Arab Detroit's "American" Mosque

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ONE FRIDAY IN 1976 a group of Muslims gathered on the doorstep of the Dix mosque (officially known as the Moslem Mosque) in the Southend of Dearborn. Finding the door locked, they forced their way in and proceeded to do what Muslims all over the world do every Friday at midday: perform Jumaa communal prayers. For this group of mostly immigrant, mostly Yemeni and Palestinian worshipers, their dramatic entrance into the mosque symbolized its reclamation by "authentic" Muslims. The "inauthentic" Muslims from whom they reclaimed the mosque were not American converts. They were mostly the families of early Lebanese-Syrian immigrants, and their mosque was one of the oldest in America.

The nationalist Yemenis among whom I was conducting ethnographic fieldwork at the time were hardly devout. They found the actions of their zealous countrymen, whom they referred to as "*al-musalee'een*" (literally "those who pray") mildly amusing.[1] Yet even the avowed atheists among them understood the logic of the *musalee'een*'s action. The Lebanese and Palestinian immigrant population residing in the Southend of Dearborn in the late 1970s also readily comprehended the reasoning behind the *musalee'een*'s forced entry into the Dix mosque. Mosques in the Middle East, and elsewhere in the traditional world of Islam, are open on Fridays, their primary function being to serve as a place to hold the Friday communal prayer. That the Dix mosque was not open on Fridays was abnormal, even scandalous, in the eyes of the immigrant Muslim community. This fact was obscured in my mind by the rhetoric employed by my Yemeni informants, leftists as well as rightists, who considered the *musalee'een* to be political reactionaries and social neanderthals. With hindsight, it is clear to me that whatever the personal, social, and political attitudes of the *musalee'een*, the driving impulse behind their action that fateful Friday morning was as cultural as it was religious.

The "reclamation" of the Dix mosque that began in 1976 culminated two years later when the *musalee'een* wrested complete control of the mosque from its more assimilated Lebanese Sunni members following a bitter court battle. With the help of a Yemeni sheikh trained in Saudi Arabia, they instituted a series of seemingly radical measures. Whereas in the past the mosque was open once a week for communal prayers (mostly on Sundays), henceforth it would be open twenty-four-hours a day, seven days a week. The newcomers also did away with the historic division of the mosque into a prayer area on the main floor and a social area in the basement; thus they disallowed weddings and other social celebrations that were long the mainstay of the Dix mosque. "Henceforth," the *musalee'een*'s imam declared, "there will be no singing or dancing in this house of worship."[2]

In another departure from established practice, the new leaders placed restrictions on women entering the mosque. In the past, female members of the congregation were at liberty to enter the mosque as they pleased. After the takeover, they were required to wear head scarves, enter through a special side door, and restrict themselves to designated areas within the building. According to the former imam, Mike Karoub, who was unceremoniously ousted, the *musalee'een* felt that the women and children were defiling the mosque. Women were believed to be ritually "polluting" the mosque if they entered it while they were menstruating. This "danger" applied even to the parts of the building that had been considered social areas. In the view of the newcomers and their sheikh, the entire building was a "house of worship." Theological rationalizations about "ritual pollution" aside, the *musalee'een* sought to replicate in Dearborn the public forms of female segregation and subordination they were accustomed to in their countries of origin.

To outside observers, the new restrictions comported well with the image of "Islamic revivalism" and "fundamentalist Islam" taking shape in the wake of the Islamic revolution in Iran and elsewhere in the latter half of the 1970s. This was especially true of the injunctions applied to the women of the congregation. By the mid-1980s those images became the norm in much of Dearborn's Muslim community, the largest concentration of Arabic-speaking Muslims in North America. It is quite commonplace today, for example, to see Muslim women clad in head scarves, long sleeves, and ankle-length dresses even on the hottest summer days throughout Arab Detroit. The recent influx of Iraqi Shia refugees has brought with it the heretofore unfamiliar sight of the black *abayas* (cloaks) worn

by women in southern Iraq. Such images, always perplexing to outsiders, including assimilated Arab American Muslims, fit neatly into American views of Islam and its attitudes toward women.

