

A SUDANESE MISSIONARY TO THE  
UNITED STATES:  
SĀTTĪ MĀJID, ‘SHAYKH AL-ISLĀM IN NORTH  
AMERICA’, AND HIS ENCOUNTER WITH NOBLE  
DREW ALI, PROPHET OF THE MOORISH SCIENCE  
TEMPLE MOVEMENT\*

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For Dr. Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Abū Salīm, to commemorate his retirement  
as Secretary-General of the National Records Office, Khartoum.

*Introduction*

Sometime in the late 1920s there was an encounter, direct or indirect we do not know for certain, between two figures from two very different traditions of ‘Islam’. The present article partially documents this encounter, presenting a tantalising glimpse of African American Islam’s earliest encounter with global Sunnī Islam. On the one side is a Sudanese *‘ālim*, the very model of Nile Valley Islamic orthodoxy; on the other is an African American, a generation only removed from slavery, an actor in the great northward migration that

\* This article presents the texts and translations of various documents from a book found by Abu Shouk and O’Fahey in the National Record Office, Khartoum. We give them here as a contribution to both African-American and Sudanese history, but while we can claim some expertise in the latter, we have none in the former. O’Fahey wishes to thank the Norwegian Universities Fund for Development Studies (NUFU) for financial support and Dr Ali Salih Karrar and his staff at the National Records Office in Khartoum for their unfailingly courteous assistance. Abu Shouk has earlier published, ‘Sāttī Mājid al-Sūdānī alladhī aṣḥaḥa shaykhan li’l-Islām fī Amrīka’, *al-Multaqā*, Khartoum, August 1993.

was to transform the African American worldview, as it was later to transform world music. The Sudanese *‘ālim* was Sāṭī Mājid Muḥammad al-Qāḏī from Dongola; the African-American was Timothy Drew, later known as Noble Drew Ali, from North Carolina. The topic also opens up new avenues for research into the missionizing activities of immigrant Sunnis, Aḥmadīs, and other Muslim groups, and for the history of the Moorish Science Temple, which latter movement may, in some sense, have been—even unconsciously—a link between the Islam of some African slaves in the antebellum South and the Lost and Found Nation of Islam of Elijah Muhammad.<sup>1</sup>

*Sāṭī Mājid Muḥammad al-Qāḏī Suwār al-Dhahab*

The Sudanese are not known as a nation of wanderers (although today three million Sudanese are estimated to live outside their country). But there are, of course, exceptions. The nineteenth century Ja<sup>‘</sup>aliyyīn diaspora of itinerant traders, from petty peddlers to merchant conquerors like al-Zubayr Pasha (1830-1913), that established networks and states from Lake Chad to Ethiopia has been relatively well studied.<sup>2</sup> Another type of Sudanese diaspora arose when the British employed Sudanese as teachers of Arabic, junior administrators and judges in Northern Nigeria and South Arabia in the 1940s and 1950s. More individually motivated were the careers of one or two adventurous figures who exploited new opportunities far from home.<sup>3</sup>

1 See Michael A. Gomez, ‘Muslims in early America’, *Journal of Southern History*, ix, 4, November 1994, 671-710. See also Allan D. Austin, *African Muslims in antebellum America: transatlantic stories and spiritual struggles*, New York 1997.

2 See Anders Björkelo, *Prelude to the Mahdiyya: Peasants and traders in the Shendi Region, 1821-1885*, Cambridge 1989.

3 On a near contemporary of Sāṭī Mājid who was to have a distinguished career as an Islamic modernist reformer in Indonesia, see R.S. O’Fahey and M.I. Abu Salim, ‘A Sudanese in Indonesia. A note on Ahmad

Sāttī Mājīd was born in al-Ghaddār in Old Dongola in 1300/1883; his father was from the Zayādāb section of the Dahmashiyya Bidayriyya and a member of a well-known Sudanese holy family, the Suwār al-Dhahab.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, when he finally returned to the Sudan, he seems to have claimed the headship of the family, calling himself on his visiting card (below),<sup>5</sup> *raʿīs sajjādat usrat Suwār al-Dhahab bi-Dunqulā al-ʿAjūz*, ‘Head of the Suwār al-Dhahab family in Old Dongola’.

الرواق بالله  
السيد ساتي ماجد سوار الذهب  
شيخ الاسلام بأمريكا الشمالية – سابقاً  
ورئيس سجادة اسرة سوار الذهب بدنقلا العجوز

Sayed S. Magid Mohamed  
Pr. Sheikh Al Eslam  
of the U. S. A.

Sāttī’s first teacher was a Shaykh ʿAwaḍ, with whom he began the memorization of the Qurʾān. He then went to the *masīd*, or mosque/school, of another shaykh, Aḥmad Abū Zayd Wadīdī, in the village called Rūmī, where he completed the memorization of the Qurʾān.<sup>6</sup>

The next date we know with some certainty in Sāttī’s life

Muhammad Surkitti’, *Indonesia Circle*, 59–60, November 1992– March 1993, 68-72.

- 4 On the origin of the family, see Ali Salih Karrar, *The Sufi Brotherhoods in the Sudan*, London 1992, 25, 59. On the Bidayriyya, see H.A. MacMichael, *A History of the Arabs in the Sudan*, Reprint London 1967, I, 201-3.
- 5 ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd Muḥammad Aḥmad, *Shiyākhāt al-Islām fī Amrikā, Sāttī Mājīd Muḥammad al-Qāḍī 1904-1929*, Khartoum: Wizārat al-thaqāfa wa’l-ā’lām 1978, 9.
- 6 Al-Ṭāyīb Muḥammad al-Ṭāyīb, *al-Masīd*, Khartoum 1991, 89, where a piece of doggerel by Wadīdī remembered by Sāttī Mājīd is given. Al-Ṭāyīb says he obtained the information from Sāttī Muḥammad b. Sāttī Mājīd, a well-known lawyer in Omdurman.

is 1904, when, at the age of twenty-one, he apparently arrived in the United States.<sup>7</sup> He had left the Sudan at an uncertain date, but probably after 1900, intending to make for Egypt and study at al-Azhar. It is not clear if he ever spent any significant amount of time in Cairo, for the next thing we learn is that he had moved on to England. No reason is given for this rather drastic change of direction. One may guess from the nationalities of the two friends he made in England, that he went as a sailor. There, with the friends, a Kenzī Nubian who had already learnt English, and a Yemeni,<sup>8</sup> he founded an Islamic missionary society (*jam<sup>ʿ</sup>iyyat li'l-tabshīr bi-dīn al-Islām*), the first of several such organizations that he was to found and so tirelessly work for.<sup>9</sup> He also started to preach, his sermons being translated into English.

Of his going to America there are two versions, one vague and brief, the other very precise and detailed. The brief version is given by Sāttī Mājīd himself in an autobiographical fragment

7 We have two major sources for Sāttī's life; one is Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Raḥīm's *al-Nidāʾ fi dafʿ al-iftirāʾ* (Cairo 1371/1953, 328-30), based on the author's interview with Sāttī. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Raḥīm was himself a Dahmashī Bidayrī and his writings contain much on the history and personalities of his people. On ʿAbd al-Raḥīm, see ʿAlī Ṣāliḥ Karrār, Yaḥyā Muḥammad Ibrāhīm and R.S. O'Fahey, 'The life and writings of a Sudanese historian: Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Raḥīm (1878-1966)', *SAJHS*, 6, 1995, 125-36. Our second major source is ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd Muḥammad Aḥmad's, *Shiyākhāt al-Islām fi Amrikā*. The copy we are using is in the National Records Office, Khartoum, Miscellaneous 1/258/3403. There are, however, additional papers on or by Sāttī elsewhere in the National Records Office. In 1995 ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd revised, added new chapters to and published his book under the title: *al-Dāʿiyya al-islāmiyya al-Sudāniyya bi-Amrika, 1904-1929*, Khartoum.

8 Yemenis from Aden, a British colony since 1839, had been serving on British ships since at least the 1850s. The Yemeni settlement in and around Newcastle and South Shields dates back to 1870s and is one of the oldest, if not the oldest, Arab communities in Western Europe. The British in Egypt often had Nubian servants, as did indeed upper class Egyptians, so the Kenzī Nubian may have come to England as a servant.

9 ʿAbd al-Raḥīm, *al-Nidāʾ*, 328.

entitled *Taʾrīkh intishār al-Islām fī Amrīkā*, ‘A history of the spread of Islam in America’, evidently written in Cairo sometime after his return there in 1929.<sup>10</sup> Here he talks of how he went to America<sup>11</sup> and in vague terms of his dismay at the anti-Islamic writings he found in the newspapers of the *bilād al-ḥurriyya waʾl-ʿadāla*, ‘the land of freedom and justice’.<sup>12</sup> He continues by saying that he tried to have articles published defending Islam against these calumnies, but was not very successful. It was then that he decided to establish an Islamic Benevolent Society.

In the second version, it is the missionary society he founded in England that is said to have delegated him to travel the United States to counter anti-Islamic propaganda allegedly being published in the *New York Times*.<sup>13</sup> His biographer tells us that before his arrival, the only official Islamic presence in the United States was that of the Ottoman ambassador in Washington, Aḥmad Rustum Bey, the Ottoman Consul-General in New York, Jalāl Bey, and the imam of the Embassy’s mosque in Washington, Shaykh Muḥammad ʿAlī. Their missionary effort is said to have attracted a number of Syrians to America, among them Shaykh Salmān Badūr al-

- 10 It is written on a headed notepaper from Hotel Port–Fouad. Presumably it was written as part of his campaign to be officially appointed as an Azharī missionary in the United States; see further below. A truncated version of it is given in Aḥmad, *Shiyākha*, 21-2.
- 11 In a notarized document from 1929, evidently made to obtain a re-entry visa to the USA in connexion with his journey to Egypt in that year, he gives New Orleans as his point of entry into the USA.
- 12 Elsewhere he writes ‘Unkal Sām’ for the U.S.A.
- 13 Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Raḥīm, *al-Nidāʾ*, 329. Earlier, in 1895, the *New York Times* had under the title ‘Fall of Islam in America’ gleefully reported the dissensions and downfall of the first recorded Islamic missionary enterprise in New York State, that of the American journalist and convert, Alexander Russell Webb; see Marc Ferris, ‘To “Achieve the Pleasure of Allah”: immigrant Muslims in New York City’, in Yvonne Y. Haddad and Jane I. Smith (eds.), *Muslim Communities in North America*, New York 1994, 210-11.

