

Guide to  
the Microfilm Edition  
of the

**FBI File on  
The Moorish Science  
Temple of America**

(Noble Drew Ali)

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## Introduction

In 1913 the Prophet Noble, Drew Ali, founded the Moorish Science Temple of America in Newark, New Jersey. Preaching a synthesis of orthodox Islam, black nationalism, and Christian revivalism, he and his followers offered first-generation urban African Americans a religion that addressed black consciousness and frustrations. The Temple's following peaked between the two world wars and declined thereafter. Ali's teachings laid the basis for the modern black Islamic tradition in the United States, with the Nation of Islam being the most notable progeny.

Little is known of Ali's life before the founding of the Moorish Science Temple of America. Born Timothy Drew in North Carolina in 1886, he spent his early years among the state's Cherokee tribe. At some point, Drew became part of the growing wave of African Americans moving north, finding work as a railway brakeman. It is unknown what prophecy transformed Timothy Drew into Prophet Drew Ali, but he began preaching in Newark some time after 1910. The foundation of his teachings, and the most radical part of the Temple's canon of faith, was the belief that African Americans descended from the Moors, not Ethiopians, and thus were Asiatic in origin, not African. Ali believed that this misconception originated in America's Revolutionary Continental Congress, which stripped the Moors of their identity and labeled them Africans in order to create a permanent underclass for the new nation.

Drew Ali preached that the rediscovery of this Moorish heritage would bring salvation and liberation to black Americans. Thus, his followers attempted to reclaim their Moorish heritage. They took Moorish-sounding names, often by adding "Bey" or "El", to their names and many began wearing the fez. Initially, they carried ID cards that proved their Moorish identity and would accost whites in the street who treated them as Africans.

The rediscovery of black America's true racial heritage provided the core upon which the Temple built its

canon. Since black Americans were Asiatic, Ali taught that Islam was their natural religion. He preached that a return to this true religion would bring unity and advancement for the race. However, the Temple did not offer pure Islam but rather a synthesis of the teachings of Mohammed and Protestant Christianity, held together with the black separatist belief that emerged among many black American intellectuals around the turn of the century. For example, some believed that Jesus Christ was a black man executed by white Romans and that Marcus Garvey was John the Baptist to Drew Ali's Jesus. Ali's religion also manifested itself in the conviction that the white race was the opposite and negative of blacks, soon to be destroyed by the divine retribution of God. As radical and dangerous as many of these beliefs appear, especially considering the Jim Crow society in which they were proffered, Ali was a political conservative who stressed obedience to the law and an avoidance of radicalism.

Ali moved the Temple headquarters to Chicago in 1925. There, for his movement, he published *The Holy Koran*, which combined the story of the blacks' creation and fall with ideas from the true *Koran* and the writings of spiritualist Levi Dowting. In 1928, Ali died under mysterious circumstances, yet the Temple continued to grow. In the interwar years the Temple spread across the nation, reaching its zenith just prior to the Second World War. By the end of the 1940s, however, the Temple began a decline. It remains active today, now headquartered in Baltimore, Maryland.

The Moorish Science Temple of America reflects, and is part of, a larger cultural current in the lives of northern and urban black Americans at the turn of the century, one in which resulted in an explosion of new religions. The vast majority of blacks were migrants from the rural South and new to northern urban life. They flooded churches in search of spiritual security in their alien surroundings. Established churches failed to address these migrants' problems; thus, a number of new religions emerged, including

the Moorish Science Temple of America. This brand of religious revival, characterized by its emphasis on racial restoration, reflected black America's frustrations, the harshness of its life, and the near destruction of the black race during the first years of the twentieth century.

The Temple's key tenet, the denial that black Americans were African, appealed to many in the early part of this century as white Americans institutionalized the Jim Crow system throughout the nation and supported the revival of the Ku Klux Klan. The claim of Moorish, and thus Asiatic, heritage liberated the Temple's followers from the humiliations, degradations and physical violence imposed upon their race, at least psychologically.

J. Edgar Hoover and the FBI's interest in Drew Ali and his movement are self-evident. Despite Ali's political conservatism, he represented a threat to the status quo. His message of the imminent destruction of the white race was clearly subversive to the white power structure. He had created a potentially explosive breeding ground for black radicals who were motivated by religion and race, a frightening combination to any ruling elite. For four decades, beginning in the 1930s, the Bureau investigated the Moorish Science Temple for alleged anticapitalistic attitudes and efforts to incite revolution. The files were collected geographically from various field offices, including the Temple's Chicago headquarters, and other main centers of activity, particularly Baltimore and Philadelphia. Each office's reports are filed chronologically.

The documents reproduced here were drawn from the Washington files of the FBI and have been released under the Freedom of Information Act. Pursuant to the provisions of that legislation, the FBI has deleted certain documents or portions of documents. The material was filmed in the exact order and condition in which it was released, and every effort has been made to publish the most legible copies available.

