Indépendent d'Etudes Esotériques and l'Union Idéaliste Universelle, were ostensibly designed to meet these specific goals, yet they, like many of Papus' other groups, were also gateways for joining what were thought to be superior organizations, one of which was the Martinist Order. The Martinist Order itself, meanwhile, was used to prepare people for the H.B. of L., as Papus was convinced that the highest form of spirituality was the type of occult initiation promoted by the latter group.[20] Indeed, when Blitz came to the US in 1894 with the intention of spreading Martinism, he was instructed

14 They had changed the spelling of this word in the organization's name from 'Moslem.'

15 "Annual Meeting of the Liverpool Muslim Institute," *Crescent* 11, no. 286 (1898): 421.

16 This was another name for Yarker's Ancient and Primitive Rite.

17 On Blitz, see Edouard Blitz, *Ritual and Monitor of the Martinist Order* (Nevada, MO: E. Blitz, 1896); Chanel, "'Fraternite Hermetique.'" 315; Edouard Blizt letters, Fonds Papus, MS 5489, Bibliothèque municipale de Lyon (henceforth, FP); Milko Bogaard, "The Martinist Order," accessed May 9, 2014, http://www.hermetics.org/Martinism.html, accessed April 14, 2014; http://kg.vkk.nl/french/organisations.f/om.f/blitz/blitzbio.html.

18 On Papus, see Marie-Sophie André and Christophe Beaufils, *Papus, biographie: la Belle Epoque de l'occultisme* (Paris: Berg International Éditeurs, 1995).

19 André and Beaufils, *Papus*, 54–58.

20 René Guénon, "F.-Ch. Barlet et les sociétés initiatiques," *La Voile d'Isis*, April 20, 1925, reprinted in Godwin et al., *Hermetic Brotherhood*, 434.

to keep in touch and work with the Georgia-based H.B. of L. leader Peter Davidson.[21]

In a project similar to what Mackenzie had proposed in 1869, the Martinist Order presented itself as the only Masonic movement that taught true "traditional" symbols, as opposed to "synthetic" ones, which were, according to Papus, permeating and dividing Masonry. Because he was working from this belief, in establishing the Martinist Order in the US, Blitz began with Masons, although he soon reached out to Theosophists and other esotericists as well.[22] Blitz was relatively successful in this effort; between August 1894 and November 1895, Martinist groups had been established in over a dozen states and Blitz had started communicating with influential people in the American esoteric scene, such as the H.B. of L. and Sufic Circle member, S.C. Gould, who joined the movement and helped promote it in the esotericist magazine he edited and published.[23]

By early 1896, when the growth of US Martinism apparently reached a plateau, Blizt also began working on spreading the newly-created Union Idéaliste Universelle, the Papus group that, more than any of his other ones, sought to establish good relations among different religions.[24] This may have been what initially led to Blitz's connection with Muslim converts, since Islam was one of the religions that was prominent on the radar of the ecumenical side of the Papus community. In 1892, Papus created a short-lived journal, the *La Lumière d'Orient: Revue Bi-Mensuelle de L'Islam*, whose objectives were to "approach Islam through philosophical and social terms rather than political ones" and to correct prevalent misconceptions about the religion of Muslims.[25] To this effect, the journal included articles on cultural institutions in Turkey, news from the Muslim world, a serialized French translation of the Qur'an, and brief introductions to important elements of Islam—which included, interestingly, two essays by Quilliam.[26] Despite only producing two issues, the creation of such a journal apparently led, in January 1893, to the Ottoman Sultan awarding Papus the fourth class of the Ottoman Imperial Order of the Mejidieh, a medal

21 Chanel, " 'Fraternite Hermetique,'" 310 ff.

22 The spread of the Martinist Order under Blitz is well-documented in his dozens of letters to Papus in FP.

23 See letter, Blizt to Papus, undated, FP.

24 André and Beaufils, *Papus*, 156–59; in the FP, see the "Union Idéaliste Universelle" flyer and Blitz to Papus, 1886 (month and date are in a cipher, but they are filed before a March 1886 letter).

25 André and Beaufils, *Papus*, 102.

26 Copies of the two known issues of the journal are held in the Bibliothèque nationale de France.

given in honor of services to the Ottoman government.[27] This was followed by the opening of Martinist Order lodges in both Egypt and Tunisia.[28]

Connecting with Muslims, then, was not a new idea for Martinists by the time Blitz came to the US, and these experiences of the Order surely emboldened him. Blitz, in fact, showed no hesitancy, in an early 1896 letter, in discussing with Papus his desire to form alliances with "the Arab, the Persian, or the Turk" to obtain for Martinism "the glory of having established silently a wide committee of peace and of universal alliance."[29] Of course, persuading Muslims to become actual Martinists, and not just join the Union, would be an even bigger coup, and Blitz was up to challenge. In early March, Blizt was proud to announce to Papus that he had brought into the Martinist Order Alexander Webb, the most famous Muslim in the country.[30] Webb was at that time also still a Theosophist as well as a confirmed believer in Islam's having esoteric origins through Muhammad's 'psychical' divine communications—he even publicly expressed the latter view that year in S.C. Gould's magazine.[31] Martinism's strong commitment to religious cooperation and unity, along with its promotion of occult initiation, would have been particularly appealing to Webb, who surely valued the practical occultism of his early days in the St. Louis Theosophical Society and his communications with men like Gould. There are, however, no known confirmed connections between Martinism and Webb after March 1896. For this reason, it is difficult to say how important Martinism actually was for the convert.

Nevertheless, Martinist connections to both Islam and the broader white Muslim convert community continued to appear for the next few years. In March 1896, the same month Blizt announced his initiation of Webb, Blitz wrote to Quilliam's *Crescent* requesting materials on Islam.[32] Two years later, Blizt established ties with various Muslims in Tunisia, convincing a person named, simply, Bey to join the Union, and coming to an agreement with the editors of the reformist Tunisian paper *El-Hadira* to promote the Union.[33] By

27 André and Beaufils, *Papus*, 103–04.

28 André and Beaufils, *Papus*, 105.

29 Blitz to Papus, 1886 (month and date are in a cipher, but they are filed before a March 1886 letter), FP.

30 Chanel, " 'Fraternite Hermetique,'" 315; Blitz to Papus, March 3, 1896, FP.

31 M'd Alexander Russell Webb, "Criticism on 'Mohamed's Place in the Church,'" *Miscellaneous Notes and Queries* 14, no. 6 (1896): 128¼–128½.

32 "Answers to Correspondents," *Crescent* 7, no. 168 (1896): 632.

33 Blitz to Papus, undated and August 30, 1897, FP. On *El-Hadira*, see Arnold H. Green, *The Tunisian Ulama 1873–1915: Social Structure and Response to Ideological Currents* (Leiden: Brill, 1978), 165–67.

early 1898, Martinists had initiated a few Egyptian residents, including one Si Ali Ben Ahmed Nourisson Bey,[34] and by mid-year, Blitz—just before he was named honorary president in Quilliam's group—was communicating to Quilliam in language that suggested either that he had converted to Islam or that he saw Islam as one of the few traditional "True Faith[s]" in the world.[35] It appears, though, that 1898 was the end of Blitz's public engagement with Muslims. After he was announced as one of the vice presidents of Quilliam's group in July, he was never mentioned again in the *Crescent* or in any known documents connected to Webb or other American Muslims. There would be other lingering effects of Blizt's efforts to unite American esotericists with Islam, as we will see, but from 1898 on Blitz was at best in the background of these activities.

Besides Blitz, meanwhile, there were a few other LMI-linked American converts mentioned in the *Crescent*,[36] but there is neither information about any post-1896 organized Islamic activities they may have participated in, nor any evidence that anyone else served as an official representative of Quilliam's group after 1900.[37] In fact, out of all the old leaders from the movement years, the evidence suggests that Webb was probably the most active in Islamic promotional efforts after 1895, and he certainly received the most attention from the press. After his last Islamic newspaper stopped production in February 1896, for the rest of the year Webb still wrote articles on Islamic topics, continued to attempt to lecture, and publicly invited Muslims to visit him at his home.[38] In 1898 he moved to Rutherford, New Jersey, where he worked in the newspaper industry again for at least a few years and became involved in civic life.[39] Then, in late 1900, Webb left on a several month-long journey to Constantinople (and possibly Mecca), during which the Sultan of Turkey gave Webb medals for both

34 André and Beaufils, *Papus*, 157; Blitz to Papus, March 12, 1898, FP. It is likely that he was the same person as the Swiss man named Nourisson Bey who was living in Egypt at the time.

35 Dr. Edouard Blitz, "Kind Letter from America," *Crescent* 11, no. 285 (1898): 413. Blitz praises Quilliam's "noble efforts in [*sic*] behalf of the True Faith."

36 For instance, Dr. Hazzard of New York, who converted under Lant, and J. Lecky McGregor Gough of Hamilton, Ohio.

37 This is true despite the fact that some British converts—but particularly Louise Hanifa Jones—moved to the US and continued to correspond with the Muslims in Liverpool.

38 "Mohammed Webb's Account," *New York Times*, March 27, 1896, 3; M'd Alexander Russell Webb, "Criticism on 'Mohamed's Place in the Church,'" *Miscellaneous Notes and Queries* 14, no. 6 (1896): 128¼–128½; "News of the Week," *Moslem Chronicle and the Muhammadan Observer*, October 31, 1896, 483.

39 Singleton, introduction, 47; "Mr. Alexander R. Webb, Friend of Commuters, Dead at Seventy," *New York Herald*, October 3, 1916, 8.

the Order of Merit and the Order of the Mejidieh and appointed him as the Honorary Consul General of the Turkish Government in New York.[40] According to Webb, at this time he was also named Sheikh-ul-Islam—religious head—for America.[41] Whether or not this was true, the fact remains that until his death on October 1, 1916, Webb continued to write and speak in promotion and defense of Islam. He even did so with organizations from which he had previously disassociated himself, such as Theosophical Society, from which he had resigned in 1897, and Ghulam Ahmad's Ahmadiyya movement, for which in 1910 he assisted in revising Ahmad's *The Teachings of Islam*.[42]

Webb also kept in touch with at least some American converts, although how many is uncertain.[43] Throughout the active years of his movement,

40 "Rejoicings in the New World in Honour of the Sultan," *Crescent* 16, no. 404 (1900): 229–30; "Editorial Notes," *Crescent* 16, no. 410 (1900): 329; "Sultan Honors Alex. R. Webb," *New York Sun*, September 29, 1901, 6; Leonard, *Who's Who*, 4:1352. Webb had been defending the Sultan since the days of the movement, when he received support from the Ottoman government; see Singleton, introduction, 47–48 and Şahin, "Sultan's America," 62. It might be pointed that the Order of the Mejidieh honor was the same thing given to Papus, who merely created an Islam-themed journal that lasted for two issues. Quilliam also received a medal from the Sultan, but one for the Order of the Osmanieh, which was a higher honor, being reserved for "Muslims who rendered great service to the Ottoman Empire." On these medals, see "Turkish Orders of Knighthood and Honour," *Crescent* 11, n. 281 (1898): 346.