Drūzī<sup>14</sup> who in 1910 was to establish a newspaper, *al-Bayān*, in New York. Others who came were a group from Ba'albek, who included Shaykhs Khaṭṭār Yūsuf al-Dayrānī and Aḥmad Ḥamza Fawwār.<sup>15</sup>

It was in this context that Sāṭṭī Mājid came to New York and set to work. When the *New York Times* refused to publish his articles in defence of Islam, Sāṭṭī Mājid took the newspaper to court to force them to publish his articles or pay \$200,000 in damages for pillorying Islam and insulting its dignity. The court found in Sāṭṭī's favour. The whole episode caused a great stir; Sāṭṭī Mājid became known as *Shaykh al-Islām fi 'l-Amrīkā* and a number of American, Afghans, Indians and Africans converted to Islam.<sup>16</sup>

The problem with this version of events is that there is no clear reflection of this in the columns of the *New York Times*, at least insofar as we have been able to establish. The second account of Sāṭṭī's coming to America and his later encounter with Noble Drew Ali seems more reminiscent of the Aḥmadī missionary, Ghulām Aḥmad, and his encounter with an anti-Islamic Illinois Catholic priest, John A. Dowie, a.k.a. the Prophet Elijah.<sup>17</sup>

14 Who, despite his name, was presumably a Sunnī Muslim and not a Druze.

15 Interview with Sāṭṭī Mājid, see the newspaper *al-Balāgh*, Cairo, no. 2921, 14 August 1935.

16 *Ibid.*

17 'One account of Ahmadi involvement in the United States describes the virulently anti-Muslim campaign of John A. Dowie, a Catholic priest in Illinois who is said to have proclaimed himself to be the Prophet Elijah. In the first decade of the twentieth century Dowie devoted himself to preaching the destruction of Islam. "I pray to God that the day of destruction of Islam approach nearer. O God! Do like that, O God, bring destruction to Islam". Hearing of Dowie's attack on Islam, Ghulam Ahmad [an Aḥmadī missionary] invoked the mubahala [*mubāhala*, i.e., the curse of God], publishing a formal challenge in which he called on the preacher to stop his diatribe and enter into a prayer contest. According to the terms of the contest, whoever was a liar would die during the lifetime of the one who was telling the truth. Followers of Ghulam Ahmad believe that their leader

Meeting with little success against the might of the American press, Sāttī Mājid decided that a more profitable course of action would be to establish various benevolent societies to promote Islam and serve the Muslim community. Thus he founded, presumably at different times, the following,

- (a) the Muslim Unity Society – *jamʿiyyat al-ittihād al-Islāmī*,
- (b) the Islamic Missionary Society – *al-jamʿiyya al-tabshīriyya al-Islāmiyya*,
- (c) the Red Crescent Society – *jamʿiyyat al-hilāl al-aḥmar*,
- (d) the Islamic Benevolent Society – *al-jamʿiyya al-khayriyya al-Islāmiyya*.

Again, there is a large chronological gap in our picture of Sāttī Mājid’s life, for we have to wait some seventeen years before we catch a glimpse of him again. In 1921 we encounter him in New York, and obtain a vivid picture of his engagement in the welfare of migrant or sojourning Muslims in the New York area through a series of letters exchanged between Sāttī on the one hand and the British Consulate-General in New York and Embassy in Washington, dated between 4 August and 15 September 1921.<sup>18</sup> The first letter in the series adequately explains the issues involved,

Rev. Majid Mohamed  
22 West Street  
New York

August 4th 1921

To His Excellency,

won the contest, in which the American press took great interest, since Dowie became paralyzed, went insane, and finally died. A local newspaper reported that Ghulam Ahmad regarded “the misfortunes which befell his traducer as evidence of divine vengeance coming with divine judgment”; Yvonne Y. Haddad and Jane I. Smith, *Mission to America. Five Islamic sectarian communities in North America*, Gainesville 1993, 59-60. One obvious question was why was Dowie so obsessed with Islam?

<sup>18</sup> We have not reproduced all of them here for considerations of space.

The Consul General of Great Britain,  
44 Whitehall Street,  
New York City

Dear Sir,

[...] <sup>19</sup> city, beg to inform your Excellency that there in the City of New York are [*sic*] a great number of sailors from the City of Eden [*sic*, Aden], Arabia, which is under British Authority, and who were serving during the World War as sailors on board British ships, and a good number of their comrades who were their compatriots perished during the War, either by German submarines or by other destructive means by the enemies of Great Britain, and the said surviving sailors were employed for the service of British ships by English officers at the said city of Aden [...] and faithfully are without employment, and suffering [some dis]tress and poverty, as those who employ sailors for English steamers give preference in obtaining employment to those who pay them commissions.

May I further inform your Excellency, that I wrote on behalf of the said sailors to Mr. John D. Rockefeller, requesting him to kindly give them employment, and he replied that he had no work for them.

At present these people are kept from starvation by Shiek Yiahia, who has already spent a good sum of money helping them and cannot continue to help them any longer. I, therefore, in the name of humanity and renowned English justice, beg of you [...] and to graciously help them in obtaining employment on British steamers, and you would thereby serve God and humanity.

Thanking you in advance for any kind service you may render these [...] I am [...]

This correspondence, conducted on Sāttī's side in impeccable English, and on the British side with appropriate courtesy was essentially about British colonial subjects, mainly sailors from the Yemen and the Indian subcontinent, who were stranded in New York in large part because they could not pay the commission required to obtain a new berth. The letters exchanged make it clear that the Reverend Sāttī Mājīd Muḥammad was acting as a concerned pastor for various 'abandoned'

19 There is a *lacuna* at the beginning.

fellow Muslims for whom he felt a responsibility.<sup>20</sup>

The English version of the *jam'iyya khayriyya* seems, in fact, to have been the 'African Muslim Welfare Society', judging from the only non-Sudanese account of Sāṭī Mājid's activities we have found.<sup>21</sup> The Welfare Society was founded in Pittsburg in 1928. As we shall see, it was to have a complicated history.

Sometime in the late 1920s Sāṭī Mājid came into contact with the first indigenous African-American Islamic organization to emerge in the United States, the Moorish Science Temple Association of Noble Drew Ali. This was probably after 1927 when Noble Drew Ali printed an edition of *The Holy Koran*, an act which brought his claims of prophecy and revelation squarely into the public domain.

### *Noble Drew Ali*

Noble Drew Ali's background could hardly have been more different than that of Sāṭī Mājid.<sup>22</sup> Born as Timothy Drew on

20 This aspect of Sāṭī's career deserves further investigation; presumably the British consular records from New York will contain more information.

21 Adib Rashad, *Islam, Black nationalism and slavery: A detailed history*, Beltsville, MD 1995, 141-2; this is apparently based on a paper by Dr Sulayman Nyang, 'The African Welfare Society: an unknown factor in American religious history', published in the *Saudi Gazette* [Jeddah], 1983.

22 The most detailed 'insider' account we have found is Peter Lamborn Wilson, 'Lost/Found Moorish Time Lines in the Wilderness of North America', in *idem, Sacred Drift: Essays on the margins of Islam*, San Francisco 1993, 15-50. An up-to-date overview is provided by Ernest Allen Jr., 'Religious Heterodoxy and Nationalist Tradition: the continuing evolution of the Nation of Islam', *The Black Scholar*, xxvi, 3-4, 1996, 2-34. An excellent new account of Noble Drew Ali and his movement, which places him in the broader context of African-American identity struggles (and especially the movement of Marcus Garvey) is Richard Brent Turner, *Islam in the African-American Experience*, Bloomington 1997, 90-108. However, none of the existing accounts make mention of the encounter between Sāṭī Mājid and

8 January 1886<sup>23</sup> in North Carolina, a child of ex-slaves, and brought up among Cherokee Indians, Drew seems to have come from a culturally complex background.<sup>24</sup>

Little is known of Noble Drew Ali's early life, although he is said to have suffered great hardship as a child and as a young man to have travelled in the Muslim world.<sup>25</sup> At some stage he moved to New Jersey, where he worked as a railway expressman. He established his first Moorish Science temple in Newark in 1913; others were later founded in Pittsburg and Detroit.<sup>26</sup> Noble Drew Ali moved in 1925 to Chicago,<sup>27</sup> which became, and has remained, the centre of the Moorish movement. He died in mysterious circumstances in 1929 and is buried in a mausoleum in Chicago.<sup>28</sup>

Noble Drew Ali. Two other 'insider' accounts that add details are Isa al Haadi al Mahdi, *Who was Noble Drew Ali?*, Brooklyn 1988, and José V. Pimienta-Bey, 'Some 'Myths' of the Moorish Science Temple: an Afrocentric Historical Analysis', Ph.D. thesis, Temple University 1995.

- 23 Thus about three years younger than Sāttī Mājīd.
- 24 Wilson ('Lost/Found', 15-17) discusses most, if not all, of the possible theories. He raises (p. 28) the unanswerable question as to what degree there existed among people of Timothy Drew's generation a folk memory of Islam. In other words, did Drew's group go into and appropriate from Free Masonry, Shrinerism etc., the symbols they needed simply because they had no access to 'the real thing'? There is a parallel here between the later doctrinal shifts of Warith-ed-Deen Muhammad and Louis Farrakhan, with the former moving to 'orthodox' Islam while the latter continued to preach the teachings of Elijah Muhammad.
- 25 Al Mahdi, *Who was Noble Drew Ali?*, 4-5.
- 26 The first temple was called the Canaanite Temple. According to Turner (*Islam in the African-American Experience*, 90), a dozen temples were established in the first ten years of the movement's life.
- 27 Or 1923, according to Turner, *Islam in the African-American Experience*, 92.
- 28 Noble Drew Ali's corpse, 'lies in a stately mausoleum in Lincoln Cemetery. It can be viewed from windows from all sides and he looks exactly as though he will keep his promise to "to rise up and walk with my people again" sometime in the very near future. Fez-wearing Moors (and there are many of them still to be seen around the city)

The relationship between Noble Drew Ali, the elusive Wallace Fard, regarded by some as a reincarnation of Noble Drew Ali,<sup>29</sup> and Elijah Muhammad, the founder of the Nation of Islam, has also been the subject of much speculation. This is however not our concern here.

### *The Encounter*

Sāttī Mājid does not make it clear how he encountered Noble Drew Ali; his account is vague.<sup>30</sup> He begins by saying the Noble Drew Ali was set up by some ‘bigots’ or ‘fanatics’ (*muta‘aṣṣibīn*), gave himself a ‘prophetic’ name and wrote a ‘*qur‘ān*’. Sāttī continues that one of those who were following true Islam brought him one of Ali’s books—presumably the ‘*qur‘ān*’! He read it, but did not find any verse of the Qur‘ān

keep a vigil at the cemetery to be on hand when Noble Drew gets up from his death couch’; Dan Burley, ‘Elijah Muhammad: Part II: Pomp, Mysticism Key to Power’, *Chicago Defender*, 22 August 1959, 2, quoted in Essien Udosen Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism: the rise of the Black Muslims in the U.S.A.*, Harmondsworth 1966, 387 n. 54. The mausoleum in Lincoln Cemetery (at 125th and Halstead Streets) was visited by two of the authors. It is not, however, the tomb of Noble Drew Ali, but rather that of several persons who claimed to be reincarnations of him. Hunwick and O’Fahey were told by the Cemetery staff that the mausoleum is still frequently visited. The Chicago telephone directory lists five Moorish Science Temples in Chicago.

29 Al Mahdi (*Who was Noble Drew Ali?*, 50) calls him Abdul Wali Farad Muhammad, ‘An Arab from the East who came to Newark [in 1924] and began teaching Arabic and the Islaamic [*sic*] way of life. The people were fascinated by him ...’. He continues that many of Noble Drew Ali’s followers deserted him to follow Abdul Wali and it was for this reason that Ali moved to Chicago. Turner says (*Islam in the African-American Experience*, 92) that in 1914 [*sic*] Abdul Wali Farad Muhammad unsuccessfully challenged Noble Drew Ali for leadership of the movement, but he does not give any source for this claim. See further Claude Andrew Clegg III, *An Original Man: The Life and times of Elijah Muhammad*, New York 1997, 20-1, and Turner, *op. cit.*, 160-6, for wildly varying origins for Wallace Fard.

30 What follows is based on Aḥmad, *Shiyākha*, 20-1, from the unfinished autobiographical note by Sāttī Mājid.

or *ḥadīth* of the Prophet in it.