It is a simple matter today to point to the profusion of Islamic institutions and organizations in Metropolitan Detroit and conclude that an Islamic "revival" has indeed taken place. In Dearborn and its immediate environs alone, there are at least a dozen Islamic mosques, centers, schools, and bookstores that address the needs of Muslims, Shia, and Sunni alike. *Halal* (ritually slaughtered) meat markets and food abound. It is easy to forget that this profusion is a relatively recent phenomenon. In the early 1980s, Dearborn's large Muslim population was served by only two mosques—the mainly Sunni Dix mosque in the Southend and the predominately Lebanese Shia Islamic Center on Joy Road in nearby Detroit. Arguably, this profusion of Islamic dress, centers, schools, Muslim identity, and *halal* food derives its primary impulse from developments taking place in the Muslim world. The scale of this proliferation, however, obscures its prosaic nature. The prevalence of things *Islamica* in Dearborn has much to do with the influx of Muslim immigrants to the area in recent decades. They brought with them an Old World view of Islamic practice, partly energized by the Islamic revival, that contrasts sharply with the evolution of mosques and Muslims in the United States. The now-forgotten history of the Dix mosque reveals the impact recent immigration has had on Islamic practice in Dearborn.

An "American" Mosque: Lost and Found

Tucked away on Chase Street on Dearborn's east side in the heart of the new Lebanese immigrant community sits the American Moslem Bekaa Center. Operating out of a converted building, the Bekaa Center is the forgotten stepchild of the "reclaimed" Dix mosque; it is all but unrecognizable to those who attended its myriad religious and social functions through the four decades leading up to the dramatic events of 1976. The founders of the American Moslem Bekaa Center were the losers in the battle over the shape and tenor of Islamic practice in the Dix mosque. Their story is now buried beneath the rubble of the present. Paradoxically, the history of the Dix mosque provides both a deeper understanding of Islam in Arab Detroit today and a glimpse into its future.

By 1978 the Lebanese old guard at the Dix mosque found themselves on the losing end of a struggle to retain control of the

mosque they had built. Those who were not physically ousted in the tumult of 1976 found themselves defeated and dejected after a bitter court battle that ended in 1978. Several years of dormancy followed. Eventually, the ousted group was able to reconstitute itself as a distinct congregation under the name of the American Bekaa Lebanese League, a name used decades earlier by a previous generation. The name reflects the group's regional roots in the Bekaa Valley of Lebanon. By 1983, some five years after its ouster, the group acquired the small building on Chase Street that it converted to a social hall and religious sanctuary. What made this resurrection especially noteworthy was that the effort was spearheaded by women, not men.[3]

The women had long maintained their own organization under the name of the American Moslem Women's Society, whose title and treasury they retained after the change in leadership at the Dix mosque. The Bekaa men, in contrast, found themselves "penniless" and in disarray, as the mosque's treasury, which they once controlled, fell into the hands of the newcomers. Thus, when it came time for the Bekaa League to secure a mortgage for its new building, the Women's Society stepped forward with the down payment on the mortgage. The women's financial leverage gave them an unprecedented voice not only in the Bekaa Center's administration but also in its overall direction. Half of the seats on the center's new board of directors went to women as well as to representatives of the youth organization, who were allied with them.

The new arrangement stood in sharp contrast to the one that once prevailed at the Dix mosque. In preschism days, the men officially dominated the affairs of the mosque and its activities, while the women were confined to secondary roles. After the takeover, the positions of men and women reversed, with the women enjoying unprecedented leadership in the day-to-day affairs of the Bekaa Center. The new arrangement between the sexes caught the notice of many observers, including one imam in another congregation who remarked with some alarm that the Bekaa "women want to control their men." In no other Muslim institution in the Dearborn area did women play a leadership role in the respective institutions. The fact that many of the Bekaa women worked outside the home probably accounts for their readiness to assert themselves into a leadership role in the reconstituted Bekaa Center.