41 Leonard, *Who's Who*, 4:1352.

42 Singleton, introduction, 48. See also M'd Alex. R. Webb, "A Letter from Muhammad A. Russel Webb," *Moslem Chronicle and the Muhammadan Observer*, February 15, 1902, 89–90; Muhammad Webb, "Muhammadan Society and its Pressing Needs," *Moslem Chronicle and the Muhammadan Observer*, March 29, 1902, 170; "Miscellaneous," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, March 25, 1905, 12; "Religion of Mohammed," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, February 20, 1911, 4; Maulana Dost Muhammad Shahid, "*Review of Religions*: A 100 Year History of the Magazine," *Review of Religions* 97, no. 11 (2002): 21–23; Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, *The Teachings of Islam: A Solution of Five Fundamental Religious Problems from the Muslim Point of View* (London: Luzac & Co., 1910), ix.

43 In 2014, five letters written by Webb in 1907 and 1909 to what appears to be a convert living in Ohio went up for auction on *Ebay*. The seller put excerpts from the letters online, and they contain a few interesting bits of information. One thing revealed in these letters is Webb's aversion to politics and anything that creates divisiveness, particularly among Muslims. He says, in fact, that he "will gladly join any association of men which has for its real object the spiritual up-building of humanity." Furthermore, Webb remarks that he does not believe Islam opposes Freemasonry, although he feels that he has never met a Mason "who was seriously religious"—which perhaps gives insight into the friction he experienced with Rawson and the other Shriners in the 1890s. Webb also comments on women: "I believe that as a rule they are superior in spiritual susceptibility to men. When they are convinced of the truth of Islam they are more earnest and indefatigable in their efforts to guide others

despite occasionally publicly naming the original members of the American Moslem Brotherhood's study circles, the majority of whom were not converts, Webb rarely discussed actual converts by name, and never publicly announced how many individuals had joined Islam in the US. The most likely reason for this was that there were simply not many converts to talk about. This would help explain why throughout the three years of the movement, the same convert names were brought up over and over, and why none of the Islamic organizations created by Webb, Lant, or Nabakoff had any staying power. In 1902 Webb did claim that Islam had made, over the previous decade, a "steady silent advancement" in the US.[44] But in September 1893, which was probably the peak of Webb's movement, an Indian Muslim visiting the World's Fair met Webb, who told him that the movement had so far only generated thirty-nine converts.[45] In 1895, Webb suggested that this lack of success in converting was due to potential converts' fears of becoming social outcasts: Webb asserted

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into the true faith than are men." This surely reflects Webb's experience with the active female converts in his movement in the 1890s, and perhaps also his time in spiritualism, in which women were the majority of the mediums. Finally, a large part of the letters seems to have been devoted to counseling and encouraging this convert in his effort to spread Islam, which Webb of course regards as a great challenge in the US. Webb, however, is hopeful; he had recently "been invited to occupy the pulpit of the Unitarian Church at Montclair, N.J.," and "this, and other similar evidences of interest, shows, at least, that there is less violent prejudice among church-going people against Islam than there was a few years ago." Here, Webb reveals that he believed deeply that the failure of his movement was due to prejudice against Islam, and not his inability to successfully navigate a religious market, which, like any market, was composed of pre-existing consumer baises. While it is true that anti-Islam sentiment shaped religious consumers' tastes, as the last sections in this chapter demonstrate, Asian-majority religions towards which Westerners had less antipathy, such as Buddhism, Hinduism, and the Baha'i faith, also failed to gain many converts—and in some cases got fewer converts than Webb—when they did not successfully appeal to the religious tastes of the individuals most likely to convert. In other words, anti-Islam sentiment cannot singularly explain the failure of Islam to spread on American soil in the 1890s and early 1900s. "1907 MOHAMMED ALEXANDER RUSSELL WEBB—FIVE HANDWRITTEN LETTERS re ISLAM KORAN," accessed January 13, 2015, http://www.ebay.com/itm/1907-MOHAMMED-ALEXANDER-RUSSELL-WEBB-FIVE-HANDWRITTEN-LETTERS-re-ISLAM-KORAN-/400702561026.

44 "A Letter from Muhammad A. Russel Webb," 89. Webb explained that the majority of these were liberal Christians, particularly Unitarians, who are "practically Moslems in everything but name." Webb's wife, however, did not see it that way, and reverted from Islam to her Unitarian faith later in life (see Singleton, introduction, 50).

45 However, it is not known if Webb was actually discussing the number of members of the American Moslem Brotherhood, which probably came to about thirty-five at that time.

> that there are hundreds of Americans who have accepted the truths of Islam but who will not acknowledge the fact even to the Moslem for fear that in some unforeseen [w]ay, it will become known.[46]

Specifically, they feared ostracism and financial difficulties.[47] Given what we know about earlier efforts to spread non-Christian religions in the country, even if Webb was overestimating the number of closeted Muslim converts, this is probably a fairly accurate assessment of one of the main reasons people resisted converting. Indeed, it is precisely this reasoning that, as has been discussed, explains why organized esoteric and non-Christian groups did not start growing until the 1870s and 1880s, when their markets were finally legitimized by various entities.

In any case, there were undoubtedly at least a few converts with whom Webb had contact who were willing to make their conversions public. One of these was Rev. James Laurie Rodgers, a Scottish resident of Santa Cruz, California.[48] In 1902, Rodgers was featured in a story that received wide circulation in US papers when he, days after announcing his conversion to Islam, set fire to a number of buildings on the dairy farm on which he was working.[49] The first part of the story initially broke on Saturday, May 31. The newspaper for Gonzales, California, a town fifty-five miles southeast of Santa Cruz, reported that Rodgers, who a year before was a pastor of Gonzales Baptist Church, had "after much study and correspondence with learned Moslems," embraced Islam.[50] The day before, May 30, an acquaintance of Rodgers had received a letter from him proclaiming his conversion and adding the suspiciously prophetic assertion that

> I have got sense to know I will received no material benefits from my religion, but instead may be killed or allowed to starve to death.[51]

Sayyid `Abid `Ali Vajdi al-Husaini, *Maulana Barkatullah Bhopali: Inqilabi Savanih* (Bhopal: Madhyah Pradesh Urdu Akademi, 1986), 107.

46 Alexander Russell Webb, "Mr. Md. Alexander Russell Webb Writes to Us the Following, on Islam in America," *Moslem Chronicle and the Muhammadan Observer*, December 7, 1895, 521.

47 *Ibid*.

48 Interestingly, a James Rodgers is listed as a member of the Brooklyn Islam study circle in 1893; however this was almost certainly not James Laurie, as the latter makes no mention of New York in his discussion of his earlier life in the US; see "Rev. James Laurie Rodgers in Jail," *Santa Cruz Morning Sentinel*, June 4, 1902, 1.

49 "Preacher Confesses Arson," *Sun* (Baltimore), June 5, 1902, 1.

50 "Changes His Faith," *Gonzales Tribune*, May 31, 1902, 3.

51 "Rev. J.L. Rodgers Found," *Santa Cruz Morning Sentinel*, June 3, 1902, 1; "Parson Goes Wrong," *Gonzales Tribune*, June 7, 1902, 3.

In the letter, Rodgers goes on to make a series of requests concerning the proper performance of religious rites at his burial "if such a thing happens anywhere near Santa Cruz." Finally, he asks, in the event of his death, for his friend to contact Webb,

> who is the Sheikh-al-Islam (head) of the Religion of Islam in this country and he will communicate with such friends or relatives as I may wish him to correspond with and tell them all I wish to know.[52]

With these curious preparations for death clarified, on the afternoon of June 1, the convert committed his act of arson.[53] Rodgers, who had a grievance with his employer but was also generally considered mentally unstable, was quickly jailed, and he appears to have died in prison the follow April without the press ever learning more about his conversion.[54]

Another notable post-movement convert with whom Webb had contact was Dr. Anthony George Baker. After graduating from Jefferson Medical College in Philadelphia in 1887, the thirty-year-old Baker began practicing both standard and homeopathic medicine.[55] Fascinated by history, languages, and the religions of the East, in his spare time he also studied various European languages, Arabic, and Chinese, and published and presented historical papers on the cultures and religions of the native speakers of these languages.[56] It was in

52 *Ibid*. The only other evidence I have been able to find concerning Webb using the Sheikh-al-Islam title is in a *Who's Who* entry, presumably written by Webb (see Leonard, *Who's Who*, 4:1352). I would like to thank Brent Singleton for this entry to my attention.

53 "Rev. J.L. Rodgers Found," *Santa Cruz Morning Sentinel*, June 3, 1902, 1.

54 A twenty-six-year-old James Rodgers from Scotland is listed as having died in Sacramento (where California Supreme Court trials were held, and near the Bay Area's famous prisons) on April 3, 1903; see California, San Francisco Area Funeral Home Records, 1835–1979, accessed April 15, 2014, https://familysearch.org/pal:/MM9.1.1/JNJZ-VY7. The only age the convert James Laurie Rodgers was ever given in the press was twenty-nine in 1902 (see "Rev. Rodgers is Crazy," *Salinas Daily Index*, June 4, 1902, 1); while not a precise match, the Sacramento James Rodgers' biographical data is closer to that of the convert than the data in records for other known James Rodgers from the period. Unfortunately, I have not been able to locate any police, trial, or prison records for James Laurie. I would like to thank the Genealogical Society of Santa Cruz County for their help in trying to find out the fate of Mr. Rodgers.