The '*qur'ān*' in question has as its full title, *The Holy Koran of The Moorish Science Temple of America*, although Wilson says that it is more commonly known as the Circle Seven Koran, from the design at the front of the book. It is a mystical composition, culled from a number of sources, but according to Abbie Whyte, over half of it is taken from *The Aquarian Gospel of Jesus the Christ* by 'Levi' H. Dowling of Ohio.<sup>31</sup>

Sāttī says that he wrote to Noble Drew Ali and advised him to change his name and burn his book. The indignation Sāttī undoubtedly felt comes through vividly in his account. Sāttī continues by saying that he attempted to take Ali to court to seek American justice and put the latter to the test '*thumma innī ṭālabtuhu li'l-muḥākama amāma ʿadālat ḥukūmat hādhihi 'l-bilād aʿnī bihā ḥukūmāt al-Wilāyāt al-Muttaḥida al-Amīrikiyya li-ajal al-imtiḥān*'.<sup>32</sup> Sāttī wanted Ali to prove his prophethood by performing miracles (*muʿjizāt*), that is, those miracles that only a prophet can perform.<sup>33</sup> He then says that he approached the government personally (*qadd-antu nafsī ilā 'l-ḥukūma*), since this man was bringing the Islamic faith into disrepute (*ahāna 'l-diyāna 'l-islāmiyya*). The 'U.S. Government' (Department of Justice?), we are told, referred Sāttī to the 'men of knowledge and religion' (*rijāl al-ʿilm wa'l-dīn*) as the suitable people to deal with such matters. Sāttī, somewhat lamely, concludes his account by saying that he continued to raise the issue of Ali's claims in the newspapers.

There is a puzzle here: from Essien-Udom and Lincoln

31 See Abbie Whyte, 'Christian elements in negro American Muslim religious beliefs', *Phylon*, xxv, 4, 1964, and Wilson, *Sacred Drift*, 18-23. Haddad and Smith (*Mission*, 81) note 'The scripture [Noble Drew Ali] provided for the Moorish American community ... makes no pretense at being a replica or even an approximation of the Qur'ān'.

32 Aḥmad, *Shiyākha*, 21.

33 This is, of course, a perfectly orthodox Muslim position.

up to the more recent studies,<sup>34</sup> there has been a great deal of research on the origins of African American Islam. It seems strange, especially in light of some of the documents presented here of American provenance, that no echo of this controversy has been found in the historical records in America.<sup>35</sup>

In writing a ‘*qur’ān*’ and in claiming prophetic status—however defined—Noble Drew Ali was outraging the orthodox Muslim sensibilities of Sāttī Mājīd. It is unreasonable to expect the latter to have been sensitized to the African-American need to create alternative world-views and their receptivity to such currents as Free Masonry, Garveyism, and similar.<sup>36</sup> Sāttī reacts in the appropriate Sunnī Muslim way; he seeks a *fatwā* from his would-be *alma mater*, al-Azhar in Cairo, condemning Ali. Thus he travels to Cairo and presents a formal *istiftā’*, request for a *fatwā* or judicial opinion, which he duly receives.

The interest in the *istiftā’* lies in Sāttī’s summation of what he thought was Ali’s doctrinal position. Although it is for specialists in African American Islam to evaluate this further, our impression, based on Wilson, Lincoln and others, is that Sāttī does not too grievously misrepresent Noble Drew Ali. The latter did write a book entitled *The Holy Koran*; he did in some way regard himself as a *sharīf*; he did proclaim a new ‘revelation’ out of Morocco/the land of the Moors, and he did claim to have travelled and been with the ‘*ulamā’*’ of various Muslim countries. In other words, on the basis of what we know about Ali’s doctrinal position, the ‘charges’, from Sāttī’s perspective, were not false.

The response from the Middle East is equally difficult to evaluate. One interpretation is to view the various *fatwās* that

34 C. Eric Lincoln, *The Black Muslims in America*, 3rd edn, Grand Rapids 1994. See Allen, ‘Religious heterodoxy’, 2-34, for a review of the literature.

35 The answer may be that researchers have simply not looked in the right places; hopefully the present article may help in this respect.

36 Wilson, ‘Lost/Found’, *passim*, is a subtle and humorous analysis of these complexities.

Sāttī obtained as essentially routine documents. The problem with this that a *mutanabbī* or 'would-be prophet' in the USA in the late 1920s could hardly have been a routine designation. Again, we are to a large degree in the dark.

### *Sāttī's Later Career*

Sāttī left New York for Alexandria 31 January 1929; he was never to return.<sup>37</sup> But this does not mean that he abandoned his American followers. It is difficult to trace his activities for the next decade and what follows is only a preliminary account.

The most reasonable reconstruction of events surrounding the *istiftā'* and the various *fatwās* is that Sāttī obtained them by physically going to al-Azhar and to Khartoum and Omdurman. Since he never returned to America, there is no reason to suppose that the *fatwās* were ever seen there. Nevertheless, Sāttī continued to correspond with his African American followers and apparently produced a journal from Cairo (presumably in Arabic) that was sent to his followers in America. This emerges from the various letters from his American followers that are reproduced in the present article under 'The Documents'. In one (no. 4), the implication is that some of his followers had mastered Arabic, but wanted the material translated into English. In the same letter there is reference to local conflicts between Sāttī's followers and a Mooree James – the latter has yet to be identified.

There are two final themes; first, Sāttī's attempts to have himself recognized and appointed as al-Azhar's official missionary or *dā'ī* to North America, an attempt that failed as the following letter from Muṣṭafā al-Marāghī decisively shows:

نفيد أن حضرته ليس لديه مؤهلات علمية ترشحه للبعوث الدينية التي يوفدها الأزهر إلى الخارج ، وكل ما في الأمر، أنه أفهمنا أنه

37 His ticket is reproduced in Aḥmad, *Shiyākhā*, opp. p. 15.

نصب نفسه للدفاع عن الدين الإسلامي في أمريكا وأنه على  
اتصال بالجمعيات الإسلامية . ١٧ / ١٢ / ١٩٣٤ .<sup>38</sup>

We declare that he does not have the scholarly qualifications to be appointed to a religious mission such as al-Azhar is accustomed to send abroad. All that happened is that he informed us that he had appointed himself to defend Islam in [North] America and had had contacts with Islamic associations [there. Dated 17 December 1934.]

Secondly, there is the story or tradition that Sāttī was prevented from returning to the States because he seems to have been perceived by the FBI as a potential ally of Japan.<sup>39</sup> It seems possible to deduce from the letters sent him that he was seen by his American followers in an increasingly Garveyist mode, as the references to Ethiopia and Japan make clear.

In the meantime Sāttī was attempting two things, one to obtain official Azhar recognition, the other to find financing for a renewed mission to America—as his letter to a relative of the Nizam of Hyderabad, below, shows. In both these endeavours he evidently failed.

Having failed to gain al-Azhar's approval and being seemingly prevented from returning to America, Sāttī returned to the Sudan sometime in the 1940s and died there 17 March 1963.<sup>40</sup>

### *The Documents*

The following lists all the letters and other documents given in Aḥmad's *Shiyākha*.

38 Aḥmad, *al-Dā'iya al-islāmiyya*, 335, 337.

39 Rashad, *Islam, Black Nationalism*, 141-2, quoting a number of relevant sources.

40 We have been unable to discover any more about his later life.

- (1) Certificate of emigration for Sāttī Mājid (address 24 Seneca St, Buffalo, New York), described Imam of Islam in United States (opp. p. 14).
  - (2) Ticket, Fabre Line, New York to Alexandria, 31 January 1929 (opp. p. 15).
  - (3) *Taʿrīkh intishār al-Islām fī Amrīkā*. Apparently written in Cairo in about 1930 (on notepaper headed Hotel Port-Fuad, Cairo). The editor of *Shiyākha* reproduces a page in facsimile (opp. p. 20) and gives as much of the text as he can, pp. 20-22.
  - (4) List of grave locations? Some of the names are Islamic (opp. p. 22).
  - (5) *Nidāʿ ʿamm li-jamīʿ al-muslimīn fī kāffat al-aqtār al-Islāmiyya*. An open invitation to all Muslims to subscribe towards the costs of publishing a book about the *injīl Barnābā*, i.e., The Gospel of St. Barnabas. Dated 1350/1936 (opp. p. 24).
  - (6) From Sāttī Mājid to the British Consul General in New York, 4 August 1921 (see above).
  - (7) From the British Consul General (G. Leslie? Armstrong) to Sāttī Mājid, 6 August 1921 (opp. p. 28).
  - (8) From Sāttī Mājid to the British Consul General, 12 August 1921 (opp. p. 30).
  - (9) From Sāttī Mājid to the British Consul General, 22 August 1921 (opp. p. 32).
  - (10) From Sāttī Mājid to the British Consul General, 27 August 1921 (opp. p. 34).
  - (11) From Sāttī Mājid to the British Consul, 1 September 1921 (opp. p. 36).
  - (12) From Sāttī Mājid to the British Ambassador, Washington, 7 September 1921 (opp. p. 38).
  - (13) From Sāttī Mājid to the British Consul General, 9 September 1921 (opp. p. 43).
  - (14) From the British Embassy to Sāttī Mājid, 15 September 1921 (opp. p. 45).
- Nos 6 to 14 all concern the question of sailors from British colonies who were destitute in New York. During

- this period Sätti's address was 22 West Street, New York.
- (15) From Sätti Mājid to Hon. E.H. Hull, Commissioner General of Immigration, Department of Labour, Washington DC, dated 31 October 1927.<sup>41</sup> The letter concerns the immigrant status of one Soleman Tahir, 'the treasurer of the Turkish Red Crescent [*sic*]' (opp. p. 47).
  - (16) From Elijah Mohommed to Sätti Mājid, 17 December 1928 (opp. p. 49; see below).
  - (17) From [names illegible] to 'Father Sayed Majid Mohamed, Supreme Dictator of African Moslem Welfare Society, Cairo, Egypt', 5 February 1930. The writers' address is 2444 Bedford Avenue, Pittsburg, PA. They write to confirm the sending of money to Sätti (opp. p. 51).
  - (18) From [names illegible] to Sätti Mājid; virtually unreadable. There is a reference to the disruptive activities of a 'Hashia Farrell', 1930 (opp. p. 53).
  - (19) To Sätti Mājid; incomplete (see below; opp. p. 55).
  - (20) From E.L. Martin to Sätti Mājid, 18 May 1932 (see below; opp. p. 58).
  - (21) From [E.L. Martin] to Sätti Mājid, 18 January 1933 (see below; opp. p. 61).
  - (22) A letter of religious exhortation in Arabic signed by Sätti Mājid Muḥammad al-Qāḍī, announcing the conversion to Islam in Egypt of a Coptic priest and asking for support for him since he is now destitute; seemingly addressed to imams of mosques. He says his is °Abd Allāh b. Sätti Mājid Muḥammad al-Qāḍī, suggesting that Sätti Mājid 'adopted' him (after p. 61).
  - (23) Letter to the Egyptian newspaper *Kawkab al-sharq*, asking them to place an advertisement, signed °Abd Allāh Sätti Mājid, and dated 22 June 1924 (p. 65).
  - (24) Letter from Muḥammad Kāmil Ḥamdī to Sätti Mājid, 22 April 1935 (p. 66).
  - (25) Letter from Mohammed Elias to Sätti Mājid, 11 September 1935 (see below: after p. 66).