Origins of the Women's Society

By the late 1920s, a large number of Lebanese Muslim immigrants had moved into the Southend of Dearborn to work at Henry Ford's

sprawling River Rouge automobile plant. Many of the immigrants had relocated from Highland Park, the site of the original Ford operations and the home of the earliest Lebanese Muslim settlement in the Detroit area. At the time, Detroit's Lebanese Muslim community consisted of Sunnis from the Bekaa region of Lebanon and Shia from the southern region of the country.

In the 1930s the Lebanese in Dearborn established a Muslim congregation that was dominated by Sunnis. "A year or so after the establishment of this mosque," Linda Walbridge writes, "the Shi'a rented a hall only a few blocks away. They named it the Hashimite [*sic*] Hall, in honor of the family of the Prophet" (1997, 44).[4] By 1937 the Sunni congregation completed work on the ground floor of what would eventually become the Dix mosque. Meanwhile, the Shia congregation began efforts to purchase and convert a bank into the Hashemite Hall.

The rival mosque projects necessitated the mobilization of the still-nascent immigrant community's meager financial and human resources. This need appears to have been an important impetus behind the establishment of women's auxiliaries in each congregation. Novel developments in themselves, the auxiliaries are said to have played important roles in raising funds for the building projects, although documentation is nonexistent. It should be noted that the very idea of Muslims building and then financially supporting a mosque is itself novel, given that the construction and upkeep of mosques in the Middle East invariably is the responsibility of the state.

Although the precise role of the women's auxiliaries is not known, it is said that the Hashemite auxiliary was disbanded by the late 1940s, while its counterpart at the Dix mosque continued to function and even flourished. The exact cause, as well as the date, behind the demise of the Shia women's group is lost to us.[5] It is, nevertheless, worth speculating why one auxiliary survived into the present while the other did not. According to some informants, the Hashemite auxiliary disbanded around the time the mortgage on the Hashemite Hall was retired and no major projects that would tax the congregation's resources were on the agenda. In contrast to the single-phased project at the Hashemite Hall, the building project at the Dix mosque consisted of multiple phases in a long-term construction project. Construction of the Dix mosque continued into the late 1950s with plans for further expansion. During the second half of the 1950s and early 1960s, when my family was a member of the congregation, there was constant talk of building a school on a vacant lot adjacent to the mosque. The idea remained unfulfilled at the time of the takeover in the late 1970s.

By necessitating the mobilization of the community's resources and ingenuity, the building projects at the rival mosques enabled the greater involvement of Muslim women in the affairs of the mosques. The women were called upon to actively engage in fund-raising. They organized sales, parties, and picnics at which they sold baked goods, knitting, and other crafts. "Blessings" from the wives were needed so husbands could pledge portions of their take-home pay to the projects. Presumably, the women also needed to agree to their husbands spending scarce nonworking hours away from family supervising projects, raising money, and occasionally pitching in a hand in the actual construction or renovation of the buildings.

Overall, the women, individually and collectively, probably played key roles in the success of the community projects, even though their contribution was undoubtedly less recognized than the men's, and it may have been resented as well. According to a longtime female member of the Hashemite congregation, "the women were criticized all the time for being so organized and for being so aggressive. . . . The men felt the women should have stayed at home. They didn't like the idea of the women being so politically active." The exigencies of the communitywide mobilization necessitated a softening of the men's conservative social attitudes toward the participation of women in the public life of the mosques. The men were not altogether happy about the changes taking place as a result, but they faced a kind of Faustian bargain: to preserve their Lebanese Muslim cultural and religious identity they needed to build the mosques, but building the mosques entailed the participation of women in the public life of the community, a step that undermined the very cultural world they were seeking to preserve in the New World.

The early immigrants must have suffered from extreme cultural and social alienation in depression-era Dearborn. Their neighborhood, the Southend, was mostly populated by Italian, Romanian, and Polish immigrants. The Arabic-speaking residents were relatively few, as their immigration into the area did not peak until the periods 1927–33 and 1946–53 (S. Abraham, N. Abraham, and Aswad 1983, 166ff.). The mosque construction/acquisition projects helped them overcome their alienation and strengthen their communal solidarity, their Sunni-Shia sectarian rivalries notwithstanding. The projects gave them a special purpose—the advancement of Islam in an alien, Christian land. Those benefits probably outweighed the public activism of the women in the mental calculus of the men.