55 See his records on *Ancestry.com*.

56 Lewis R. Hamersly, ed., *Who's Who in Pennsylvania; Containing Authentic Biographies of Pennsylvanians Who Are Leaders and Representatives in Various Departments of Worthy Human Achievement* (New York: L.R. Hamersly Company, 1904), 28; *Journal of the One Hundred and Twenty-fourth Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church of the Diocese of*

August 1893 when Baker had his first known public connection with Muslim converts; that month, Webb ran in the *Moslem World* a section of a piece Baker had recently published concerning the relationship between medieval Christians and Muslims in Jerusalem.[57] However, Webb's frustrating tendency to not say much about American converts leaves one to wonder about their relationship. Baker was one of the few known Webb affiliates from Philadelphia, so it is possible that he ran that city's Oriental Publishing Company. This was the name of the company Webb had set up in New York to publish *Islam in America*, but in 1892 and 1894 the company used a Philadelphia post office box and published a spiritualist work—which was the only other book the company published, and which Webb himself advertised in his Muslim newspapers—in which it was claimed that Christianity was derived from Asian religions.[58]

Despite these connections with Webb, other Muslim contacts may have been more important for Baker. In January 1896, when he was explicitly identifying as a Muslim in a letter to the *Crescent*, Baker expressed his belief that Quilliam's magazine was the only English-language Islamic journal available, even though Webb's *Moslem World and the Voice of Islam* was still being printed.[59] He also appears to have early ties with the Ahmadis, who claim that Baker accepted Islam through correspondence with Ghulam Ahmad.[60] In as late as 1913, in fact, one of Baker's speeches appeared in the English-language Ahmadi journal, *Review of Religions*, a journal with which Webb had corresponded in the early 1900s.[61] Another Islamic organization with which Baker was probably associated was the group of about twenty converts in Philadelphia who were meeting secretively in 1907. Almost nothing is known about the community; in the only known newspaper article about the group, its meeting place is not

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Pennsylvania Held in the Church of St. Luke and the Epiphany, Philadelphia May 5 and 6, 1908, with Appendices (Philadelphia: John C. Winston Company, 1908), 277.

57 "A Moslem Hero," *Moslem World* (August 1893).

58 This was Jonathan M. Roberts, *Antiquity Unveiled: Ancient Voices from the Spirit Realm Disclose the Most Startling Revelation Proving Christianity to be of Heathen Origin*. The first edition appeared in 1892 and a second edition in 1894.

59 A. Geo. Baker, M.D., "Encouraging Letter from America," *Crescent* 7, no. 160 (1896): 509.

60 Mubasher Ahmad, *Approaching the West* (Silver Spring, MD: Majlis Ansarullah USA, 2008), 7–8. It is likely, however, that Baker's embracing of Islam through Ghulam Ahmad came after 1901, and thus after his 1896 pronouncement of having converted, as the Ahmadis typically recognize F.L. Anderson, who converted in 1901, as the first American Ahmadi (see below).

61 Dr. A. Geo. Baker, "The One God and Islam is the Religion of All Men," *Review of Religions* 12, no. 8 (1913): 327–40; Shahid, "*Review of Religions*: A 100 Year History," 21–23.

disclosed and none of the members are named.[62] The article does contain a brief description of the group's "proselyter"—who was said to have once lived in Turkey and was responsible for translating and commenting on the Qur'an—but his identity remains uncertain.[63] Although during this period Baker was also acting as an Episcopalian preacher,[64] given the fact that he identified as a Muslim in the 1890s and as late as 1913, and that he was probably the most well-known lecturer on Islam in Philadelphia at the time, it seems probable that Baker was secretly a Muslim and a member of this group.

Islamophilic Organizations

In addition to impacting actual converts to Islam, the first Islamic movement and its leaders left a legacy in organizations that supported the study and sometimes practice of both Islam and Sufism. Whatever their original purpose was, in 1900 Rawson's Islamophilic Sheiks of the Desert—now called 'Sheikhs of the Kaaba, Defenders of the Mystic Shrine'—wrote a new "manifesto" and were declaring that the group was founded for "the purposes of social intercourse and intellectual culture, but more particularly for the study of the traditions and literature of the Orient."[65] In 1902, the year of Rawson's death, many of its original members were still involved in the group, which had also gained John H. Russell, one of the American Moslem Brotherhood study circle members from Brooklyn.[66] The Sheikhs of the Kaaba appear to have still been active as of 1907,[67] but nothing is heard from them after that date.

The original Islamophilic Theosophists, meanwhile, possessed their own organization, in which they promoted the reading of Sufi poets as well as the orientalist E.H. Palmer's *Oriental Mysticism* (1867), which they declared to be the best exposition of Sufi doctrines. In November 1896, Thomas M. Johnson's occult correspondent and fellow H.B. of L. and Sufic Circle member, S.C. Gould, discussed in his esotericist magazine *Miscellaneous Notes and Queries*

62 "Mohammedans in Philadelphia," *Daily Review* (Decatur, IL), October 23, 1907, 6. I have not been able to locate the original article for this story, which appeared in the *Philadelphia Record*.

63 *Ibid*. If this was an English translation of the Qur'an, it would be a previously unknown work.

64 *Journal of the One Hundred and Twenty-fourth Convention*, 277.

65 Order of Ishmael manuscript, 1; *Freemasons Chronicle*, August 10, 1901, 1.

66 *The World Almanac and Encyclopedia 1902* (New York: Press Publishing Co., 1902), 326.

67 Yarker, "The Order of Ishmael."

an organization identified as the Order of Sufis.[68] In his brief description of the group, Gould explains that this para-Masonic order, which possesses three degrees and eight "stages,"[69] represents "the Sufistic and Unitarian Theosophy of the Persians" and it "consists in endeavoring to reconcile Philosophy with revealed Religion, and in assigning a mystical and allegorical interpretation to all doctrines and precepts."[70] Its "first principle" is "I am the Truth"; the group also values a quote from Palmer, who was himself quoting George Sale's rendering of a notion from the Qur'an: "I am a hidden treasure, and I would fain be known."[71] This all, unsurprisingly, was very close to the ideas promoted by the various esotericist and New Thought communities with which Johnson was connected.

It is probably significant that earlier in 1896, Gould ran in his magazine a few discussions of Islamic topics, including a letter from Webb, and it was around that same time that both Gould and Webb were initiated into Edouard Blitz's Martinist Order.[72] Given this timing, it is likely that the Order of Sufis was being linked to Papus' Martinist Order in the spirit of unifying 'traditional' religions. This would make the Order of Sufis an important predecessor to the Traditionalist Shadhiliyya Sufi order of Ivan Aguéli and René Guénon, which was itself significantly influenced by Papus' Martinist movement.[73] Again, though, lacking other evidence, this cannot be confidently confirmed.

Like with many of the esoteric orders he discussed, Gould was fairly reticent about the Order of Sufis. In 1896, he did not even publicly reveal the identity of any of its members, saying only that its US representatives resided in New York and Missouri. Twelve years later, however, when Gould next publicly discussed the order (which had been renamed the 'Persian Order of the Sufis'), he revealed that Thomas M. Johnson, C.H.A. Bjerregaard, and Gould himself were

68 S.C. Gould, "Masonic and Arcane Societies in the U.S.," *Miscellaneous Notes and Queries* 14, no. 11 (1896): 274.

69 The description of these were as follows: "The Ascent. 1. A Talib, or search after God. 2. A Murid, or One who inclines. 3. Salik, or Traveller. There are eight stages: Worship, Love, Seclusion, Knowledge, Ecstacy [*sic*], Truth, Union, Extinction, or absoption [*sic*] into Deity—The Light"; Gould, "Masonic and Arcane Societies in the U.S."

70 *Ibid*.

71 *Ibid*.

72 See above.

73 See Mark Sedgwick, *Against the Modern World: Traditionalism and the Secret Intellectual History of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004); for a summary of this history, see Mark Sedgwick, "The 'Traditionalist' Shadhiliyya in the West: Guénonians and Schuonians," in *Une voie soufie dans le monde: la Shâdhiliyya*, ed. Eric Geoffroy (Paris: Maisonneuve & Larose, 2006), 453–71.

members.[74] 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.[75] 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.[76]

It is noteworthy that in between the first and last announcement of the Order of Sufis, Bjerregaard's interest in Sufism was revived, and its manifestation revealed a significant clue about his—and possibly the other order members'—concept of Sufism. In 1902, Bjerregaard wrote a book critiquing FitzGerald's *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* from the viewpoint of what Bjerregaard presents as a true Sufi, which, for him, is "not always a [...] Mohammedan [...,

74 S.C. Gould, "Arcane Societies in the United States," *The Rosicrucian Brotherhood* 2, no. 3 (1908): 113. It may be worth noting, too, that in the January 1909 issue of Gould's journal, he ran a piece by Quilliam (under a pseudonym), reprinted from one of Quilliam's journals.

75 Gould to Johnson, December 18, 1906, TMJ Papers.

76 Bjerregaard writes: "An attempt was made some years ago to introduce what was called Esoteric Mohammedansim, but Esoteric Mohammedanism is not Sufiism [*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 Sufiism [*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.

but] simply a Mystic in Mohammedan garb."[77] This notion that beneath the Islamic elements of Sufism was a universal mystical spirituality is consistent with Theosophy, with Johnson's view that all occult teachings were manifestations of Platonism, and with the Martinist view that 'traditional' religions were simply exterior forms of an esoteric spirituality, such as that practiced in the H.B. of L. It was also similar to the approach to Sufism taken by Aguéli and Guénon as well as (as will be shown in Chapter 7) another Sufi teacher popular in the West named Inayat Khan, a figure with whom Bjerregaard would later work. It is undoubtedly significant that the ideas of Sufism promoted by all of these men share a fundamental influence from both Theosophy and the Western occult initiatory movements that broke off from Theosophy—the Martinist Order and the H.B. of L.[78] These direct ties between, on the one hand, the first known modern Western Sufi groups and, on the other, Theosophy and related initiatory occult orders, reaffirm the importance of the historical development of the Western esoteric and non-Christian religious markets for shaping—reterritorializing—early expressions of Islam and Sufism in America.

A final Sufi study organization from the period most likely did not have, as far as is known, any ties to Webb's movement, but its appearance at the time reflects the environment that his movement helped cultivate. The Omar Khayyam Club was originally formed in England in 1892.[79] Its purpose was to preserve the memory and appreciation of FitzGerald's *Rubaiyat* through hosting quarterly dinners at which the fifty-nine members of the club could celebrate and discuss the work. Although the club was primarily social, not literary, members often wrote poems to present at its meetings, and its mere existence helped solidify literary appreciation of Muslim mystical writings in England and abroad, particularly when it invited American guests like Charles Scribner and Henry James.[80] The American club, meanwhile, held its first meeting in Boston in 1900, and among its attendees was the old Unitarian spiritualist and sympathizer of Islam, Col. Thomas Wentworth Higginson.[81] Like its British counterpart, members were people who wanted to encourage the cultivation of appreciation of Muslim mystical writings and frequently composed their own Omar Khayyam-inspired poems.