41 Sätti's address is now 450 Seneca Street, Buffalo, NY.

- (26) Unidentified letter (before p. 71; see below).
- (27) Draft of a letter to Mawlana Khan Bahadur Aḥmad °Alā° al-Dīn of Hyderabad (opp. p. 71; see below).
- (28) Letter from Sāttī Mājīd to the Civil Secretary, Sudan Government (opp. p. 73; see below).
- (29) Letter from the Secretary of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, dated 15 January 1928, authorizing the founding of 'The Society of Muslim Africans' and referring to the Rules of the Charitable Association established 16 May 1923 (opp. p. 79).<sup>42</sup>
- (30) Letter to the members of the Islam Benevolent African Society, presumably from Sāttī (after p. 79; see below).
- (31) 'By Laws of Moslem Welfare Society', dated 1922; a three-page typescript (after p. 83).
- (32) Letter in English, signed by several people, dated Detroit, MI, 23 August 1922, that opens, 'Be it known that we, the undersigned officers and members of the Moslem Welfare Society of America in aide [*sic*] of the Ottoman Red Crescent of Angora [Ankara], Turkey ...'. The letter continues by adding four new articles to the society's bylaws giving complete authority to Sāttī Mājīd (opp. p. 91). An Arabic version is printed on p. 91.
- (33) Membership application (in Arabic) for the *Jam°iyyat al-Sūdāniyyīn al-khayriyya*, dated 5 May 1938.
- (34) Letter from Sāttī to the mufti of Egypt, dated 17 September 1931.
- (35) Letter to Sāttī from an unidentified correspondent, dated 29 Jumādā II 1350/10 November 1931.
- (36) Letter from Sāttī to Muḥammad Sa°ūd, teacher of *ḥadīth* at the Aqṣā Mosque in Jerusalem, asking him for a ruling concerning the claim being made in America by one Sharif Khān, a follower of Ghulām Aḥmad Khān, that the latter is the messiah foretold in the Qur°ān (opp. p. 118).<sup>43</sup>

42 The original document is too blurred to be read; the information given here comes from the Arabic translation on p. 79.

43 On the history of Aḥmadī missionary activity in the States, see Haddad and Smith, *Mission*, 49-78.

*The Noble Drew Ali Documents*

It is unclear if the *istiftā'* from Sāttī was sent or taken by him to al-Azhar. The latter seems the more likely since we know he left America in 1929 and the two Sudanese *fatwās* are dated 1930. It should be noted that all three *fatwās* presented here form one continuous document. In other words, Sāttī took his request to al-Azhar, who gave him a *fatwā*, which he then took to the al-Ma'had al-'ilmī in Omdurman. There a *fatwā* was issued on 3 Sha'abān 1349/23 December 1930, to which was appended a *fatwā* on 8 Sha'abān/28 December by the *muftī* of the Sudan, Ismā'īl al-Azharī.

Finally, we give the official al-Azhar 'translation'—rather a *précis*—of their *fatwā*, obviously intended for dissemination in the United States.

*The istiftā' from Sāttī Mājid Muḥammad al-Qāḍī to the  
'ulamā' of al-Azhar*

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

الى حضرات علماء الدين الاسلامي الحنيف بمصر  
ما قولكم - دام فضلكم - في رجل وجد اليوم يسمى «نوبل  
دروا علي» معناه النبي المتسلسل من بيت النبوة علي . مدعيا  
انه هو النبي الموعود به في آخر الزمان الذي بشر به عيسى  
عليه السلام، وصنف كتابا وسماه ذي هولي قرآن ، ومعنى  
هولي قرآن القرآن المقدس الذي انزل بمكة على سيدنا محمد  
ﷺ ومع ذلك لا يوجد في كتابه هذا [سورة من سور

القرآن [ الشريف ولا حديث من احاديث نبينا محمد ﷺ  
 [...] <sup>44</sup> على انه يتكلم على رسول الله وخاتم النبيين وعن  
 [...] [ بغليظ الكلام الذي ما انزل الله به من سلطان .

وهكذا الكتاب مشتمل على ما يأتي

اولا: انه هو النبي الموعود بمجيئه الذي بشر به عيسى عليه  
 السلام

ثانيا: انه هو الذي ذكره يوحنا في رؤيته في الاصحاح  
 السادس والكلمة السادسة اعنى ولما فتح الختم الثالث [...] ]  
 يقول : هلموا وانظروا فنظرت واذا فرس اسود والجالس عليه  
 معه ميزان، [آلخ].

ثالثا: ان الاسلام الذي كان قبله ليس باسلام صحيح وقد  
 ادعى انه تلقى علومه بمدينة فاس، وانه اجتمع برؤساء الديانة  
 الاسلامية هناك وفي مصر والحجاز والعراق وان جميع العلماء  
 شهدوا له بانه هو النبي الموعود به في آخر الزمان، واخذه يوعظ  
 العالم بهذا ثم يقول انه سر نبوته [...] عيسى عليه السلام،  
 واخذه الاسلام من قبله واخفوه عن العالم وان معبود الاسلام  
 ليس له عين يبصر به ولا عقل يميز به ولا اذن يسمع به وليس

44 Square brackets here and below indicate a lacuna in the printed text.

له قوة ما هو الا خيال خرقة [فخذفة] هذا ما اظهره من كفره  
 ونفاقه في كتابه المذكور آنفا، وهذا قليل من كثير.  
 فنريد من فضيلتكم ان تفتونا في ذلك، والحاجة ماسة اليها  
 وادامكم الله عضدا للدين الحنيف وابنائهم المؤمنين.  
 خادم الملة الاسلامية بامريكا الشمالية الفقير اليه تعالى  
 ساتي ماجد محمد القاضي

### Translation

In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful.

To their excellencies, the ‘*ulamā*’ of the pure Islamic faith in Egypt.

What say you—may your virtue endure—about a man currently living called Noble Drew (*nūbil dr.w.ā*) °Alī, the meaning of [his name being] the prophet who is linked to the House of Prophecy, °Alī,<sup>45</sup> alleging that he is the prophet promised at the end of time who was announced by Jesus, upon whom be peace, and who composed a book and called it *dhī hūlī qur’ān*.<sup>46</sup> The meaning of *hūlī qur’ān* is the Holy Qur’ān, which was revealed at Mecca to our lord Muḥammad, upon whom be blessings and peace. However, there is not to be found in this book of his [any *sūra* of the]<sup>47</sup> Noble [Qur’ān]

45 Sātī Mājīd seems to think the ‘Drew’ has some such meaning between ‘Noble’ and ‘°Alī’, e.g., the noble one who drew [his ancestry from] °Alī. Interestingly this is how al Mahdī (*Who was Noble Drew Ali?*, 45) interprets the name, that ‘drew’ (past tense of ‘draw’) meant nobility was being drawn out of the [House of] °Alī, i.e., the Prophet’s family.

46 ‘The Holy Koran’.

47 The editor notes a *lacuna* caused by the document having crumbled; the passage is restored from Aḥmad, *Shiyākha*, 20.

or any *ḥadīth* of our Prophet Muḥammad, upon whom be blessings and peace. Nevertheless, he speaks about the Messenger of God and Seal of the prophets and about [...] with harsh words for which God sent down no authority.

This book contains the following:

Firstly, that he is the prophet whose coming was promised and who was announced by Jesus, upon whom be peace,

Secondly, that it is he whom John mentioned in his vision, in the sixth chapter [and the sixth verse], that is to say, 'When he opened the third seal [...], he said, "Come and see", and I looked and, behold! There was a black horse and a rider upon it with a scale, etc.'<sup>48</sup>

Thirdly, that the Islam that was before him was not true Islam and he claimed that he had garnered his knowledge in the city of Fez and that he had met with leaders of the Islamic religion there and in Egypt, the Ḥijāz and Iraq, and that all the scholars had testified that he is the prophet promised at the end of time. He began to preach this to the world. Then he said the secret of his prophecy [was] Jesus, peace be upon him. His adoption of Islam was in former times and that they<sup>49</sup> had hidden this from the world.<sup>50</sup> The object of worship<sup>51</sup> in Islam has no eye with which it sees and no intelligence with which it reasons, nor any ear with which it hears, nor does it have power; it is nothing but fantasy, shot through with hocus pocus. This is what he put abroad of his unbelief and hypocrisy in the book mentioned above and this is but a small part of a large whole.

We ask your grace to give us a *fatwā* about this for we are sorely in need of it. May God keep you as a support of the

48 Revelation, 6:5, where the text reads (Authorized Version): 'And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse, and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand'.

49 Possibly, Noble Drew 'Ali's followers.

50 Tentative translation.

51 The following passage is unclear; it may refer to a passage in Noble Drew 'Ali's *Holy Koran*.

pure religion and its believing sons.

The servant of the Islamic community in North America,  
the poor one of Him Most High,  
Sāttī Mājīd Muḥammad al-Qādī.

*Fatwā from al-Azhar*

[...] عبده المصطفى سيدنا محمداً بالهدى ودين الحق

[...] من الظلمات إلى النور باذن ربهم إلى صراط العزيز

[...] به الانبياء والمرسلين واتم به حجته على الخلق اجمعين

[...] كما أمر ، وأدى الامانة وبالغ في اظهار الحق حتى لم

يدع عذراً لمعتذر ، وصلى الله وسلم وبارك عليه كما هو اهله،

وعلى اهله الاطهار وصحبه وسائر الابرار .

«أما بعد» فقد قال الله تبارك وتعالى في كتابه العزيز وهو

اصدق القائلين ﴿ ما كان محمد أباً أحد من رجالكم ولكن

رسول الله وخاتم النبيين ﴾ وقال الله تعالى ﴿ إن الدين عند الله

الإسلام ﴾ وقال سبحانه ﴿ ومن يتبع غير الاسلام ديناً ، فلن

يقبل منه ، وهو في الآخرة من الخاسرين ﴾ وقال الله تعالى

حاكياً عن المسيح ﴿ ومبشراً برسول يأتي من بعدي اسمه

أحمد ﴾ .

وقد بالغ الله تعالى في توبيخ أهل الكتاب من اليهود

والنصارى ، اذ لم يسارعوا إلى متابعة هذا النبي الكريم محمد

ﷺ وكتبهم الناطقة بالعلامات المنطبقة عليه وشاهدة بأنه النبي الذي بشر به موسى وعيسى ومن بينهما من أنبياء بني إسرائيل وقد استجاب الكثيرون [...] فاعترفوا بالحق ودخلوا في دين الإسلام طائعين ، قال تعالى : ﴿ الذين اتيناهم الكتاب يعرفونه كما يعرفون أبناءهم ، وإن فريقا منهم ليكتمون الحق وهم يعلمون ﴾ ، وقال سبحانه ﴿ فلما جاءهم ما عرفوا كفروا به فلعنة الله على الكافرين ﴾ وقال عز وجل ﴿ ولما جاءهم رسول من الله مصدق لما معهم ، نذ فريق من الذين أتوا الكتاب كتاب الله وراء ظهورهم ﴾ والآيات في هذا المعنى كثيرة جداً .

إذن ، فأمر المسألة التي سألتكم عنها ، في منتهى الوضوح وأعلى درجات [...] انه نبي أو أنه هو الذي بشر به عيسى [...] أعظم الفرية ، فإنه أعظم فرية أن يكذب [...] ولأرض ﴿ ومن أظلم ممن افترى على الله كذباً ﴾ ﴿ أولئك يعرضون على ربهم ويقول الاشهاد هولاء الذين كذبوا على ربهم ألا لعنة الله على الظالمين ﴾ وأعلموا أيها المؤمنون ، أنه ألزم لوازم النبوة وأخص خواصها هو الصدق ، وأن أنفى ما ينافيها وأشد ما يجافيها هو الكذب .