Men, Women, and Their Imams

The Sunni women's auxiliary, which was also known as the Women's Society, remained active throughout the 1950s, as the congregation moved to implement the second and third phases of the mosque construction project. Although the auxiliary continued to be largely dominated by women from the Bekaa region of Lebanon, membership expanded during the decade to encompass women from Palestine as well as other areas of Lebanon, a move that reflected the changing composition of the congregation during this time. In 1952 work on the important second phase was completed with the opening of the first-floor prayer area, the adjacent lecture hall, and the imam's office. The congregation soon made plans for the third phase—the construction of a large metal dome atop the mosque. The dome, adorned with a characteristic Islamic crescent, was finally erected in 1957.

Following the raising of the dome, the congregation's attention turned to internal matters, particularly to bringing a scholarly imam to head the now prosperous working-class congregation. The proposal ignited a conflict between the mosque's board of directors and the congregation's longtime spiritual head, Imam Hussein Karoub. Karoub had founded the congregation, but his lack of scholarly credentials, his surprising progressive views, and the taint of scandal associated with the first mosque in the Detroit area—in Highland Park—conspired to weaken his standing in the eyes of the Bekaa old-timers on the board of directors. Citing a news story that appeared in the *Detroit News* on July 29, 1927, Walbridge (1997, 43–44) recounts the controversy that followed Karoub from the original Highland Park mosque:

> The mosque was short-lived, though it apparently had support from a variety of Muslim countries. The article reports that there was a difference of opinion regarding the failure of the mosque. Karoub had brought a religious leader, a mufti, from Lebanon whose ideas were too progressive for the Muslims, who were far from being a homogeneous group . . . from Persia, Turkey, Spain, Morocco, Siberia, Arabia and Syria. Others, apparently, were not happy with Karoub's financing of the mosque. The greatest controversy came when a coffeehouse proprietor who had usurped Karoub's leadership and popularity was killed. While Karoub was acquitted of any wrongdoing, his name was tarnished.

By the late 1950s, the incident had been largely forgotten, but other controversies remained. Most pronounced was the fact that

Imam Karoub lacked any formal theological training. Being largely self-taught, his knowledge of Islamic theological and legal matters was considered dubious by some in the congregation. My mother's attitude was typical of some. A Palestinian immigrant who arrived in Detroit in 1955, she was quietly skeptical of Imam Karoub's religious knowledge. Seeing no alternative, she nevertheless continued to send her children to the mosque for religious and Arabic-language instruction.[6]

The erection of the dome signaled a change in attitude among a segment of the congregation. The completion of the building project conferred new confidence in the small congregation. Around the same time, Egypt's charismatic leader, Gamal Abdel Nasser, nationalized the Suez Canal, sparking Arab nationalist fervor throughout the Arab world, including the tiny Dix mosque congregation in far-off Dearborn. Egypt's ability to stave off a combined military attack by Britain, France, and Israel following nationalization of the Suez Canal further enhanced Arab nationalist sentiment in the mostly Arab Dix congregation. This glowing account by Elkholy (1966, 48) of the Arab nationalist fervor he found among Detroit's Muslims, though somewhat ecstatic, is nevertheless accurate:

> The Arab defeat in the Palestinian War [1948] aroused the anger of Moslems in America but discouraged them as well. The Egyptian Revolution and the rise of President Nasser to world prominence, however, aroused their sense of nationalism. To Moslems in America as well as in the Middle East, Nasser became the symbol of Arab nationalism. In almost every Moslem home in America there is more than one picture of Nasser. In their social and religious events, the Moslems receive enthusiastically and applaud strongly the songs about Nasser. As a prominent woman in Detroit put it to a Jordanian official accompanying King Hussein during his visit in 1959: "Whenever a party is opened in the name of the Prophet, no one is particularly moved. If it is opened in the name of God, no one cares either. But the name of Gamal Abdel-Nasser electrifies the hall."