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77 *Sufi Interpretations of the Quatrains of Omar Khayyam and Fitzgerald* (New York: J.F. Taylor & Co., 1902), preface (unpaginated).

78 For Inayat Khan's ties to the Martinist Order, see Chapter 8.

79 Yohannan, *Persian Poetry*, 202–03.

80 *Ibid.*

81 Charles Dana Burrage, *Twenty Years of the Omar Khayyam Club in America* ([Boston]: Rosemary Press, 1921), 7, 9.

Independent Converts and New Muslim Proselytizers

Just as some Islam-focused clubs were not directly connected to Webb's movement, not every turn-of-the-century US Muslim convert had ties to him either. These independent converts, however, were relatively few, and seem to have been individuals less motivated by ideological reasons than their Webb-connected counterparts. The dozen or so converts of this type who appeared in newspaper articles at the time can be grouped into three camps: (1) women who married wealthy Muslim visitors to the US who, soon after the marriage, returned to their homeland with their new wives;[82] (2) American visitors—usually missionaries, teachers, soldiers, or families of diplomats—to Muslim countries (often it was Turkey) who married local Muslims and then stayed in the country;[83] and (3) women who married Muslim immigrants.[84] Although very little is known about these individuals, it is clear that the deterritorializing force of modern travel was a major component in these conversions, as was the desire to marry, which appears to have been for these people a motivation so powerful that it superseded reservations about religious differences and social consequences. Travel and marriage would, in fact, only continue to increase the numbers of US Muslim converts—particularly non-ideologically-motivated Muslim converts—in the years to come.

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82 In the early 1900s, there was a small rash of newspaper reports of wealthy Muslims marrying American women, and some of these women were said to have converted. See "Weds Mahometan," *Boston Daily Globe*, December 1, 1904, 5; "Actress Weds a Prince," *New York Times*, August 16, 1911; "The Smart Set," *San Francisco Call*, April 23, 1912, 11; "Weds a Mahommedan, and Adopts His Faith," *Los Angeles Times*, August 13, 1912, 11; "Abandons the Cross for the Crescent," *Los Angeles Times*, August 13, 1912, 11; "One American Girl's Oriental Marriage," *The Milwaukee Sentinel*, September 14, 1919; "American Girl Gives up Faith to Marry Turk," *Evening Independent*, August 18, 1926, 1; "Rajah Wants Bride—or Death," *Los Angeles Times*, February 3, 1928, 7.

83 George Horton, *The Blight of Asia* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1926), 244–45; "He Traveled in Turkey," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, November 25, 1895, 3; "Brides of… Turkish Beys," *The Saint Paul Globe*, July 1, 1900, 19; "A Convert to Islam," *Indiana Progress*, July 16, 1902, 3; "How Gray Became a Datto," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, July 27, 1902, 33; "American Officer a Datto," *New York Times*, February 19, 1903; *Philadelphia Inquirer*, February 20, 1903, 8; "U.S. Bluejackets Wed Turkish Girls and Stay in Turkey," *Atlanta Constitution*, February 18, 1919, 1 (the last of these does not mention conversion, but conversion would have been very much encouraged for these men who had taken Turkish wives).

84 "New York Mohammedans," *Hartford Courant*, September 9, 1889, 2; "With Moslem Rites," *Daily Inter Ocean*, September 7, 1893, 1; "Alice Noonan, Mohammedan," *New York Times*, March 31, 1895.

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 where he met 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 reported 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]

85 R.W. Emerson, "Thirstier'n Suez; Worse'n Portsaid," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, October 27, 1907, 4.

86 Emerson's "Thirstier'n Suez" says MacIlwaine's family was from "one of the New England states," but MacIlwaine was actually from Philadelphia; see "Wife, in U.S., Gets $100," *Special to the Washington Post*, February 4, 1911, 1.

87 Emerson, "Thirstier'n Suez"; "American Risks Life for Mecca," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 19, 1908, A1.

88 "American Risks Life for Mecca." MacIlwaine later showed people his Islamic marriage certificate.

89 "American Risks Life for Mecca."

90 "American Risks Life for Mecca"; "American Mohammedan," *New York Times*, December 17, 1907; "Wife, in U.S."

There were undoubtedly at least some additional ideologically-motivated converts who were living in the US and who were not directly connected to Webb. One was possibly F.L. Andersen who, after beginning to correspond with Ghulam Ahmad in 1901, became the first official US Ahmadi Muslim[91] and remained an active member of the Qadiani movement at least through the early 1920s.[92] Still, these people must have been rare; without the presence of American Islamic organizations, the looming fear of ostracism had to have been a serious concern for those considering converting. As long as promoters of Islam failed to concentrate their efforts on drawing converts from among those already involved with the New Thought-influenced occult revival—and therefore individuals already socially connected to, and psychologically adjusted for, an exclusive commitment to a non-Christian religion—ideologically-motivated converts would not be numerous.

This situation, however, does not appear to have been appreciated by the various international Muslim proselytizers who came to the US between 1893 and the early 1910s. Despite the suspicions many Indian and Arab Muslims had of Webb's motives, his multiple successes in generating a good deal of press attention for his movement, publicly explaining and defending Islam, publishing books and newspapers, organizing study groups, and even in converting people, all convinced many Muslims that spreading Islam in the US was not an impossible task. Webb and other converts had in fact been eager for more international Muslim propaganda and missionaries to be sent to the country, and publicly supported the idea.[93] Indeed, as has been mentioned, Webb welcomed an Egyptian Muslim missionary who came to help the movement in July 1893. Then, in the following fall, during his visit to America to attend the World's Fair, the Nawab of Rampur met with Webb and discussed the preaching of Islam in the country.[94] Based on this conversation the Nawab decided to appoint a highly respected Indian Muslim teacher living in England, Mohammad Barakatullah, to be his ambassador to the US,[95] although it would

91 *Moslem Sunrise* 1, no. 1 (1921): 13; *ibid.* 1, no. 2 (1921): cover; Ahmad, *Approaching the West*, 8. The Ahmadis report that Anderson was "in the First Scientific Station, New York City." After extensive searching, the only entity that I have found with such a name is a brewery college in New York from that period.

92 *Moslem Sunrise* 1, no. 2 (1921): 39.

93 Webb, "Mr. Md. Alexander Russell Webb"; Rawson to Lant, April 19, 1895, John A. Lant Papers; J. Le Roy MacGregor Gough, "Interesting Letter from America," *Crescent* 9, no. 212 (1897): 77.

94 Al-Husaini, *Maulana Barkatullah*, 170; "Personal," *Moslem World* (August 1893).

95 Al-Husaini, *Maulana Barkatullah*, 170.

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.[96] 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.[97] After 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.[98]

Probably in around 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.[99] 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.

97 "Mission of Muley Ali," *Philadelphia Times*, December 4, 1898, 15.

98 See, e.g., "The Ramadan," *The Standard* (Brooklyn), April 29, 1892, 5; "Hassan Ben Ali, Manager," *New York Sun*, May 28, 1911, 3; "Hassan Ben Ali Dies," *Variety*, July 24, 1914, 8. 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).

99 "Mosque for New York," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 17, 1896, 5.

with the effort.[100] By April 1895, Barakatullah, who was an important member of both the London Muslim community and the Liverpool mosque, was telling the American converts affiliated with Webb of these plans and his intentions of coming to the US.[101] However, because *Ben Ali's* intentions were not sincere, progress was extremely slow. In late 1896, he made a big announcement of the project for the press, but he never followed through with the plans.[102] Ben Ali, nevertheless, continued to exploit religious themes to promote his troupe, such as by labeling members of his troupe 'sheikhs' and 'whirling dervishes,' and quoting from the Qur'an in his advertisements.[103] He also, by 1895, joined the white Shriners' Mecca Temple in New York, and frequently promoted his affiliation with the organization as a means of drawing on the popularity of the Shriners' connections with oriental themes.[104] Through these efforts, Ben Ali became perhaps the US' single most successful Muslim performance manager during the period, spawning many imitators who, because of their sheer numbers, helped to establish a new genre of for-profit Muslim performer: the Muslim mystical 'professor,' who claimed that he could share his advanced oriental esoteric knowledge with paying customers (see Chapter 7).[105]

Barakatullah, meanwhile, would, after finally arriving in the country in 1899, promote Islam in the US for over decade.[106] Here, he wrote numerous articles

100 "Mosque for New York"; M. Irfan, *Barkatullah Bhopali*, ['liberal'] trans. S. Iftikhar Ali (Bhopal, India: Babul Ilm Publications, 2003), 41.

101 Rawson to Lant, April 19, 1895, John A. Lant Papers.

102 "Mission of Muley Ali."

103 See, e.g., his many advertisements in the *New York Clipper* in 1913–15.

104 *Ibid*. Given this and what we know about Noble Drew Ali, who would later lead the Moorish Science Temple, an important early African American Islamic organization, it seems very likely that it would have been Hassan Ben Ali's troupe that was the Arab 'circus' Drew Ali was rumored to have joined in the early 1900s. For further discussion, see *HCTIUS* vol. 2.

105 Hassan Ben Ali seems to have influenced this wave by occasionally employing such types in his troupe. For more on the topic, see chapter 7 in this volume as well as *HCTIUS* vol. 2.