وهذا الرجل الذي سألتكم عنه ، قد أقام من نفسه أنصع برهان على كذبه ، واسطع دليل على أنه أشد العالم تزويراً وأكثرهم افتراء ، فانكم ذكرتم في استفتائكم هذا ، أنه يدعي أنه اجتماع بأكابر العلماء في مصر وغيرها من إجتماع الإسلام فأقروه على دعواه ، ومعاذ الله أن يفعل ذلك جاهل من جهلة المسلمين ، فضلا عن عالم من علمائهم فضلا عن أكابرهم ، وإن كتاب الله تعالى من أوله وآخره ، وسنة رسوله ﷺ ليناديان بأرفع الاصوات أن من صدق هذا الكذاب في دعواه ، فقد نبذ دين الله الذي ارتضاه لعباده وطلب التدين به من جميع أهل الأرض إلى أن يرث الله الأرض ومن عليها ، وخالف ما علم علماً ضرورياً من القرآن العظيم واستحق الخلود الأبدي في عذاب السعير مع هذا المفتري الكذاب بل نقول إن وجود هذا المفتري وأشباهه من الكذابين على الله بادعاء أنهم رسله من معجزات سيدنا رسول الله محمد ﷺ الصادق الأمين ، فقد صحت الأخبار عنه عليه الصلاة والسلام بحدوث هذه الحوادث ، ووجود الكذابين المفتريين بدعوى [...] عيوب كثيرة ظهر الكثير منها بعد وفاته [...] كما يعلم ذلك بوضوح من عرف أخباره [...] بعد

زمانه إلى يومنا هذا ، فليحذر كل مسلم أن [ ... ] بامثال هؤلاء المحتملين على الناس الذين يريدون عرض الحياة الدنيا وزينتها ﴿ وما ربك بغافل عما يعملون ﴾ ﴿ وسيعلم الذين ظلموا أي منقلب ينقلبون ﴾

هذه نصيحتنا معاصر علماء الاسلام ، نشد بها خالصة إلى كل مؤمن بالله ورسوله واليوم الآخر ، فمن قبلها ، فقد فاز بصميم الهدى وظفر بحقيقة السعادة الدائمة ، ومن تولى فقد رمى بنفسه في مهواة الشقاء الابدي ، تبوأ الخسران المبين – وقانا الله ذلك وسائر أخواننا المسلمين ، وكيف [ ... ] بدعوى هذا الكذاب عاقل وهو يكذب على الناس ويفترى على أهل العلم ، فيزعم أنهم شايعوه على رأيه ، وصدقوا دعواه ، فمن لم يكن أميناً في نقله عن الناس ، فكيف يكون أميناً في النقل عن الله عز وجل ، ومن اجترأ أن يفترى على علماء المشرق والمغرب ، وجازف هذه المجازفة العظيمة ، ولم يخجل أن يجابه بتكذيبهم له وإعلانهم أنه مفتر عليهم كما نعلن نحن الآن بلسان علماء الاسلام كافة ، فقد حل من الوقاحة والدنس وسوء الأخلاق المحل الذي يتنزّه عنه سفهاء الناس فضلا عن صلحائهم وأن أنبياء الله عليهم الصلاة

والسلام يجب أن يكون في منتهى ذروة الفضائل وأعلى  
مكارم الأخلاق .

فهذا الدجال – كما أسلفنا – من شاهد كذبه كما أن الانبياء  
عليهم الصلاة والسلام معهم يراهم بصدقهم ، فله الحجة  
والحمد لله رب العالمين .

كاتبه يوسف الدجوي ، من هيئة كبار العلماء بالأزهر .

عبد الرافع نصر الدجوي ، من علماء الأزهر .

يوسف شلبي ، من علماء الأزهر .

حسن حمدي ، مدرس بالقسم الثانوي بالأزهر الشريف .

محمد عبد السلام قباني ، من علماء الأزهر .

محمد السوداني ، من علماء الأزهر .

عياد علي حسن ، من علماء الأزهر .

مصطفى زيد ، من علماء الأزهر .

محمد محي الدين ، من علماء الأزهر .

عبد الله محمد ابو الزيد ، من علماء الأزهر .

طه سلطان فرغلي ، من علماء الأزهر .

صادق شعيب ، من علماء الأزهر .

عبد العزيز مهنا ، من علماء الأزهر .

- حسن أبو عزت ، من علماء الأزهر .
- سلامة العزامي ، من علماء الأزهر .
- عبد الغني سلامة ، من علماء الأزهر .
- عفيفي علام ، من علماء الأزهر .
- أحمد عليش ، من علماء الأزهر .
- إبراهيم الجندي ، من علماء الأزهر .
- محمد سعد ، من علماء الأزهر .
- محمد سعيد الرداء ، مدرس بالأزهر – تونسي .
- محمد محمد عبد الفتاح الفرغلي ، من علماء الأزهر .
- محمد عبد الباقي ، من علماء الأزهر .
- امضاءات أصحاب الفضيلة العلماء من الشعوب الشرقية  
الاسلامية
- محمد أحمد سالم المرزوقي التونسي .
- محمد مسعود فشيلاه ، من مصراته التابعة لولاية طرابلس  
الغرب .
- الحسين علي . مراكش .
- محمد عمر المباداة ، طرابلس .
- عبد الرحمن عبد الله المراكشي .

- محمد سعيد الطيب المغربي الجزائري .  
 فرج عبد السلام الفيتوري الطرابلسي .  
 محمد الصغير محمد الجزائري .  
 محمد جلول أحمد الجزائري .  
 عمر بن علي بن ابراهيم الطرابلسي .  
 عبد ربه محمد محمد عبد السلام ، المسراتي الطرابلسي –  
 [ كتب بجانب إمضائه – «إنه أكذب الكاذبين» ، يعنى به  
 المتنبيء ]

- يوسف عبد الرازق ، من علماء فلسطين .  
 توفيق محمد الزواتي ، من فلسطين .  
 أحمد علي حمودة ، من علماء فلسطين .  
 محمد عبد ربه البنيانوي ، طالب فلسطيني بالأزهر .  
 عبد الله محمد الجراعي ، طالب فلسطيني بالأزهر .  
 خالد خليل سرحان ، فلسطيني بالأزهر .  
 حامد محمد عبد الله ، من علماء فلسطين .  
 عمر مصطفى الورد ، من علماء سوريا .  
 سليمان علي الجعبري ، من علماء فلسطين .  
 شكيب أمين الخماش ، من علماء فلسطين بالأزهر .

- علي حسن القلقيلي ، طالب بالأزهر – فلسطين .  
 أحمد حسن الباز ، طالب بالأزهر – فلسطين .  
 خليل أبولبن ، من علماء الأزهر الفلسطينيين .  
 أسماء حضرات السادة علماء الأتراك :  
 حسني إبراهيم ، شرق الأردن .  
 عمر عبد الله القوقاري .  
 حميد إلياس الجركي ، من شرق الأردن .  
 شكري عبد القادر الجركي من شرق الأردن .  
 أحمد حجاب الاناضولي .  
 محمد محمد جانجج البوسفوري .  
 [...] .

- أسماء حضرات السادة علماء أفغانستان [ هذان الاسمان  
 مسبوقان بقولهما « نشهد بانه كافر بالله تعالى » ] :  
 بخيت ولي ، شيخ رواق الأفغانية .  
 عماد الدين محمد الأفغاني .  
 أسماء حضرات السادة علماء جاوا :  
 إسماعيل عبد المطلب .  
 الحاج محمد نوح .

عبد الرحمن سعيد .

زين العابدين عمر .

أبو بكر محمد الأشعري .

حمور حرزين .

مختار زكريا .

فتح الرحمن [...] .

الحاج محمد حميدي .

أسماء حضرات السادة علماء الحرمين الشريفين :

السيد يوسف علي الزواوي المكي .

السيد طاهر علي الزواوي المكي .

أحمد علي المنيقي المكي .

توقيعات حضرات اعضاء المجلس الصوفي العالي بالديار

المصرية :

شيخ السادة الغنيمية الخلوتية وعضو المجلس الصوفي العالي

محمد الغنيمي التفتازاني .

شيخ عموم السادة السمانيه الخلوتية وعضو المجلس الصوفي

العالي بالديار المصرية محمد ابراهيم الجمل .

شيخ طريقة السادة البيومية وعضو المجلس الصوفي العالي

- بالديار المصرية أحمد فضل محمد عبد الغني .  
 شيخ طريقة السادة السلامية الشاذلية وعضو المجلس الصوفي  
 العالي محمد محمد شيبه .  
 أسماء حضرات علماء الديار السودانية  
 محمد الحسن مصطفى بشير .  
 عبد الوهاب محمد احمد بقاري .  
 أحمد طه العربي .  
 الجاك أحمد محمد علي .  
 محمد العباس .  
 مصطفى الطاهر أحمد .  
 شيخ عموم الطريقة المرغنية بالديار المصرية ، محمد أبو بكر  
 ميرغني .  
 وكيل عموم الطريقة المرغنية بالديار المصرية، محمد عوض .

### *Translation*

Thereafter:<sup>52</sup> God Most High and Praised said in His Mighty Book—and He is the most truthful of speakers: ‘Muḥammad was not the father of anyone of your men, but is the Messenger of God and the Seal of the prophets’ [Q 33:4]. God Most High also said: ‘Surely in God’s sight religion is Islam’ [Q 3:19]. He also said, Sublime is He: ‘Whoso follows other than Islam as a religion, [this] will not be accepted from him, and in the Afterlife he shall be one of the losers’ [Q 3:85].

God Most High also said, speaking with the tongue of the Messiah: ‘And giving good news of a messenger who shall come after me, whose name is Aḥmad’ [Q 61:6].

And God Most High most strongly denounced the Jews and Christians among the People of the Scripture, since they did not hasten to follow this noble prophet Muḥammad—may God bless him and grant him peace—and their books that speak of the signs relating to him, and bearing witness that he is the prophet whom Moses and Jesus announced, and those the prophets of the Banū Isrāʾīl [who came] between them. Many of them responded [...] and confessed the truth and entered obediently<sup>53</sup> into the religion of Islam. God Most High has said: ‘Those to whom We gave the Scripture know it as they know their sons; and surely a group of them conceals the truth, while yet they know it’ [Q 2:146]. He who is Sublime said: ‘When there came to them what they knew, they disbelieved in it—then the curse of God be upon the unbelievers’ [Q 2:89].<sup>54</sup> And He—Mighty and Exalted is He—said: ‘When there came to them a messenger from God confirming the truth of what was with them, a group of those who has been given the Scripture turned their backs on the Book of God, [not knowing]’. And there are very many verses in this sense.

Hence the answer to the question which you posed is extremely clear, and of the highest rank, [i.e., whether] he is a prophet or whether he is the one spoken of by Jesus [...] the greatest falsehood. The greatest falsehood is that one should lie [...] and to earth. ‘Who is more wicked than he who fabricates a lie against God [or says “There was revealed to me, when nothing was revealed to him”], Q 6:93. ‘And who is more wicked than one who fabricates a lie against God]. Those shall be brought before their Lord, and witnesses shall say; “These are they who lied against their Lord”. The curse

52 The *basmala* and other introductory formulae have been omitted.

53 The printed text reads: *ṭāʾifīn*, but this must undoubtedly be corrected to: *ṭāʾiʿīn*.

54 The printed text is corrupt.

of God be upon the wicked' [Q 11:18].<sup>55</sup> Know, O believers, that the most convincing attribute of prophethood and the most specific of its properties is the truth, and that what disavows it most and makes it most repulsive is falsehood.