This file is in approximate chronological order, and the FBI did not index documents. The Roll Notes is not a

complete inventory of the file; however, it gives an indication of the types of material or specific documents that may be particularly worthwhile for research.

Paul R. Beezley

## Roll Notes

### PART 1

FBI File: 62-25889

Roll 1, 0003-0237

#### SECTION 1

*Sep 1931-Nov 1942*

Background information into the Moorish Science Temple of America

Copy of: "The Great Judgment is on. Who Shall be Able to Stand? The Cause & the Cure"

Internal Security: Moorish Science Temple of America

Japanese influence into the Moorish Science Temple

Copy of: "Koran Questions for Moorish Americans"

Copy of: "Questionnaire and Additional Laws for the Moorish Americans" by the Prophet Noble Drew Ali

Copy of: "The Holy Koran," Divine Instructions from the Holy Prophet, Noble Drew Ali

Copy of "Divine Constitution and By-Laws, the Moorish Science Temple of America

File on Robert Washington, organizer of the Moorish Science Temple of America

Internal Security: Sedition

File on C. Kirkman Bey

Excerpt from: "Divine Instructions from the Holy Prophet"

Investigation of St. Mary's Church and Power Center of Applied Christianity (Louisville, KY) as a front for the Moorish Science Temple of America

#### SECTION 2

Roll 1, 0238-0366

*Dec 1942-Feb 1943*

Internal Security

No branch of the Moorish Science Temple of America present in San Diego

Investigation of St. Mary's Church (Louisville, KY)

Background information on C. Kirkman Bey, "Supreme Grand Advisor"

Investigation Moorish Science Temple established at Prince George, VA

Investigation of members of the Moorish Science Temple  
in possible violation of the Selective Service Act  
Moorish Science Temple allegedly tied to the overthrow or  
destruction of the government

**Part 2**

SECTION 3

**Roll 1, 0367-0500**

*Feb-Mar 1943*

Internal Security: Selective Service, Sedition  
Investigation into alleged pro-Japanese tendencies at  
Moorish Science Temple, New Haven, CT  
Background of Ruben Frazier Bey of Indiana  
Investigation of Moorish Science Temple of America in  
Mississippi  
Background information on Robert Washington  
Copies of "The Moorish Voice" (Feb 1943)  
Activities of the Moorish Science Temple

SECTION 4

**Roll 1, 0501-0559**

*Mar-Apr 1943*

Internal Security: Sedition  
Questionnaire and Additional Laws for the Moorish  
Americans by the Prophet Noble Drew Ali

**FBI File: 62-25889**

SECTION 5

**Roll 1, 0560-0641**

*Feb-Apr 1943*

Selective Service  
Internal Security: Sedition  
Background information on seven Moorish Science  
Temples in New Jersey

SECTION 6

**Roll 1, 0642-0739**

*Apr 1943*

Internal Security: Sedition  
Internal Security: Custodial Detention

**Part 3**

SECTION 7

**Roll 1, 0742-0897**

*Apr-Jun 1943*

Internal Security: Selective Service, Sedition  
"The Moorish Voice," Mar-Apr 1943

SECTION 8

**Roll 1, 0898-1024**

*Apr-Jun 1943*

Internal Security: Custodial Detention  
Internal Security: Selective Service, Sedition

SECTION 9

**Roll 1, 1025-1119**

*Jun-Aug 1943*

Internal Security: Sedition, Selective Service  
Investigation of Selective Service status of various  
members of the Moorish Science Temple

**Part 4**

SECTION 10

**Roll 1, 1122-1218**

*Aug-Sep 1943*

Internal Security: Sedition, Selective Service  
Background information on Drew Noble Ali founder of  
the Moorish Science Temple and early conflicts within  
this organization  
Investigation of alleged "pro-Japanese" teachings of the  
Moorish Science Temple

SECTION 11

**Roll 1, 1219-1315**

*Sep-Oct 1943*

Internal Security: Sedition  
Investigation of the Moorish Science Temple of America,  
Kansas City, MO  
Investigation of the Moorish Science Temple, Camden, NJ  
Internal Security: Selective Service

SECTION 12

**Roll 1, 1316-END**

*Oct-Nov 1943*

Internal Security: Sedition, Selective Service

Investigation of the Moorish Science Temple, Becket, MA  
Investigation of the Moorish Science Temple,  
Kansas City, MO  
Investigation of draft status of members of various  
Moorish Science Temples

**Part 5**

SECTION 13 **Roll 2, 0002-0067**

*Nov-Dec 1943*

Internal Security: Selective Service  
Investigation of draft status of members of various  
Moorish Science Temples

Excerpts from "The Holy Koran" of Noble Drew Ali, out-  
lining the association of the Moors, the Asiatics,  
and the Japanese