106 There are only a few English-language in-depth discussions of Barakatullah's life, and we still know very little about his time in the U.S. See Charles Brodie Patterson, "Mohammad Barakatullah: A Biographical Sketch," *Mind* (October 1903): 493–95; Shafqat Razvi, "Mawli Barkatullah Bhopali (A Revolutionary Freedom Fighter in the Early 20th Century)," *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society* 37, no. 2 (1989): 139–58; Irfan, *Barkatullah Bhopali*; al-Husaini, *Maulana Barkatullah*; Juhi Aslam, "Life History of Maulana Barkatullah Bhopali," in *The Contribution of Raja Mahendra Pratap and Prof. Barkatullah Bhopali in Freedom Struggle and Its Importance in Contemporary Society*, eds. M. Hassan Khan & Ayisha Rais Kamal (Calcutta: M.K. Bagchi, 2008), 36–46; Mohammed Ayub Khan, "Universal Islam: The faith and political ideologies of Maulana Barakatullah 'Bhopali,'" *Sikh Formations* 10, no. 1 (2014): 57–67; Humayun Ansari, "Maulana Barkatullah Bhopali's

and lectured on Islam and Sufism for many people across the US—including the New Thought community in 1903 and attendees of a 1908 interreligious conference that also hosted Webb.[107] During the early twentieth century, however, the evidence suggests that the only people he explicitly urged to convert to Islam were African Americans, and this call seems to have been either ignored or rejected in the black community at the time.[108]

There were, of course, other missionaries who, like Barakatullah, appear to have been sincere in their efforts but failed to bring Americans to Islam. In September 1905, a North African named Hadji Ali arrived in Boston with two purposes: to attend Harvard as a student and to propagate Islam through building a mosque in the city and promoting the religion.[109] Ali was in fact being backed by the Moroccan sultan, who was, despite Hassan Ben Ali's plans falling through, continuing to make a strong effort to spread Islam abroad in order to generate support against European colonialism.[110] Once again, though, nothing is known to have come out of this effort. Ten years later, in 1914, throughout the country there were various reports of Muslim missionaries, including a Turkish missionary in Kentucky in early January and another one of unknown ethnicity reportedly on his way to Portland in March.[111] The latter may have been Harry Dean, a black American of non-slave ancestry who was a great-grandson of Paul Cuffe, a noted American captain and African nationalist of Ghanese descent.[112] Like his famous ancestor, Harry Dean became a ship captain and

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Transnationalism: Pan-islamism, Colonialism, and Radical Politics," in *Transnational Islam in Interwar Europe: Muslim Activists and Thinkers*, eds. Götz Norbruch and Umar Ryad (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 181–210.

107 On Barakatullah's New Thought ties, see "Summer School of the New Thought," *Arena* (June 1903): inside cover. His lecture for their community was titled, notably, "Esoteric Mohammedanism." An article he wrote on Sufism and a short biography were also featured in the October 1903 issue of the popular New Thought journal, *Mind*, and were reprinted in many other periodicals. On the 1908 interreligious conference, see "Church and Religious News and Notes," *New York Tribune*, July 4, 1908, 8.

108 Mohammad Barakatullah Maulavie, "'White and Black in the South,'" *New York Tribune*, May 3, 1903, 11; *Colored American*, November 28, 1903, 6. For more on this subject, see *HCTIUS* vol. 2.

109 "Bits from Boston," *Washington Post*, February 5, 1906, 6; "Editorial Notes," *Crescent* 27, no. 699 (1906): 361.

110 "Moorish Awakening," *Moslem Chronicle and the Muhammadan Observer*, September 28, 1901, 2075.

111 *Hartford Herald*, January 28, 1914, 1; Walter B. Hinson, "A Challenge and a Defense," *Oregonian*, March 22, 1914, 12.

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

African nationalist, and his vigorous efforts to build an empire in southern Africa eventually earned him the epithet of "the most dangerous colored man on the face of the earth."[113] In addition to all of this, currently circulating in US Muslim circles is a report that Dean was associated with the Muslim Mosque of London and "distributed Islamic literature in Chicago, Los Angeles, Seattle, and Washington State" in the early twentieth century.[114]

By this time, there were reportedly several Ottoman Muslim sheikhs coming to the US; they apparently had been attracted by the work done by an imam connected to the Ottoman ambassador in Washington, DC, one Shaykh Mehmed Ali.[115] Mehmed, in addition to being the imam for the Ottoman Embassy, led religious worship at one of the earliest immigrant mosques in the US. The Ottoman consulate, beginning in 1910, paid the rent for an apartment on the third floor of 17 Rector Street in lower Manhattan so that it would be used as a mosque.[116] The building at this address, in fact, had been, at least since the early 1890s, a popular destination for immigrant Muslims; many resided there, and several also ran oriental wares businesses out of the bottom floors—all of which apparently earned the building its nickname, which appeared on the front doors, 'The Oriental.'[117] From this building, Mehmed was a very influential Muslim leader in the city. It was reported in 1912 that, as a result of Mehmed becoming the imam two years earlier, local Muslims had begun more closely adhering to Islamic practices, and as many as seventy-five to one hundred Muslims "often" visited the Manhattan mosque for prayer. Mehmed, who claimed that the Turkish government had named him head "of the spiritual affairs of the Mohammedans in this part of the world," even had

113 "'Most Dangerous Colored Man in the World' Dead at Age 72," *Afro-American*, August 3, 1935, 12.

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

115 See Ahmed I. Abu Shouk, J.O. Hunwick & R.S. O'Fahey, "A Sudanese Missionary to the United States," *Sudanic Africa* 8 (1997): 141–42. I would like to thank Abdullahi Gallab for pointing this fact out to me.

116 "Mohammedans Now Have a Place of Worship Here," *The Sun* (New York), February 25, 1912, 15. This article gives extensive biographical details for Mehmed Ali.

117 "Mohammedans Now Have." This is confirmed by the fact that searches for 17 Rector Street in New York newspapers often reveal Muslim surnames affiliated with this address, at least until the early 1920s. It seems that these Muslims represented a wide variety of ethnicities and nationalities.

an influence that went beyond New York.[118] He regularly traveled to and was the religious leader for Muslims in various New England cities, including Lowell, Boston, Worcester, and Providence. News of Mehmed's religious work had made its way back to Muslim-majority lands where it attracted several Syrian sheikhs to come to the US, and may have been part of what drew the more well-known Sudanese proselytizer Satti Majid to New York.[119] Majid, after spending perhaps a few years under Mehmed, went to Detroit, from where he began working with immigrants and African American converts across the eastern half of the country.[120]

On August 12, 1915, yet another Ottoman sheikh arrived in the US. This man, however, was distinguished by his verifiably holding the title of Sheikh al-Islam, a title given by Ottomans to the highest religious official in a region.[121] Sayid Muhammad Wajih Gilani Effendi had been the 'Imperial Ottoman Religious Commissioner' (apparently his English interpretation of the position of Sheikh al-Islam) for the Philippines, which was still under US control at the time,[122] though, due to conflicting reports, it is not known exactly how long he had acted in this capacity.[123] Upon his arrival in New York, Gilani, who was accompanied by his secretary and a servant, announced that he had

> come to tell the American people that there are half a million [Muslims] in the Philippines [...] and they will become citizens of whom the United States will not be ashamed.[124]

118 "Mohammedans Now Have."

119 Abu Shouk et al., "Sudanese Missionary," 141–42.

120 See Abu Shouk et al., "Sudanese Missionary," *passim*; Patrick D. Bowen, "Satti Majid: A Sudanese Founder of American Islam," *Journal of Africana Religions* 1, no. 2 (2013): 194–209. For more, see *HCTIUS* vol. 2.

121 There is in fact a long history of this title being used by Muslims, but the Ottomans employed it a unique way. See Richard W. Bulliet, "The Shaikh al-Islam and the Evolution of Islamic Society," *Studia Islamica* no. 35 (1972): 53–67. It is not clear if Webb, as he and James L. Rodgers claimed, had officially received this title (Mehmed's being named the head "of the spiritual affairs of the Mohammedans in this part of the world" would have conflicted with this); Quilliam, however, did receive the title for Britain.

122 "Sheikh here to Lecture," *New York Times*, August 13, 1915.

123 In one report, he claimed to "have spent several years in the Philippines"—see "Skyscrapers as Prayer Towers," *Miami Herald*, August 28, 1915, 10. In a later article, however, he is said to have only served as Sheikh al-Islam there for a "few months." See "Descendant of Mohammed," *Le Grand Reporter*, November 12, 1915, 6. There are also discrepancies in his reported age. While most newspaper articles at the time said he was forty, his ship's manifest lists him as thirty-three.

124 "Sheikh here to Lecture."

Gilani carried with him a book entitled *What Sayeth the Sheikh ul-Islam*,[125] and over the next several months apparently gave a number of lectures, "promoting good will of all Moslems toward the government of the United States," encouraging Muslims to have "religious and racial tolerance," and teaching "a new Mohammedan creed of the brotherhood of man."[126]

Gilani's US impact extended beyond promoting better relations between Muslims and non-Muslims. While in the US, he corresponded with at least one convert to Islam, Ella May Garber, a white woman originally from Indiana, who had first converted to Sufism in 1911 after reading Sufi poets (see Chapter 7).[127] In Sufism, however, she felt she had only

> first beg[u]n to see Islam's light, not in a very serious way. I was only groping… A glorious teacher of light came into my life in 1915, the late Sheik […] Gilani […] He lifted me far above this world, so it seemed to me […] In one letter he said to me: "Your salvation now depends upon your actions towards those who see the light of faith through you." […] I lived only for him [for over two years] after his departure.[128]

Gilani died in Richmond, Virginia on May 6, 1916, so it was only with the 1920 arrival of an Ahmadi missionary that Garber would feel that her soul was "lifted" again. In spite of his success in having redirected the faith of Garber, however, as far as is known, Gilani, like the other Sunni Muslim proselytizers in the US before 1920, could not generate a conversion movement.

Asian-Majority Religions in Turn-of-the-Century America: A Comparison

As we have seen, in 1895, Webb attributed Islam's relative failure at gaining large numbers of converts during the turn of the century largely to anti-Islamic sentiment, which he asserted made potential converts fear ostracism that they

125 "Skyscrapers as Prayer Towers."

126 "Descendant of Mohammed."

127 See *Moslem Sunrise* 1, no. 6 (1922): 147. I am dating her conversion based on comments made in this source, as well as one found in *Moslem Sunrise* 1, no. 1 (1921): 13. Garber appears to have been in San Francisco at the time of her introduction to Islam, and so may have been an original follower of Inayat Khan, who is recognized as being the first Sufi proselytizer in the US, or his first American follower, Rabia Martin (see Chapter 7).