This man of whom you asked has himself established the clearest proof of his falseness, and the most shining demonstration that he is the greatest liar in the world and the man most [guilty of] perverting [the truth]. In your request for a *fatwā* you mentioned that he has met with the leading scholars in Egypt and other places in the way of Islam, and that they acknowledged his claim. God forbid that any ignorant Muslim should do that, let alone one of the scholars—to say nothing of the leading scholars, when the Book of God from beginning to end, and the Sunna of His Messenger—may God bless him and grant him peace—cry out in the loudest voice that whoever gives credence to this liar in what he claims has repudiated the religion of God which He approved for His servants, and which He asked all folk of the earth to follow until God shall inherit the earth and those upon it, and has gone against what is known indisputably from the Mighty Qur'ān, and deserves eternal and everlasting punishment in Hell, together with this lying slanderer. Nay, we would say that the existence of this slanderer and liars against God like him who claim they are His messengers are one of the miracles of our master Muḥammad—may God bless him and grant him peace—the truthful one, the trustworthy one, for the accounts related on his authority—peace and blessing be upon him—confirm the occurrence of these events and the existence of liars who fabricate a claim [...] many faults, of which many were apparent after his death [...] as is known clearly by him who knows the accounts [...] after his time until now. So let every Muslim be warned that [...] the likes of these people who deceive folk who seek the trivialities of this life and its blandishments. 'Their Lord is not heedless of what they do' [Q 6:130 etc.]. 'Those who commit wickedness shall know what a reversal

55 The printed text is corrupt.

they shall suffer' [Q 26:227].

This is our counsel, O scholars of Islam, which we direct especially to all who believe in God and His messenger and the Last Day. Whoever accepts it has obtained pure guidance, and has gained true and lasting happiness. Whoever turns aside has cast himself into an abyss of eternal misery, and has assumed evident loss—God protect us and the rest of our Muslim brothers from that. And how [...] any discerning man in the claim of this liar, as he lies to people and slanders the people of learning, for he claims that they shared his view and believed his claim. How could someone who is not honest in what he reports of people be honest in what he reports from God—Mighty and Exalted is He. Whoever is bold enough to utter falsehoods against the scholars of the east and west and to embark on such hugely reckless ventures as these, and is not ashamed that he will be answered by their proclaiming him a liar and announcing that he is a slanderer against them, as we now do in the name of all the scholars of Islam, has reached a level of impudence and baseness and immorality that fools would disown, let alone pious folk; but prophets of God—blessing and peace be upon them—must be at the very highest level of virtues and of the most exalted moral character.

This imposter, as we have said before—is someone who bore witnesses to his own lying, just as the prophets—blessing and peace be upon them—have with them proofs of their genuineness. To God belongs the proof. Praise be to God, Lord of the worlds.

Its scribe: Yūsuf al-Dijwī, from the association of the senior *‘ulamā’* (*hay’at kibār al-‘ulamā’*) at al-Azhar.<sup>56</sup>

*‘Abd al-Rāfi‘ Naṣr al-Dijwī, from the ‘ulamā’ of al-Azhar. Yūsuf Shalabī, from the ‘ulamā’ of the association (hay’a) of al-Azhar.*

56 Yūsuf b. Aḥmad b. Naṣr b. Suwaylim al-Dijwī, 1870-1947, a blind Mālikī teacher at al-Azhar, and author of several works including a rebuttal of *‘Alī ‘Abd al-Rāziq’s al-Islām wa-uṣūl al-ḥukm*. See Ziriklī, ix, 287.

Ḥasan Ḥamdī, teacher the second section (*al-qism al-thānawī*)  
at the Noble Azhar.

Muḥammad °Abd al-Salām Qabbānī, from the °*ulamā*° of  
al-Azhar.

Muḥammad al-Sūdānī, from the °*ulamā*° of al-Azhar.

°Ayyād °Alī Ḥasan, from the °*ulamā*° of al-Azhar.

Muṣṭafā Zayd, from the °*ulamā*° of al-Azhar.

Muḥammad Muḥyī °I-Dīn, from the °*ulamā*° of al-Azhar.

°Abd Allāh Muḥammad Abū Zayd, from the °*ulamā*° of al-  
Azhar.

Ṭāhā Sulṭān Faraghli, from the °*ulamā*° of al-Azhar.

Ṣādiq Shu°ayb, from the °*ulamā*° of al-Azhar.

°Abd al-°Azīz Muhannā, from the °*ulamā*° of al-Azhar.

Ḥasan Abū °Izzat, from the °*ulamā*° of al-Azhar.

Salāma al-°Azzāmī, from the °*ulamā*° of al-Azhar.

°Afifi °Allām, from the °*ulamā*° of al-Azhar.

°Abd al-Ghanī Salāma, from the °*ulamā*° of al-Azhar.

Aḥmad °Illaysh, from the °*ulamā*° of al-Azhar.

Ibrāhīm al-Jundī, from the °*ulamā*° of al-Azhar.

Muḥammad Sa°d, from the °*ulamā*° of al-Azhar.

Muḥammad Sa°id al-Raddā°, teacher at al-Azhar-Tunis.

Muḥammad Muḥammad °Abd al-Fattāḥ al-Faraghli, from the  
°*ulamā*° of al-Azhar.

Muḥammad °Abd al-Bāqī, from the °*ulamā*° of al-Azhar.

Signatures of their excellencies the °*ulamā*° on behalf of the  
peoples of the Islamic East:

Muḥammad Aḥmad Sālim al-Marzūqī al-Tūnisī.

Muḥammad Mas°ūd Fashīla, from Miṣūrāta, which belongs  
to the *wilāya* of Ṭarābulus al-Gharb [Tripolitania].

al-Ḥusayn °Alī al-Marrākushī.

Muḥammad °Umar al-Mubāda al-Ṭarābulusī.

°Abd al-Raḥmān °Abd Allāh al-Marrākushī.

Muḥammad Sa°id al-Ṭayyib al-Maghribī al-Jazā°irī.

Faraj °Abd al-Salām al-Fitūrī al-Ṭarābulusī.

Muḥammad al-Ṣughayr Muḥammad al-Jazā°irī.

Muḥammad Jalūl Aḥmad al-Jazāʾirī.

°Umar b. °Alī b. Ibrāhīm al-Ṭarābulusī.

°Abd Rabbihi Muḥammad Muḥammad °Abd al-Salām al-Misurātī [*sic*; Miṣurātī] al-Ṭarābulusī. He wrote by the side of his signature ‘He is the greatest of liars’, meaning by this the claimant of prophecy (*al-mutanabbiʿ*).

Yūsuf °Abd al-Razzāq, from the °*ulama*ʿ of Palestine.

Tawfiq Muḥammad al-Zawwātī, from Palestine.

Aḥmad °Alī Ḥammūda, from the °*ulamā*ʿ of Palestine.

Muḥammad °Abd Rabbihi al-Binyāwī, a Palestinian student at al-Azhar.

°Abd Allāh Muḥammad al-Jarāʿī, a Palestinian student at al-Azhar.

Khālīd Khalīl Sirḥān, a Palestinian at al-Azhar.

Ḥāmid Muḥammad °Abd Allāh, from the °*ulamā*ʿ of Palestine.

°Umar Muṣṭafā al-Ward, from the °*ulama*ʿ of Syria.

Sulaymān °Alī al-Jaʿbarī, from the °*ulamā*ʿ of Palestine.

Shakīb Amīn al-Khammāsh, from the °*ulama*ʿ of Palestine at al-Azhar.

°Alī Ḥasan al-Qulqaylī, student at al-Azhar—Palestine.

Aḥmad Ḥasan al-Bāz, student at al-Azhar—Palestine.

Khalīl Abū Laban, from the Palestinian °*ulamā*ʿ of al-Azhar.

The names of their excellencies, the Turkish °*ulamā*ʿ:

Ḥusnī Ibrāhīm: Transjordan (*sharq al-Urdunn*).

°Umar °Abd Allāh al-Qawqārī.

Ḥāmid Ilyās al-Jarkī, from Transjordan.

Shukrī °Abd al-Qādir al-Jarkī, from Transjordan.

Aḥmad Ḥajjāb al-Anādūlī.

Muḥammad Muḥammad Jānjaj al-Būsafūrī

[...] <sup>57</sup>

The names of their excellencies, the °*ulamā*ʿ of Afghanistan:

57 The editor notes that at least one name is missing at this point and suggests, Qawqārī.

[these two names are preceded by the words: 'We testify that he is an unbeliever in God Most High'].

Bakhīt Walī, shaykh of the hostel of the Afghans (*riwāq al-Afghāniyya*).

°Imād al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Afghānī.

The names of their excellencies, the °*ulamā*° of Java:

Ismā°il °Abd al-Muṭallib.

*al-ḥājj* Muḥammad Nūḥ.

°Abd al-Raḥmān Sa°id.

Zayn al-°Ābidīn °Umar.

Abū Bakr Muḥammad al-Ash°arī.

Ḥammūr Ḥirzayn.

Mukhtār Zakariyā°.

Faṭḥ al-Raḥmān.

*al-ḥājj* Muḥammad Ḥumaydī.

The names of their excellencies, the °*ulamā*° of the Noble Sanctuaries [*al-Ḥaramayn al-sharīfayn*, i.e. Mecca and Medina]:

*al-sayyid* Yūsuf °Alī al-Zawāwī al-Makkī.

*al-sayyid* Ṭāhir °Alī al-Zawāwī al-Makkī.

Aḥmad °Ali al-Munīqī al-Makkī.

The signatures of the members of the Higher Sufi Council<sup>58</sup> in the Egyptian lands:

Shaykh of their excellencies the Ghunaymiyya Khalwatiyya and member of the Higher Sufi Council, Muḥammad al-Ghunaymī al-Taftāzānī.

Principle shaykh of the Sammāniyya Khalwatiyya and member of the Higher Sufi Council in the Egyptian lands, Muḥam-

58 The editor gives *al-majlis* twice by mistake.

mad Ibrāhīm al-Jamal.

Shaykh of the Bayyūmiyya *ṭarīqa* and member of the Higher Sufi Council in the Egyptian lands, Aḥmad Faḍl Muḥammad °Abd al-Ghanī.

Shaykh of the Salāmiyya Shādhiliyya *ṭarīqa* and member of the Higher Sufi Council, Muḥammad Muḥammad Shayba.

The names of the °*ulamā*° of the Sudanese lands:

Muḥammad al-Ḥasan Muṣṭafā Bashīr.

°Abd al-Wahhāb Muḥammad Aḥmad Baqqārī.

Aḥmad Ṭāhā al-Arabī.

al-Jāk Aḥmad Muḥammad °Alī.

Muḥammad al-°Abbās.

Muṣṭafā al-Ṭāhir Aḥmad.

Muḥammad Abū Bakr Mīrghanī, Principal Shaykh of the Mīrghaniyya [*sic*] *ṭarīqa* in the Egyptian lands.

Muḥammad °Awaḍ, deputy of the Principal Shaykh of the Mīrghaniyya [*sic*] *ṭarīqa* in the Egyptian lands.

*Fatwā from the Ma°had al-°ilmī in Omdurman*

معهد السودان العلمي بام درمان

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

الحمد لله والصلاة والسلام على رسول الله ﷺ

وبعد فقد اطلعنا على الفتوى الصادرة من علماء الاسلام

بالجامع الأزهر وغيره في شأن مدعي النبوة بأمريكا ، وعلى

الجواب الذي قدمه لنا حضرة الشيخ ساتي ماجد محمد

القاضي معها ونجيب على ذلك بالآتي :

نحن هيئة علماء المعهد العلمي بالسودان ، نشهد بان من

يدعي النبوة بعد نبينا محمد ﷺ خاتم الانبياء والمرسلين ،  
 بنص القرآن هو كذاب ودجال وكافر وممقوت ، وكلما جاء  
 بفتوى هؤلاء العلماء الأعلام في شأنه فهو الحق الذي ندين  
 الله عليه ، ونصيحتنا لكل مسلم ، بل لكل عاقل ، أن ينبذ  
 قول هذا الكذاب وراء ظهره ، ولا يقيم لأكاذيبه وزنا وسيعلم  
 هذا الكذاب عاقبة أمره .

كاتبه أبو القاسم أحمد هاشم ، شيخ علماء السودان ، ٣  
 شعبان ١٢٤٩ هـ .