SECTION 14 **Roll 2, 0068-0181**

*Dec 1943-Mar 1944*

Internal Security: Selective Service, Sedition  
Investigation into the Moorish Science Temple of America  
Excerpts from pamphlet: "Koran Questions for Moorish  
Americans"

Selective Service status of C. Kirkman Bey  
Investigation into activities of C. Kirkman Bey

**FBI File: 62-25889**

SECTION 15 **Roll 2, 0182-0301**

*Mar-May 1944*

Internal Security: Sedition, Selective Service

**Part 6**

SECTION 16 **Roll 2, 0306-0417**

*May-Sep 1944*

Internal Security: Selective Service, Sedition  
Investigation of fire at the Moorish Science Temple Estate,  
Becket, MA

Investigation of Selective Service status of Moorish  
Science Temple members in Richmond, VA

Investigation into charge by C. Kirkman Bey that all  
Temples operating independently of his  
organization are fraudulent  
Moorish Science Temples report racial discrimination in  
the United States and Great Britain

SECTION 17

**Roll 2, 0418-0498**

*Sep 1944-Aug 1945*

Internal Security: Selective Service, Sediton  
Investigation of Selective Service status of Moorish  
Science Temple members

Excerpts from Temple leaflet "Church of God and Saints  
of Christ" handed out in Bridgeport, CT

SECTION 18

**Roll 2, 0499-0578**

*Jun 1945-Oct 1974*

Internal Security: Sediton, Selective Service  
Investigation of Selective Service status of Moorish  
Science Temple members

Background information on Col. C. Kirkman Bey  
Investigation of individual "Branches" of the Moorish  
Science Temple

Information regarding the Ethiopian Peace Movement  
Moorish Science Temple of America files civil suit action  
in the U.S. District Court, Philadelphia, PA (Jul 1973)

**Part 7**

ENCLOSURES BEHIND FILE

**Roll 2, 0580-1065**

*Apr 1940-Jun 1943*

Subversive Activities

Investigation into report that Japanese Chamber of  
Commerce Officials spoke before the Hartford, CT  
Chapter of the Moorish Science Temple of America

Excerpts from the Holy Koran of the Moorish Science  
Temple of America

Excerpts from "The Moorish Voice" (Nov 1942-Jan 1943)

Investigation of members of the Moorish Science Temple  
of America as possible security risks

Interviews with various members of the Moorish Science Temple in regard to alleged Japanese influence with the Temple

Excerpts from "The Moorish Voice" (May-Jun 1943)

Excerpts from "The Holy Koran" of the Moorish Science Temple of America

**Part 8**

**FBI File: 25-371604**

**Roll 2, 1068-1089**

*May-Sep 1953*

Selective Service Act of 1948; Sedition

Investigation of Conscientious Objector status among members of the Moorish Science Temple of America

**FBI File: 66-2542-3-9**

**Roll 2, 1090-1092**

No material in this file

**FBI File: 157-8441**

**Roll 2, 1093-1102**

*Mar 1968*

Information on Charles Kirkman Bey, Supreme Grand Advisor of the Moorish Science Temple of America

Notes on the Nation of Islam

**Part 9**

**FBI File: 100-8420**

**Roll 2, 1103-1154**

*Sep 1943-Oct 1974*

Information from a meeting conducted at the Moorish Science Temple of America No. 13 (Baltimore, MD)

Internal Security: Sedition, Selective Service

**FBI File: 100-10995**

**Roll 2, 1155-1223**

*Mar 1943-Sep 1945*

File notes taken from anonymous informants re: Moorish Science Temple of America

News articles include:

*Berkshire Evening Eagle:*

"Religious Group Buys Property in Becket"

(Jan 1944)

"Will Establish Moorish University in Becket"

(Feb 1944)

"Moors Meet in Convention at Becket" (Sep 1944)

Internal Security: Selective Service, Sedition

**FBI File: 100-6603**

**Roll 2, 1224-END**

SECTIONS 1 and 2

*Jun 1942-Sep 1944*

Investigation of allegations that the Moorish Science  
Temple of America is a pro-Japanese organization

**FBI File: 100-6603**

**Roll 2, 1224-END**

SECTIONS 1 and 2 (continued)

Loyalty and Character Report

Internal Security

Moorish Science Temple of America Divine Constitution  
and By-Laws

**Part 10**

**FBI File: 61-293**

**Roll 3, 0244-0410**

SECTION 1

*May 1942-Mar 1943*

Sedition

Background information on the Moorish Science Temple  
Report of alleged Japanese influence in the Moorish  
Science Temple of America

Surveillance of meetings at the Moorish Science Temple  
Pamphlets from the Faith Publishing House, Guthrie, OK