128 *Moslem Sunrise* 1, no. 6 (1922): 147.

might face if they were to convert.[129] There is undoubtedly some truth to this, but, it is rather difficult to demonstrate, as there are almost no known examples of direct suppression of or retaliation from non-Muslims against the turn-of-the-century converts. This theory also does not explain why before the 1890s no other Asian-majority religion had succeeded in starting a movement in the US. Therefore, in the interest of better understanding the relative failure of the various Islamic proselytization efforts of the period, it would be helpful to examine the increase in US conversions to other Asian-majority religions—Buddhism, Hinduism/Vedantism, and the Baha'i faith—in the 1890s and early 1900s.[130] In doing so, we will take what will at first appear to be an unrelated divagation, an examination of the rise of yet another esoteric organization, called the Oriental Order of the Magi. This discussion will be necessary to understand how the Baha'i faith—a new and relatively small religious sect—generated far and away the single most popular Asian-majority religious movement in the turn-of-the-century US.

Buddhists and Vedantists

Out of all the Asian-majority religions to have claimed converts in the late 1800s and early 1900s, perhaps the most difficult for distinguishing between who was and was not a convert is Buddhism.[131] Hundreds, possibly thousands, of late nineteenth-century Americans at some point claimed to be Buddhists without having made a formal commitment to the religion and, in many cases, without identifying exclusively as Buddhists.[132] Frequently, these people saw Buddhism as representing a pure, ancient type of Idealist philosophy—a notion that had been popularized by the Transcendentalists—and, like the Transcendentalists, the Buddhistic Idealism of these new 'converts' undergirded and reinforced their liberal belief in the truths of other religions

129 Webb, "A Letter from Muhammad A. Russel Webb," 89.

130 There is, admittedly, an important difficulty with this approach: particularly with the Buddhists and Vedantists, there is not a great deal of available information on the early converts. Often, the leaders of early Asian-majority religion organizations did not publicize membership details and scholars apparently have not found many relevant unpublished records. Nevertheless, there have been respectable attempts to sift through the available data and some valuable—if sometimes tentative—conclusions have been arrived at. The available data and these conclusions, as well as the other known facts about the history of the spread of the various Asian-majority religions in the US between 1890 and 1910, help put the Islam movement's failure into better perspective.

131 See Thomas A. Tweed, *The American Encounter with Buddhism 1844–1912* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), esp. 39 ff.

132 Tweed, *American Encounter*, 46.

as well. If we consider these people converts—which is a somewhat difficult proposition to accept, especially for those who did not commit exclusively to Buddhism—the trend that emerges is that many of these people were already committed to liberal religion and Free Thought groups. Since the time of the Transcendentalists, Buddhism had been much more popular among such people than Islam or Sufism, which may explain the preference for Buddhism towards the end of the century—although, again, it is difficult to consider these individuals true converts.

A similar, but perhaps slightly more widely accepted type of Buddhist convert was the Buddhist Theosophist, which included Alexander Webb at one point in the early religious exploration stage of his life. In the 1880s, many Western Theosophists began regarding themselves as Buddhists, especially after the publication of Alfred P. Sinnett's *Esoteric Buddhism* in 1883, which asserted that Theosophical teachings were the true essence of Buddhism. While some of these Buddhist Theosophists, such as Marie de Souza Canavarro, after identifying as Buddhist, abandoned Theosophy to pursue an exclusive commitment to Buddhism, for the most part Buddhist Theosophists continued to accept Theosophical doctrines. Although this meant that many Buddhists who followed more traditional Buddhist teachings would not embrace Theosophists as true Buddhists, the fact that Buddhist Theosophists exclusively chose Buddhism and not another traditional religion with which to identify makes them Buddhist converts on at least a superficial level. As long as one acknowledges this caveat, it would therefore be legitimate to count the over three thousand turn-of-the-century American Theosophists as Buddhists. The major factors contributing to these people's 'conversions' to Buddhism, then, as we have seen, came in a two-stage process: first, joining spiritualism, Free Thought, or another esoteric or New Thought-based movement, and then joining Theosophy, which claimed to be a legitimate representative of Buddhism.

In addition to these more questionable conversions to Buddhism, there were others who made exclusive commitments to what they regarded as traditional Buddhist teachings. Prior to 1897, these were largely, like many early Muslim converts, isolated individuals with liberal religious, and sometimes esoteric backgrounds. They were not many in number, perhaps fewer than a dozen.[133] Starting in 1897, though, conversion to non-Theosophical Buddhism increased when the religion began to be promoted by organizations interested in spreading non-Theosophical Buddhism in the US. The main organization doing this at the turn of the century was the Maha Bodhi Society, a South Asian

133 Tweed, *American Encounter*, 39–40.

Buddhist group formed in 1891 by Anagarika Dharmapala—one of the speakers at the World's Parliament of Religions—and British author Sir Edwin Arnold to encourage a revival of Buddhism in response to what was perceived as the encroachment of other religions.[134] By the early 1890s, the group had gained a single American Buddhist convert and an additional sympathizer as the organization's 'representatives,' but when Dharmapala returned to the country in 1897, he was able to gather a small core of followers in Chicago who would establish, within a few more years, additional groups in New York and San Francisco. Those few convert followers about whom we have some information were, notably, either Theosophists or active in other liberal movements.[135] Unfortunately, there is very little additional data about the early US Maha Bodhi Society groups; however, since they allowed as members (and were in fact started by) sympathizers in addition to converts, the Society probably could claim only a handful of—perhaps less than twenty—converts by 1910, given their apparently minor growth. Similarly, the Dharma Sangha of Buddha, established in 1900 by Japanese Buddhists in San Francisco, only had seven original members and apparently never obtained more than twenty-five members who were American-born.[136] It seems, then, that Webb's organization was perhaps more successful in the short term than either of these, which suggests that, since Buddhism was much more popular than Islam in mainstream American thought, public appreciation of a religion was not a direct determinant for the success of particular organizations.

There were, nevertheless, some non-Theosophist movements for Asian-majority religions that were verifiably more successful than Webb's. Protap Chunder Mozoomdar was perhaps the first Hindu missionary in the US; however, he appears to have primarily intended to spread information about Hinduism, not to make converts, in his three visits to the country between 1883 and 1900.[137] A more clearly conversion-focused movement was brought by the famous Swami Vivekenanda. After traveling to the country for the World's Parliament of Religions, Vivekenanda established in the US his Vedanta Society, which by 1906 had four American groups and 340 members.[138] Again, data on

134 Tweed, *American Encounter*, 31.

135 Edgar A. Weir, Jr., "The Whiter Lotus: Asian Religions and Reform Movements in America, 1836-1933" (PhD diss., University of Nevada, 2011), 208–17.

136 Weir, Jr., "Whiter Lotus," 217.

137 See Sunrit Mullick, *The First Hindu Missionary to America: The Pioneering Visits of Protap Chunder Mozoomdar* (New Delhi: Northern Book Centre, 2010).

138 Carl T. Jackson, *Vedanta for the West: The Ramakrishna Movement in the United States* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 108.

the early followers is very limited, but Carl T. Jackson has examined existing biographical information of early leading members as well as other clues to offer some generalizations.[139] Every early prominent leader Jackson looked at was either in Theosophy, New Thought/Christian Science, esoteric, or liberal/left-wing communities prior to joining Vivekenanda's movement, with Theosophy and New Thought being most common. With these types of people as leaders, it is highly likely that they were able to bring in other former followers of esoteric and New Thought groups. The two other patterns Jackson noticed in the Vedanta Society were that there were more women than men and that there was a larger proportion of European immigrants than there was in the US overall.[140] Vivekenanda's relative success in gaining converts, then, seems to reflect his greater ability to recruit more from groups that were of the type predisposed to generate people exclusively committed to esoteric and non-Christian religions, and there also may have been something to his group's gaining numerous women and immigrants, neither of which, as far as the evidence shows, were significant in Webb's organization.

The Baha'i Faith

In terms of enrolling official members in an organization, the most successful US conversion movement for what was understood to be an authentic Asian-majority religion was that led by America's early Baha'is. The story of the Baha'is' impressive expansion in the 1890s puts into relief the benefits that could be had by early US Asian-majority religion movements if they successfully attached themselves to New Thought/esoteric organizations, which the early Baha'is did exceedingly well. The early American Baha'i movement also had several direct and thematic connections with Webb's movement, which makes it particularly useful for comparison.

In the 1890s, the American Baha'i movement was led by Ibrahim George Kheiralla, a Lebanese Christian and graduate of the Syrian Protestant College (now known as the American University at Beirut),[141] who first encountered the Baha'i faith in the late 1880s while living in Cairo.[142] Prior to learning about

139 See Jackson, *Vedanta*, 89 ff.

140 Jackson, *Vedanta*, 93.

141 Kheiralla was in fact part of the school's first graduating class.

142 The most valuable works on the early Baha'i movement in the US are Robert H. Stockman, *The Baha'i Faith in America Volume 1: Origins 1892–1900* (Wilmette, IL: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1985); Richard Hollinger, "Ibrahim George Kheiralla and the Baha'i Faith in America," in *Studies in Babi and Baha'i History Volume Two: From Iran East and West*, eds. Juan R. Cole and Moojan Momen (Los Angeles: Kalimat Press, 1982), 95–133; Richard Hollinger, "'Wonderful True Visions': Magic, Mysticism, and Millennialism in the Making

the Baha'is, Kheiralla had taken an interest in the rational study of religion, occult knowledge, and, reportedly, Egyptian Masonry,[143] and it was through his research into the latter topics that he was put in touch with a Persian Baha'i merchant living in Cairo, 'Abdul'l-Karim-i Tihrani. For about two years, Tihrani taught Kheiralla, introducing him to the idea that spiritual powers could be obtained "only through a process of moral and spiritual development," and interspersed through these lessons were ideas about the Baha'i faith, which were presented as important for this occult teaching.[144] The Baha'i movement had emerged as an outgrowth of the mid-nineteenth-century Persian Shi'i-connected 'Babi' movement, in which in 1844 one Siyyid `Alí-Muhammad began proclaiming himself to be the 'Bab' (gate), meaning the foretold messiah. After the Bab was executed in 1850, in 1853 one of his followers, Mírzá Husayn-`Alí Núrí, took the title of Bahá'u'lláh, and claimed that he was the true messiah for which all the world's religions had been waiting. He soon amassed a large following in Persia, which he maintained even after his suppression and exile to Palestine. At the most basic level, Bahá'u'lláh's teachings emphasized three main ideas: that all humanity was a single race and should unite; that all religions come from the same source, God; and that there is only one God, who is the source of all creation—all of which were notions that were popular among Western esotericists, as we have seen. Bahá'u'lláh's full teachings were, of course, a great deal more complex than this, but Kheiralla apparently only learned the very basics from Tihrani, as he was probably mostly interested in Tihrani's promises of occult powers. Nevertheless, in 1889, Kheiralla, who reportedly understood the Baha'i faith as a global occult, Masonic-like order that allowed in members of different faiths, formally joined the movement.