إمضاءات العلماء المدرسين بالمعهد العلمي بالسودان . [...] .  
 أحمد أبو القاسم ، وكيل المعهد العلمي بام درمان .  
 إبراهيم أبو الزين ، المدرس بجامع أم درمان بالمعهد العلمي  
 بالسودان .

محمد السيد الباقر ، مدرس بالمعهد العلمي بالسودان .  
 الامين الترابي ، مدرس بالمعهد .

موسى الجزولي ، مدرس بالمعهد .

الزين عبد الله ، مدرس بالمعهد العلمي بالسودان .

حامد محمد عبد الحمود ، المدرس بالمعهد العلمي بالسودان .

محي الدين عيسى ، المدرس بالمعهد العلمي بالسودان .

- . ابراهيم الإمام ، مدرس بمعهد السودان العلمي .
- . عثمان بشير ، مدرس بمعهد السودان العلمي .
- . محمد مصطفى ، مدرس بالمعهد العلمي بالسودان .
- . محمد الصلحي عثمان ، مدرس بالمعهد العلمي بالسودان .
- . عبد الكريم النوسري ، مدرس بالمعهد العلمي بالسودان .

### Translation

In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful.

Praise be to God and blessing and peace upon the Messenger of God, May God bless him and grant him peace.

Thereafter: We have seen the *fatwā* put out by the *‘ulamā’* of Islam at the Azhar Mosque and elsewhere concerning the matter of the person claiming prophethood (*nubuwwa*) in America and the reponse which Shaykh Sāṭī Mājīd al-Qādī sent to us together with it. We reply to this as follows:

We, the association of the *‘ulamā’* of the Ma<sup>h</sup>ad al-<sup>‘</sup>ilmī of the Sudan, testify that whoever claims prophethood after our Prophet, Muḥammad, May God bless him and grant him peace, the seal of the prophets and messengers according to the text of the Qur<sup>’</sup>ān (*bi-naṣṣ al-Qur<sup>’</sup>ān*) is a liar (*khadhdhāb*) and a charlatan (*dajjāl*) and an unbeliever (*kāfir*) and an abomination (*mamqūt*).

All that is in the *fatwā* of these learned *‘ulamā’* is the truth, which we profess before God.<sup>59</sup> It is our counsel to every Muslim, indeed, to every person of sound mind, to reject the assertion of this liar and not to give his lies any weight. This liar shall know the outcome of his deeds.

59 Reading *‘alayhi* from the facsimile; the text has <sup>‘</sup>.l.h.

Its scribe: Abū 'l-Qāsim Aḥmad Hāshim, shaykh of the *'ulamā'* of the Sudan.<sup>60</sup>

3 Sha<sup>c</sup>bān 1349 *hijriyya*<sup>61</sup>

The *'ulamā'* who teach at the Ma<sup>c</sup>had al-<sup>c</sup>ilmī of the Sudan have co-signed it:<sup>62</sup>

Aḥmad Abū 'l-Qāsim, deputy at the Ma<sup>c</sup>had al-<sup>c</sup>ilmī at Omdurman.

Ibrāhīm Abū 'l-Zayn, teacher at the Omdurman mosque at the Ma<sup>c</sup>had al-<sup>c</sup>ilmī of the Sudan.

Muḥammad al-Sīd al-Bāqir, teacher at the Ma<sup>c</sup>had al-<sup>c</sup>ilmī of the Sudan.

al-Amīn al-Turābī, teacher at the Ma<sup>c</sup>had.<sup>63</sup>

Mūsā al-Jazūlī, teacher at the Ma<sup>c</sup>had.

al-Zayn 'Abd Allāh, teacher at the Ma<sup>c</sup>had al-<sup>c</sup>ilmī of the Sudan.

Ḥāmid Muḥammad 'Abd al-Maḥmūd, teacher at the Ma<sup>c</sup>had al-<sup>c</sup>ilmī of the Sudan.

Muḥyī 'l-Dīn 'Īsā, teacher at the Ma<sup>c</sup>had al-<sup>c</sup>ilmī of the Sudan.

Ibrāhīm al-Imām, teacher at the Ma<sup>c</sup>had al-<sup>c</sup>ilmī of the Sudan.

'Uthmān Bashīr, teacher at the Ma<sup>c</sup>had al-<sup>c</sup>ilmī of the Sudan.

Muḥammad Muṣṭafā, teacher at the Ma<sup>c</sup>had al-<sup>c</sup>ilmī of the Sudan.

Muḥammad al-Ṣalahī 'Uthmān, teacher at the Ma<sup>c</sup>had al-<sup>c</sup>ilmī of the Sudan.

'Abd al-Karīm al-Nūsirī, teacher at the Ma<sup>c</sup>had al-<sup>c</sup>ilmī of the Sudan.

60 Born 1275/1858-59, d. 1934; he was appointed *shaykh al-'ulamā'* or President of the Board of Ulema in 1912. On his life and writings, see *ALA*, I, 290-1.

61 24 December 1930.

62 The editor notes that the signature to the first name is missing.

63 A member presumably of the Turābī family.

*Fatwā from the mufti of the Sudan*

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

الحمد لله وحده والصلاة والسلام على من لا نبي بعده  
 أما بعد : فقد رفع إليّ ما كتبه السادة علماء الأزهر الشريف  
 والأفاضل علماء السودان وغيرهم . وتتبعنا الأقوال التي  
 نسبت لمدعي النبوة ، فلم أجد فيها برهاناً أقامه على دعواه ،  
 بل هي أقوال ملفقة لا معنى لها ولا قيمة بحيث لا تحتاج إلى  
 رد .

ولو كان من يعوى يلقم صخرة

لأصبح صخر الأرض أغلى من النقد  
 على أن ما كتبه السادة علماء الأزهر من الآيات القرآنية  
 والأحاديث النبوية ، فإنه يكفي لمن تولاه الله بهدايته .  
 وقصاري القول ، ان من يدعي النبوة بعد سيدنا محمد خاتم  
 النبيين وإمام المرسلين ، فإنه كذاب ، كافر ، عليه لعنة الله  
 والملائكة والناس أجمعين .

مفتي الديار السودانية ، إسماعيل الأزهري ، حرر بالخرطوم  
 في يوم الأحد ٨ شعبان ١٢٤٩ هـ الموافق ٢٨ ديسمبر ١٩٣٠ م

*Translation*

In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful.

Praise be to God Alone, and blessing a peace be upon whom after him there is no prophet.

Thereafter: that which the scholars of the noble Azhar, the most worthy scholars of the Sudan and others have written has been brought to my attention. I have studied the words attributed to him who claims prophethood and have not found in them any proof by which he has established his claim. They are concocted sayings with no meaning and no value and as such require no rebuttal.<sup>64</sup>

'If everyone who barked, swallowed a stone, the stones of the Earth would be worth more than coinage!'<sup>65</sup>

However, what the scholars of Al-Azhar have written of Qur<sup>3</sup>ānic verses and Prophetic *ḥadīth*, that is sufficient for those whom God favours with His guidance.

The gist of the matter is that whoever claims prophethood after our master, Muḥammad, the seal of the prophets and the imam of the messengers, is an unbelieving liar, upon him be the curse of God and His angels and all people.

Mufti of the Sudanese Domains

Ismā<sup>o</sup>il al-Azharī

Written at Khartoum on Sunday 8 Sha<sup>o</sup>bān 1349 *hijriyya*, corresponding to 28 December 1930 *m[ilādiyya]*.

*Fatwā from al-Azhar*

حضرة الفاضل السيد ساتي ماجد

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله . وبعد . فجواباً على سؤالكم

64 This would seem to imply that Ismā<sup>o</sup>il al-Azharī had read the *Holy Koran* of Noble Drew Ali, which is quite possible. He would certainly have been able to read English.

65 An unidentified line of poetry, meaning that there is no need to take fools seriously.

المتعلق بان رجلاً يدعي أنه النبي الموعود بمجيئه وأنه هو الذي بشر به عيسى وأن الأسلام الذي كان قبله ليس بإسلام صحيح .

نفيد : أن كل من ادعى النبوة بعد سيدنا محمد بن عبد الله بن عبد المطلب بن هاشم فهو كاذب قطعاً وكافر بنص القرآن الكريم الذي وصف النبي عليه الصلاة والسلام بقوله جل شأنه ﴿ ما كان محمد أباً أحد من رجالكم ولكنه رسول الله وخاتم النبيين ﴾ .

ولا يسع مسلماً مهما كان مذهبه ونحلته إلا أن يحكم بكفر من يقول في الاسلام أنه ليس بإسلام صحيح . كيف هذا وقد رضيه الله لعباده ديناً في قوله تعالى ﴿ اليوم أكملت لكم دينكم وأتممت عليكم نعمتي ورضيت لكم الأسلام ديناً ﴾ وقامت براهينه القاطعة وتبينت آياته الساطعة وعجز العالمون جميعاً أن يجدوا فيه مطعناً مقبولاً .

فمثل هذه الدعوة لا تصدر الا عن كافر أو مأفوق لا يستمع له الا من شاركه في جنونه فلا التفات لمثله ولا اعتداد به .

٢٩ جمادى الآخرة ١٣٥٠

شيخ الجامع الأزهر

١٠ نوفمبر ١٩٣١

*Official Translation of the al-Azhar fatwā*

The Reverend Sayed Sati Majid.

May the Peace and Blessings of Allah be with you. In reply to your inquiry concerning a man who claims to be the promised prophet whose advent Jesus Christ proclaimed and asserts that the Islam which existed prior to him is not the true Islam, we hereby inform you that whosoever claims prophethood after the prophet Mohammed son of Abdullah, son of Abdul-Muttalib, son of Hashim, is postively an imposter and a disbeliever in the very text of the Holy Quran which says of the Prophet, on whom be peace:

‘No man from among you can claim Mohammed for a parent, but he is the Apostle of Allah and the seal of the Prophets’.

No Moslem is there, whatever his sect or creed, but would readily condemn to apostasy and disbelief whosoever says of Islam that it is not true Islam which the Lord has pleased to give unto mankind as signified in the verse:

‘This day have I perfected your Religion for you and completed mine favours upon you and chosen Islam of all other religions, to be the accepted religion unto Me’.

The truth and clear signs of Islam have been definitely established and the learned men have failed to find a reasonable criticism whereby to assail it.

Such a claim, therefore, could only be made by an unbeliever or a mentally-deranged person, and only those of like mentality would follow him.

No importance, therefore, should be attached to him and he should be completely ignored.

Sheikh Al-Jamii-Al-Azhar (sig.)<sup>66</sup>

Issued at Cairo on the tenth of November, 1931.

The above is a true translation of the original Fatwa in Arabic.

66 The *shaykh al-Azhar* in 1931 was Muḥammad al-Aḥamadī al-Ḍawāhīrī (1930-35); Sonya Qurrā<sup>c</sup>a, *Taʾrīkh al-Azhar fī alf ʿām*, Cairo 1968, 420.

[illegible signature]

[seal]

*(b) Some Letters to Sāttī Mājīd**(1) Shiyākha, opp. p. 49.*

3 Nimick [Place]

Wilk[insburg, Pa]

Dec. 17, 1928

Respectable Father Sheich of Islam of America.

Rev. Majid Mohommad.

Hon. Sir,

We your children of the Moslem faith write you these few lines to inform you that we are well and are doing very well at the time present. Our Membership is still increasing. Also you will find enclosed the letter which we were supposed to send you and tonight we are mailing you twelve (12) letters which we were to make out and send to you. Thanking you for the many kind words that you spoke to us when you were in our presence. We also pray for your success in your long journey. I will close by saying God be with you.