SECTION 2

**Roll 3, 0411-0546**

*Mar-Jun 1943*

Internal Security

Dues card, Moorish Science Temple of America

Selective Service status of members of the Moorish  
Science Temple

Excerpt from:

*People's Voice* (Apr 1943)

"Moors Get Government Backing"

Investigation of Japanese influence in the Moorish Science  
Temple of America

**Part 11**

SECTION 3 **Roll 3, 0549-0574**  
*Jun 1943*  
Internal Security: Sedition, Selective Service

SECTION 4 **Roll 3, 0575-0609**  
*Sep 1943*  
Internal Security: Selective Service, Sedition

SECTION 5 **Roll 3, 0610-0653**  
*Feb-Mar 1944*  
Prof. Drew, the Egyptian Adept Student  
Domestic Intelligence Memorandum No. 5  
Origin and History: Moorish Science Temple  
of America

SECTION 6 **Roll 3, 0654-0720**  
*Mar 1944*  
Internal Security: Sedition, Selective Service

SECTION 7 **Roll 3, 0721-0809**  
*Sep 1944-May 1960*  
Internal Security: Sedition  
Moroccan United Organizations Federations  
Selective Service Act of 1948, Conscientious Objector  
Nation of Islam (NOI) Internal Security

**Part 12**

**FBI File: 157-2486** **Roll 3, 0811-0818**  
*May 1973*

**FBI File: 157-6834** **Roll 3, 0819-0831**  
No material in this file

**FBI File: 157-2087** **Roll 3, 0832-0847**  
No material in this file

**FBI File: 157-8299** **Roll 3, 0848-0871**  
*Aug-Nov 1973*  
Legal matters between the Moorish Science Temple of  
America and the United States

**FBI File: 157-3805** **Roll 3, 0872-0875**  
No material in this file

**FBI File: 157-5734** **Roll 3, 0876-0890**  
*May 1969-Dec 1975*  
Blackman's Volunteer Army of Liberation (BVAL)

**FBI File: 157-7766** **Roll 3, 0891-0898**  
No material in this file

**FBI File: 157-5338** **Roll 3, 0899-0920**  
*Oct 1978*

**FBI File: 157-7522** **Roll 3, 0921-0937**  
SECTION 1  
*Mar 1973*  
Extremist Muslim Groups and Violence  
The Moorish Science Temple of America

SECTION 2 **Roll 3, 0938-0958**  
*May 1973*  
Moorish Science Temple of America, questionable security  
references  
Extremist Muslim Groups and Violence  
News article: *Chicago Defender* (Sep 1974)  
"Slaying in Temple Probed by Police"

**Part 13**  
**FBI File: 100-14714**  
SECTION 1 **Roll 3, 0961-1004**  
*Nov 1942-Mar 1943*  
Internal Security: Sedition, Selective Service  
Investigation of C. Kirkman Bey

SECTION 2 **Roll 3, 1005-1099**  
*Jul 1943-Sep 1959*  
Internal Security: Selective Service, Sedition  
Includes: Homestead Subscription Certificate  
Dues card, Per Capita Tax Card  
Agreement for Sale of Real Estate, Camden, NJ (1943)

**FBI File: 100-33742** **Roll 3, 1100-1147**  
SECTION 1  
*Apr 1942-Feb 1943*  
Japanese Race Propaganda Among Negroes  
Internal Security: Moorish American Organization

SECTION 2 **Roll 3, 1148-1226**  
*Apr-May 1943*  
Internal Security: Moorish American Religious League of  
the U.S.  
Internal Security: Sedition, Selective Service

SECTION 3 **Roll 3, 1227-1308**  
*Sep 1943-Apr 1964*  
Internal Security: Sedition  
News article: *NY Amsterdam News* (Aug 1944)  
"Ex-Harlemite Rings Liberty Bell in Philly"  
News article: "Moors Buy \$175,000 Home"  
(uncredited newspaper clipping)

**Part 14**  
**FBI File: 100-5698** **Roll 3, 1311-1412**  
SECTION 1  
*Sep 1942-Feb 1943*  
Internal Security: Negro Cult  
Investigation of the Moorish Science Temple, Prince  
George County, VA  
Internal Security: Sedition  
"The Moorish Voice" (Feb 1943)

SECTION 2

**Roll 3, 1413-1466**

*Apr 1943-Feb 1954*

Internal Security: Moorish Science Temple of America

Internal Security: Sedition

**FBI File: 100-4094**

SECTION 1

**Roll 3, 1467-1535**

*May 1942-Sep 1944*

Internal Security: Sedition

Reported Disaffection in Negro Cult

SECTION 2

**Roll 3, 1536-END**

*May 1943-Oct 1959*

U.S. Naval Intelligence Service: Moorish Science Temple  
of America

Internal Security: Custodial Detention, Sedition

Investigation of Col. C. Kirkman Bey

Internal Security: Sedition, Selective Service