Kheiralla came to the US in December 1892 in order attempt to market inventions he had come up with while living in Cairo. At first, he resided in New York with his Syrian Christian friend, Anton Haddad, who had also been introduced to the Baha'i faith in Cairo, and who had arrived several months earlier to promote one of Kheiralla's inventions. Practically as soon as he gained his bearings, Kheiralla began trying to spread the Baha'i faith to the

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of the American Bahai Community, 1892–1895," in *Search for Values: Ethics in Bahá'í Thought*, eds. John Danesh and Seena Fazel (Los Angeles: Kalimat Press, 2004–05), 207–39. I would also like to thank Dr. Stockman, Mr. Hollinger, and Dr. Cole for answering my many inquiries on the topic. The following account of the Baha'is' early US growth—with the exception of the discussions of the Order of the Magi—is derived almost exclusively from these sources.

143 "Abdel Karim Effendi," *Star of the Magi* (July 1900): 9.

144 Hollinger, "Wonderful True Visions," 210–11.

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 of 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, the

145 "Headquarters Opened"; Kuddus Badsha and Hadi Badsha to Lant, November 2, 1893, John A. Lant Papers.

146 Hollinger, "Wonderful True Visions," 217.

147 Hollinger, "Wonderful True Visions," 220.

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*.[148] 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.[149] Kheiralla, believing his faith's teachings to be from a secret order, did not reveal all he knew to his students, and, as was his modus operandi later, probably interviewed them before deciding which 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.[150]

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.[151] To support himself in these early years, Kheiralla started charging people who came to him for his healing powers.[152] 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.[153] 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.

148 Hollinger, "Wonderful True Visions," 221; Richard Hollinger, email message to the author, February 8, 2014.

149 Hollinger, "Wonderful True Visions," 223.

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.

This achievement was not made simply by Kheiralla becoming increasingly well-known in the Chicago area; a significant factor in this transformation was the movement's establishing a connection with the esoteric group known as the Oriental Order of the Magi.

The Oriental Order of the Magi

In the 1890s, no organization brought together the various elements circulating in the occult revival more completely than the Oriental Order of the Magi (also referred to as the Order of the Magi, OOM, or OM).[154] While the OOM may have been another offshoot of the H.B. of L.,[155] it was without doubt a very different organization. It explicitly incorporated New Thought, homeopathy, spiritualism, astrology, Kabala, tarot, belief in Atlantis, magnetism, pyramidism and Eyptology, interest in ancient (especially oriental) religions, magic mirrors, psychic and magical powers, messianism, hidden superiors, reincarnation, an emphasis on science terminology, Freemasonry, and other ideas popular in the alternative religion milieu. It was, moreover, the first to popularize in an organized esoteric group other much rarer notions, such the claim that the fifty-two-card playing card deck has astrological significance and powers, an astrology that was heliocentric and emphasized knowing the distance of planets from the sun, the belief in life on other planets in our solar system, and the idea that all these types of esoteric teachings should be called 'mathematics.' (Not coincidentally, a number of the OOM's unique notions and practices would reappear in an African American Islamic sect, the Nation of Islam, as will be discussed in *HCTIUS* volume two.) Much like the Theosophical Society's American growth in the 1880s, the OOM's ability to bring together the many alternative religious ideas present in American religious culture at the time appears to have been one of the keys to its success: the majority of its members had often, prior to joining, participated in one or more groups focused around the above concepts, and they believed that the OOM, because it incorporated these teachings along with many others, possessed a higher level of spiritual knowledge.

The OOM had other factors contributing to its success that were similar to those that helped Theosophy spread in America. For instance, the order's

154 As has been mentioned, there has been almost no scholarly work on this group. However, some non-academic researchers have compiled and analyzed documents concerning the group's history; Arline L. Richmond's *Yenlo and the Mystic Brotherhood* ([Chicago]: n.p., 1946) was the first, and it was significantly improved upon by Iain McLaren-Owens, ed., *Articles on the Order of the Magi & Its History*, 3rd ed. (Scottsdale, AZ: Astro-Cards Enterprises, 2007). The following is largely based on their research.

155 For a discussion, see Bowen, introduction to *Letters to the Sage*.

founder and leader, Olney H. Richmond, early on obtained a core group of loyal followers who served as the organization's initial leaders. When Richmond started the OOM in Grand Rapids in 1889, he was the owner of a drug store that sold 'magnetic' and homeopathic products, and his business partner—Louis Judd Shafer—became a head in the occult group, as did Richmond's then-wife Cornelia.[156] Then, Richmond, who was also a widely respected chess and checkers player, had fellow chess and checkers enthusiast E.E. Burlingame establish an early branch of the OOM in Rochester.[157] Richmond even, after a few years of running his order, divorced his first wife and married another early leader in the organization, a follower of numerous alternative religions named Verona Doane.[158] In addition to having these close social bonds among the early leaders, the OOM, like Theosophy, also greatly benefitted from the support of a periodical; in the OOM's case, this was, as noted above, J.R. Francis' *Progressive Thinker*. Lastly, for the OOM, like for Theosophy and Martinism, Masonry was a crucial element in its development. Richmond was himself a Mason and he used the Craft as a foundation upon which he would erect an occult organization that could both incorporate many ideas and, at the same time, emphasize exclusive commitment to particular ones.

In early 1890, Richmond started gaining attention from the Grand Rapids press after telling several locals that he had special insights into the nature and history of the universe, the planet earth, and occult knowledge.[159] By late February, when a reporter visited Richmond's 'temple,' the group supposedly had thirty members, several of whom were Masons, and many of whom lived in different Michigan cities.[160] Richmond explained to the reporter that he was

156 Richmond, *Yenlo*, 71; McLaren-Owens, *Articles*, 2, 3, 112, 205; New York State Association of School Commissioners and Superintendents, *Proceedings of the Thirty-Forth Annual Meeting of the New York State Association of School Commissioners and Superintendents* (Albany: James B. Lyon, 1889), [262]; Order of the Magi certificate for John Osenbaugh, dated July 22, 1882, John Osenbaugh Papers, National Baha'i Archives (this document is signed by Cornelia and Shafer). Shafer sold a book by Richmond for which no copy has been located: *Astropathy*, which in an advertisement claimed to give information on "Astro Magnetic Treatment"; see McLaren-Owens, *Articles*, 2, 3.

157 McLaren-Owens, *Articles*, 1, 95–99; "Syracuse," *Columbia Chess Chronicle*, January 10, 1889, 13; "Mysteries of the Magi," *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle*, February 1, 1886, 14.

158 McLaren-Owens, *Articles*, 163–64; "Mysteries of the Magi." At least two of the names listed by McLaren-Owens as Doane's contacts in Boston—Hulse and Miller—were well-documented as members of the alternative religion community.

159 "A Mysterious Tale," *Grand Rapids Daily Democrat*, March 2, 1890. This article was reprinted in both Richmond, *Yenlo* and McLaren-Owens, *Articles*.

160 *Ibid*.

first introduced to this esoteric knowledge in 1864 in Nashville, where Richmond, who was serving as a Union soldier, was approached by an unnamed stranger.[161] This stranger—who was said to be a Frenchman—knew Richmond's name and birth date, and explained that he had gained his knowledge through his membership in the ancient order of the Magi, a group that had "flourished in Egypt thousands of years ago," but into which he had been initiated in India. The stranger then told Richmond that he (the stranger) was about to die, and that "the powers that rule [him]" had instructed him to convey the magis' secrets to Richmond—who was to be his successor—before this happened. Seven years after his initiation, while Richmond was visiting Chicago, he befriended a Dr. Hamilton from Charleston, South Carolina who gave him an old book that contained "some of the mysterious words which the Frenchman had given [him]."[162] The book "cast a flood of light on [his] studies," and Richmond spent the next eighteen years engaging in deep study of esoteric and historical knowledge. He purportedly learned, among other things, that this order was the true Freemasonry, that it was the true Christianity (believing that Christ was a Magi), that it was based on heliocentric astrology, and that its religion requires no faith because all of its principles would be shown through mathematics and 'proof.' In 1889, "the powers who rule [him]" instructed Richmond to communicate his knowledge to others and form the Oriental Order of the Magi.

By May 1890, Richmond's story had caught the attention of the *Progressive Thinker*, which sent a reporter to visit the Grand Rapids temple two times in May, where the reporter witnessed Richmond perform feats of magic.[163] Soon, not only were more and more readers interested in the order, but so was the magazine's editor, Francis, who, after meeting converted followers in Chicago and seeing some of Richmond's powers for himself, asked Richmond to bring his group to Chicago where the *Progressive Thinker* would become its official organ.[164] Richmond left for Chicago in mid-October and by January the group apparently had over one hundred members, many of which were Masons,

161 *Ibid*. The following narrative is taken from this article.

162 There is of course no evidence corroborating Richmond's claim of meeting these men. Researcher McLaren-Owens, however, has pointed out that it is possible that one of Richmond's distant cousins who was (a) very well versed in religious and Masonic literature and (b) was working at the same hospital Richmond was staying at in the Nashville during the Civil War, may have been the source of Richmond's occult education; see McLaren-Owens, *Articles*, 206–07.

163 McLaren-Owens, *Articles*, 9–16.

164 *Ibid*., 16–26, esp. 21; "Order of the Magi," *Pittsburgh Dispatch*, January 4, 1891, 2.

although a wide variety of alternative religion followers were present as well.[165] The group began receiving a decent amount of attention in the local secular press and, perhaps more importantly, it started attracting a significant following of Scandinavian immigrants. Being part of a minority group—like the German-speaking converts to Islam on the *Philadelphia* in the early 1800s and the immigrants in Vivekenanda's Vedanta Society—meant that the Scandinavians had comparatively strong social bonds, which produced a chain reaction of conversions. The initial impetus was probably the conversion of Bernard C. Petersen, a prominent Norwegian immigrant businessman who since a young age had studied various religious histories, theories, and practices, both popular and obscure.[166] When the World's Parliament of Religions came to town in 1893, Petersen made an effort to learn all he could from the representatives of various beliefs (including Alexander Webb, whom Petersen would still remember in 1897), and he felt confident enough to conclude that only one religion contained the essence of the wisdom of all the others: the OOM.[167] Petersen joined the group, almost immediately becoming a leader and paying for the construction for a new temple for the order.[168] Soon, Scandinavians made up a strong core of the order in Chicago and had spread the group to Scandinavian-heavy cities like Minneapolis and St. Paul, and, evidence suggests, other cities as well.[169] By the end of 1894, in addition to the probably at least 150 members in its several small groups that were spread across the northern part of the country, the Chicago temple now reportedly had over 400 Magi; two years later, the group claimed that one thousand people had been initiated in Chicago and nationwide there were "several thousand" Magi.[170]

In late 1896, however, something had changed in the group. The Magi had begun to proclaim that Chicago was built directly over an ancient city known

165 *Inter Ocean*, January 20, 1894, 4; "Temple of the Magi," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 4, 1892, 44.