Yours truly

Elijah Mohommed<sup>67</sup>*(2) Shiyākha, opp. p. 55*

516 Singer Place,

Pittburgh, Pa.,

Feb 29, 1932

Asalam u-alaikum

Rev Magid Mohammad

67 This is not *the* Elijah Muhammad, who in 1928 was living in Hamtramck, a predominantly Polish suburb of Detroit (see Clegg, *An Original Man*, 15) but probably the same as Mohammed Elias, the author of letter 5 below. We thank Dr Knut S. Vikør for his assistance in clarifying this issue.

Kind father I am writing to you in regards [*sic*] to my health. Also the family. I guest [*sic*] you think we have forgotten you, but we still have you in mind, and speak of you so often. Also Mr. Mohammad S.L. Deen. We have been looking [forward] to get a letter from you, giving us some information about the convention that was held over their [*sic*] a short while ago. You and Mr. E.L. Deen promised to let us know the outcome of the convention. I did not chance to visit the Cleveland & New York branches, owing to the fact money is so very scarce in the country, it is very diffecult to travel. Never the less I will make a special effort to visit them this spring. The muslims in Pittsburgh are still pressing forward. We desire the good wishes and prayers of the muslims over there.

(3) *Shiyākha*, opp. p. 58

516 Singer Place,  
S.E. Pittsburgh Pa

May 18, 1932

The Sheikh El-Sayid Majid  
Peace be upon you  
Dear Father:

We gladly received your letter and [I] am delighted to know that you are wo[rking for] the interest of the society over [there]. We are trying to do all that we can do here although you must know that everything is very slow over here at the present time.

Now Father those books which you were talking about I would like for them to be translated in English as much as possible.

I received the magazine and I am very much pleased with it. I am trying to get subscribers, as many as I can.

I am still expecting those papers from the Government you told me you were going to send.

Father the idea of establishing a trade between Sudan, Egypt, Abyssinia is very pleasing and I have four men in

mind who I think will be able to take care of the matter.

I am expecting to go to Cleveland on Sunday the 29th of May. I am also [expecting] a hearing from New York at most any time.

Now just as soon as I make this [trip] I will write to you.

I am sorry to say that there is very [little] money in the treasure just at this time, but we will try and send you [just?] as soon as possible something towards the expense.

Well I guess we will close. All friends members send to you their Salam u aleykum.

We all send our assalam u alaikum to Muhomed [E.] El Deen.

E.L. Martin Pres.

Helena Kleely Sec. per.

(4) *Shiyākha*, opp. p. 61

Bissmal Arrahaman Arrahem  
516 Singer Place  
Pittsburg Pa

Jan. 18, 1933

[...] Sayed S. Majid Mohomed  
Sheikh of Al Islam of the U.S.A.

Dear Sir,

I have not heard from you for a long time so I thought I would write you a few lines to see how you are getting on.

We have not been getting any mail, I mean letters, from you but we have been getting the magazines [*sic*] every week. Now Father about the magazine, we would like [them] to be translated. There are so many Muslims who would like to read them in English. Especially this month's issue 'Rahadam'.

Now Father we would like for you to pay strict attention to this letter as it is very important and we need your advice.

Now to explain the condition first. We have had a very good Branch of Muslims in a little town called Bradock,

Penn., and have been doing very well until Mooree James<sup>68</sup> heard about our good success. Then he came out there and done every thing he could do to disturb the peace of the Society, to such an extent that he has partly broke up the branch and are [*sic*] causing the members to fight among themselves.

Father I am sure you remember this Mooree James. However he has been [voted?] out of the Society [(3) three years] ago on account of the disturbance he kept in the Society. Which he started right after you left the Country [...]<sup>69</sup>

(5) *Shiyākha*, after p .66

Aslam—Ulaickom

In the name of the most merciful God

Said Majid Mohammed

21 Nimick Place

Wilkinsburg, Pa

Sept. 11, 1935

Kind Father,

We are writing you in regards to our health and in the interest of the African Moslems Welfare Society all are very good. We wrote you several months ago answering the letter we received from you and in the meantime we were looking for a reply to this same letter. We spoke to you in regards to the translation of some books. You mentioned in your letter the cost of this translation<sup>70</sup> but we did not quite understand if [...] was in Egyptian figures. So, please provide us these figures in English so as we can respond in [...] possible. We are under the impression that you have been very busy [...] we have received no reply. We are searching the newspapers

68 The editor of *Shiyākha* reads Mūdī (i.e. Moody) James, but the name is clearly given below.

69 Unsigned and incomplete, but from the handwriting it must be from E.L. Martin.

70 Probably a reference to Sāttī Mājid's project to publish a translation of the Gospel of St. Barnabas.

every day to see what the outcome will be in the Ethiopians and Italians dispute. We sympathize for these people as we are a part of them and do hope and pray that these matters will be settled without any injury to these peoples and that great country. We hope some day that we shall be able to return back to our home land Africa, Inshalah. I would be glad if we could colonize in or near Abyssinia as we feel that we need a colony. Others are colonizing there or near there and we would like to do the same. We are still working in the interest of Islam and expect by the help of Allah to continue. We also hope and pray for your success with the people there. You spoke of a convention and we feel that a convention between the two groups would be very necessary. If you still have this in mind please give us a long notice and we shall prepare to meet you all over there Inshalah. Father, if you can possibly find time please write us at [...] and don't forget the names that I sent you for changing. Hoping and praying to hear from you soon.

Yours Truly  
Mohammed Elias<sup>71</sup>

(6) *Shiyākha*, after p. 71.

From the context the following letter would appear to be from Sāṭṭī Mājid, writing from Egypt, but the poorness of the English by contrast to his other English-language letters is striking.

My Dear Sons

You mentioned in your letter the last one who called by the name of the moslems after me, the brother 'Ali Hassan El Hadi'.

This man I know him well, so I advise you to care much for him till I come and be generous to him as he got a white hand on Islam and had good previous services but deeply regret, he served more over than 30 years and did his best to

71 The name is illegible, reconstructed from the Arabic translation; Aḥmad, *Shiyākha*, 71: Muḥammad Ilyās.

shelter those who emigrated from Moslems to there.

So, please do every assist to him till I return back.

But the names who entered in Islam, I will introduce their names to Ulemas of Azhar to choose good names for them to be mercied by them too.

And began by this, the great professor El Cheikh El Hag Abdel Samad Diab, who always applause to Allah for your progress.

The names are written inside this letter, so I beg to ask to register their names in the Register book of the Association by Arabic and english, also their names before entering the Islam as they can know each other.

We are working continuously to write the word of Moslems day and night and my idea is no unity without a society to collect all are spread here and there. At last we have decided to establish a society by the name of 'ISLAMIC UNITY ASSOCIATION or the ISLAM MEN'. The association has been established. As the situation of this beloved Society in the biggest place of Islam and has its branches. Its residence in Al Azhar College 'Mosque' in Cairo.

This mosque, is the largest one religious collect in it all different nations of each race. Chinese, Indian, Japanese, Iran, Arabic, African Russian Turkish, Moroccan all approve Allah is one and trust in his Prophet and all do what Allah sends to him of the sacred book (The Koran) of which no lies come out of it all.

But your election of good respected members.

(7) *Letter to Khan Bahadur Aḥmad 'Alā' al-Dīn*<sup>72</sup> (*Shiyākha*, opp. p. 73).

Mawlana Khan Bahadur Ahmed Alaadine

Sir,

With most respect, applicant,

Sayed Magid Mohamed,

72 We have been unable to identify him.

Mawlana,

I lived in Northern America a period of 30 years arising [*sic*] the Islamic Religion.

Nearly 45 thousands have entered the faith of the Americans,<sup>73</sup> and when I saw many Indians and Afghanistan[is], I erected a society<sup>74</sup> there under the name of 'African Moslem Welfare Society of America' United of Moslems.

I came to my home Sudan to visit my family. I brought with me papers to advise the High [...] in 1929 of erecting a mosque there.

I have ordered to pass all spots for [consoling?] Moslems. I am determined to visit Hyderabad.

As all Moslem nations love your person so I beg to ask to help us financially to enable me to return back to America as I left behind me agents there.

I am in need for that expenses of travelling to America. Allah keeps your person as a defend [*sic*] for moslems.

(8) *Letter from Sāṭṭī Mājīd to the Civil Secretary,*<sup>75</sup> *the Sudan Government (Shiyākha, opp. p. 75).*

The Civil Secretary,  
Sudan Government  
Sir

Your kindness for the suffering people does not make any [...] what kind of people or from what tribe.

All your kindness and generousness all over the world for the weak men in U.S.A. is encouraging me to put down the following application for special consideration.

Most of our relatives, who lived at Gordon Tree,<sup>76</sup> are

73 Apparently in margin, 'millions'. The ms appears to be a draft of letter or translation with various corrections between the lines.

74 On line, 'published'.

75 The Civil Secretary was the 'Prime Minister' of the British administration of the Sudan. For much of the 1930s the position was held by Sir Douglas Newbold.

76 A district just south of Khartoum, now known simply as Shajjara.

suffering much trouble from humble and uninhabitable houses, so I should be grateful if you kindly pay attention to the attached application with special consideration.

Awaiting your reply I remain  
your obedient servant,  
Sati Magid Sati Mohamed

(9) *Shiyākha* (after p. 79).

All praise is done to Allah the Lord of the world and Iraq, and Salam on the Sir of prophets and Messenger.

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

Dear Sons,

Member of the Islamic Benevolent African Society in North America. I do send to you my Slam and those who are faithful of the East specially those who are residing in Egypt, Sudan, Palestine, Hagad<sup>77</sup> and Irak. Best wishes from the Learned of the Islamic Religion who work day and night, for the benefit of this religion.

Best wishes to you and all of your home Natives full of Faith and to all your neighbourhood who are justfully follow the right and the unjust to be away.

I do repeat my wishes from a heart full with confidence and heartly love and to all population of the United States. Best wishes to [all] of our respect religion of whom chosed by Allah to his creatures.

That is the true religion written in Bible and Zabour, Angel<sup>78</sup> and Coran before the priests and months [*sic*, 'monks'] change in whom every prophet been ordered to inform each of his nation by their tongue.

It has been informed that our prophet Mohamed graced and prayed by Allah for him, that he is the first the creature created from his light and for him created all creatures and

77 Presumably the Hijaz.

78 *Injil*, that is the New Testament.

look the world from them.<sup>79</sup>

‘And when Allah made a Covenant through the prophets’. Certainly what I given you of Book and wisdom—then an apostle comes to you verifying that which is with you, you must believe in him, and you must aid him. He said: Do you affirm and accept my compact in the matter? They said: Then bear witness and I too am of the bearily of witness with you.

Whoever, therefore turnaback after this, this is that are the transgressors. It is then other than Allah’s [religion] that they seek to follow and to Him [surrender those who are in the heavens]<sup>80</sup> and the earth willingly or unwillingly and to Him shall they be returned. Say: We believe in Allah and what has been revealed to us and what was revealed to Abraham and Ismail and Isac and Jacob and the tribes and what was given to Moise and Jesus and to the Prophets from their Lord, we do not make a distinction between any of them and to Him do we submit and whoever desires a religion other than Islam, it shall not be accepted from him and in the there after he shall be one of the losers.

How shall Allah gindle [*sic*, guide] a people who disbelieved after their believing and after they had borne witness that the apostle was true and very clear arguments had comets [*sic*, come to] them and Allah does not gindle the injust people. [...]<sup>81</sup>

79 A reference to the doctrine of *nūr muḥammadī* or the ‘Muḥammadan Light’, created by God before the cosmos.

80 Reconstructed from the Arabic translation; Ahmad, *Shiyākha*, 82.

81 Ahmad (*Shiyākha*, 82-3) gives an Arabic translation of the remainder of this *khuṭba*.