166 "Order of the Magi," *Inter Ocean*, January 10, 1897, 24.

167 *Ibid.*

168 *Ibid.*; "Order of the Magi," *Inter Ocean*, December 13, 1896, 16.

169 For Chicago Scandinavian members, see, e.g., A.E. Strand, *A History of the Norwegians of Illinois* (Chicago: John Anderson Publishing Co., 1905), 179. Later, in the early 1930s, there was even a portion of the community that held its Sunday worship rituals in the Norwegian language; see "Welcome to the Magi!," *Magi Star*, June 22, 1931, contained in the A Century of Progress Records, Box 30 Folder 1–729, University of Illinois at Chicago.

170 "He Reads the Stars," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 29, 1894, 4; McLaren-Owens, *Articles*, 44; "Order of the Magi," *Inter Ocean*, December 13, 1896, 16.

as 'Bab.'[171] The Magi, it seems, had begun incorporating the Baha'i teachings of Kheiralla.

Siphoning Recruits

The precise circumstances and date of the Baha'is' coming into contact with the OOM is unknown. It is possible—and perhaps even likely—that Kheiralla had been encountering members since the fall and winter of 1893, when he was meeting esotericists during his tour of Michigan; the OOM's home, Grand Rapids, as pointed out above, was in fact the city in which he originally had wanted to settle. By 1895, Kheiralla must have at least met, through his healing activities, Dr. Chester Ira Thacher, a magnetic healer and homeopath who kept an office at Chicago's Masonic temple and who was an early important leader for the OOM.[172] Thacher would join the Baha'is in 1897 and by 1900 Kheiralla had moved his own office into the same Masonic temple.[173]

The earliest period for which we can confidently connect the Baha'is to the OOM is February 1896, when Sarah G. Herron, who was probably still a member of the OOM at the time, began Kheiralla's Baha'i class, officially converting in May.[174] On October 8, 1896, John Osenbaugh, a former Christian mystic, spiritualist, and OOM member, accepted the Baha'i faith.[175] Both were part of the group of the first thirty American converts, and it is likely that other OOM members were also among the early followers. Then, in 1897, several more OOM members joined, probably making up a significant part of the huge rush of converts that year.[176] The American Baha'is had apparently even successfully tapped into an important well for OOM recruitment: Scandinavian immigrants. Scandinavians, in fact, ended up making up a significant percentage of the early Baha'i community in Chicago and other Midwestern towns.[177] The evidence therefore strongly suggests that Kheiralla's success in spreading the

171 "Order of the Magi," *Inter Ocean*, December 13, 1896, 16.

172 *Inter Ocean*, January 20, 1894, 4; McLaren-Owens, *Articles*, 2, 20;

173 Stockman, *The Baha'i Faith in America Volume 1*, 89–90, 213n2.

174 Stockman, *The Baha'i Faith in America Volume 1*, 39; "Order of the Magi," *Inter Ocean*, December 13, 1896, 16.

175 Handwritten biographical questionnaire, 2, contained in the Osenbaugh Papers.

176 Stockman, *The Baha'i Faith in America Volume 1*, 89–90, 93; Typewritten letter of life events, sections 7–11, contained in the Osenbaugh Papers. Since we do not have a full list of members from each movement to make a comparison, we cannot be sure at this point as to how many early members of the oom joined up with Kheiralla, but the evidence suggests that it was a significant number.

177 *Ibid*., 94, 100, 113–14.

Baha'i faith was largely due to this ability to, in his early years, siphon off many people from the large OOM following.

Given Kheiralla's background in esotericism, the study of religion, New Thought, and Freemasonry—plus the OOM's emphasis on the 'orient'—it is easy to see how a connection between his teachings could have been made by the followers of the OOM. The OOM even had millennial and messianic aspects, which were often not present in other esoteric groups but were present in the Baha'i faith. It was likely due to seeing these links, then, that Richmond, ever ready to incorporate anyone else's doctrines into those of the OOM, added the notion of Chicago being the 'Bab.' Kheiralla, on the other hand, may have borrowed—or may have been inspired by—some of the more Masonic elements in the OOM, such as keeping the teachings secret, teaching only in stages, and having the highest stage of instruction be for the purpose of telling the initiate the true name of God.[178] Kheiralla also probably exploited the tendency for the OOM to claim to incorporate almost all other religious ideas; justified by the Baha'i teaching on the unity of all religions, and using his background in the rational study of religion, Kheiralla would have been prepared to build off of this theme. There was one additional element that Kheiralla had that Richmond did not, however: being from the East himself. Kheiralla was an actual 'oriental'; so, for a religion that stressed authenticity of religious truth, as well as the idea that the orient was where that religious truth was born, by being a Middle Easterner, Kheiralla had a significant advantage vis-à-vis Richmond.

Gaining the OOM members was not the only reason for Kheiralla's success. His followers were amazingly successful at recruiting esotericists and New Thought believers who were not in the OOM in other cities—even connecting with prominent Martinists.[179] Still, the recruitment of the OOM people gave the Baha'is an established philosophical foundation that justified the inclusion of all alternative religious beliefs, permitting proselytizers to confidently claim to almost any potential recruit that their religion subsumed the religion of the recruit. The absorption of a large number of OOM people in a short period was probably exhilarating for the members; generally, rapid growth of a religious organization can create significant emotional excitement, which in turn can spill out in the form of increased proselytization work form existing members, which then grows the group more and thus restarts the cycle.[180] By January

178 *Ibid.*, 52.

179 The relationship between the Baha'is and Martinists is mentioned in Stockman, *The Baha'i Faith in America Volume 1*, 156, but is described more completely in the letters from Blitz to Papus in the FP.

180 See Stark and Finke, *Acts*, 151–55.

1898, the American Baha'is had shot up from sixty members in the previous April to around 300; by September 1898 there were around 700; by May 1899, perhaps 1,100; and by the beginning of 1900, 1,500.[181] No other turn-of-the-century organized movement to promote an Asian-majority religion in the US (if we exclude Theosophy, which many would) had success anywhere close to what the Baha'is had during that period.

Within months, however, it all came crashing down. In 1899, after the Baha'i heads in Persia learned that Kheiralla had invented most of the concepts he had taught his students, they attempted to end the spread of his incorrect views and have Kheiralla give up his position so other teachers—who had technical knowledge of Bahá'u'lláh's doctrines—could correct the errors. Kheiralla, however, ultimately refused to give up his power. He broke off from the main movement, taking a few followers with him; meanwhile, about half of the original converts eventually left the faith, many surely disillusioned and embarrassed by their having believed completely invented information.[182] Recruitment for both factions, meanwhile, briefly came to a virtual standstill and never resumed the conversion rates of the earlier years. Kheiralla had lost a great deal of the respect and legitimacy he had once had and the reformed faction, without being able to make the strong, multiple connections with all the various alternative religion groups, did not have the appeal the earlier movement had. They could no longer hope for waves of converts; at best the occasional small group of friends who were Theosophists, esotericists, or New Thought followers would join independently. The Baha'is had now become like all the other Asian religion conversion groups.

Conclusion

Kheiralla's background and skills that made him knowledgeable and flexible enough to appeal to a wide variety of Americans were rare, and his coming into contact with the young OOM—which was at the same time both one of the most popular esoteric groups of the 1890s and a perfect fit for Kheiralla's occult-influenced notions about the Baha'i faith—was for him an incredible stroke of luck. Neither Webb, nor any other promoter of a non-Christian religion in the 1890s and early 1900s, had been so fortunate. In fact, nothing like it would be repeated for several years because most of the foreign proselytizers for non-Christian religions were relatively well-trained in and committed to their

181 Stockman, *The Baha'i Faith in America Volume 1*, 104, 158, xiii.

182 *Ibid.*, 158–84, 191.

groups' teachings, and were only minimally familiar with American esotericism. Even most American promoters of non-Christian religions, meanwhile, did not have the knowledge and skills to reach the variety of people that Olney Richmond could, and they certainly did not have the 'oriental' appeal of the Eastern immigrants. While American notions and prejudices about Asian-majority religions probably played some role in the growth of those religions in the turn-of-the-century US, the ability to recruit directly from other similar religious movements and immigrant communities was the key for success in drawing converts at the time. The relative failure of Webb and other Muslim proselytizers reflects their relative inability to recruit successfully and incorporate multiple occult revival movements.

Although great success could be had only under very rare conditions, the fact that it was even possible, and that smaller groups could still thrive as well, reflects the major religious metamorphosis that the United States had gone through since the early 1800s. The de- and reterritorialization of American religiosity—through international contacts, the spread of Transcendentalism, the emergence of spiritualism, and the creation of organized occult groups—transformed the country from a land in which converts to Asian-majority religions were virtually unheard of and where those who embraced Islam were labeled as traitorous 'renegades,' to a place where perhaps thousands of whites freely criticized the Christianity of their parents and identified themselves as followers as Buddhists, Hindus, Baha'is, and Muslims. A real non-Christian religious market had finally been established.

The implications of this transition were immediately felt. Self-proclaimed oriental masters, prophets, messiahs, Rosicrucians, swamis, astrologers, healers, clairvoyants, and fakirs began springing up left and right. Competition for the attention and money of the liberal, radically deterritorialized American religious public was now intense. Success would go to those who did not just innovate, but offered something extremely rare and valuable, and did it in a refined way. The winners in this new religious market would still often have to appeal to American religious tastes and cultures, but this was becoming easier as those tastes expanded. As the Civil War generation died off and the US prepared to enter the First World War, the country would see a brand new wave of non-Christian identities and movements that were both much better prepared for and welcomed by the country's deterritorializing culture. Beginning in the second and third decades of the twentieth century, Islam and Sufism would finally take root and create, for the first time, lasting movements and communities.