A framed portrait of the Egyptian leader hung prominently in the social area of the mosque as late as the mid-1970s.[7]

This period was also marked by developments in parts of the Arab world that buoyed Arab nationalist sentiment, namely, the Algerian war of independence (1954–62), political union between Egypt and Syria (1958–61), the overthrow of the monarchy in Iraq (1958),

pro-Nasserite disturbances in Lebanon (1958), and the overthrow of the imamate in Yemen (1962).

By the early 1960s, possibilities and alternatives that once seemed impossible began to pose themselves to leaders of the congregation. The most attractive was a proposal to invite a Muslim scholar, a sheikh, from Cairo's famed al-Azhar University to preside over theological and Arabic-language instruction at the Dix mosque. The proposal was deliberately left vague in deference to Imam Karoub.

Adding a sense of urgency to the congregation's deliberations was Karoub's approaching retirement. Of concern to some members of the congregation was his plan to pass the imamship to his son, Mohammad "Mike" Karoub. If some in the congregation harbored doubts about the authenticity of the imam's religious bona fides, they had even greater doubts about his American-born son's credentials. Mike Karoub received his religious schooling at his father's knee.[8] His command of classical Arabic, the sine qua non for establishing authority in a religion that holds up Arabic as the language in which God delivered his final message to mankind, was suspect. In all fairness to the imam's son, doubts about his facility in Arabic were probably due more to his American-accented Arabic rather than to his actual competency in the language. Perceptions, however, are important. That the very Americanized Mike Karoub was also married to a Lebanese Christian, whose conversion to Islam was not in dispute at the time (but would become so later), contributed to the skepticism about his capabilities to lead the congregation. Imam Karoub's intention to hand the mantle of leadership to his son was the unspoken issue in the debate over whether to invite a Muslim sheikh to the mosque. Beneath that concern, however, lay a much more profound issue: should the mosque continue as an "American" mosque or should it "Arabize," that is, revert to being an Arab-style mosque.[9]

According to a longtime member of the congregation, the controversy over who should succeed the elderly Karoub was couched in the following terms: The men demanded the "preservation" of (in actuality, a return to) "authentic" Islamic traditions, while the Women's Society insisted on maintaining the status quo. The men betrayed their true feelings when they complained that some of the women were "too aggressive," faulting Imam Karoub for failing to preserve "traditional Islamic doctrine," which they believed resulted in the women's assertiveness in congregational matters. As the head of the congregation, the men reasoned, Karoub could have used his influence and knowledge of "the traditions" (sacred texts) to curtail the demands and independence of the leaders of the

women's auxiliary. This had not happened, according to the mosque's male leaders, because the imam lacked sufficient "authority" (i.e., his command of theological and legal matters was wanting) and because of the taint of scandal in his background.[10]

In Middle Eastern culture, men have ultimate authority in the family. By extension, the imam serves as the symbol of that authority in the congregation. Unlike traditional Christian clergy, Muslim sheikhs (imams) do not function as intermediaries between the faithful and the Almighty. Imams are theoretically "first among equals." Their standing and authority, therefore, are linked to their knowledge of the Quran, Hadith, and Sunna, as well as the Sharia (Islamic law). These alone, however, do not guarantee a following or convey stature. A holy man must win approval by demonstrating his knowledge, wisdom, and leadership abilities. He must also demonstrate piety in his daily conduct. In short, an imam may need to go beyond mere knowledge of the sacred and demonstrate other virtues in order to gain legitimacy, including, among others, winning peer recognition and exhibiting proper disposition and personality.[11]

Initially, Imam Karoub and his allies in the women's auxiliary sought to delay the hiring of a new sheikh, but the male-dominated board of directors ultimately prevailed and invited an Old World scholar to Detroit. Dr. Ahmed Mehanna, an Egyptian graduate from al-Azhar University, arrived in 1959. With a sheikh from the citadel of Sunni Islam, the men probably reasoned they would be able to reassert their authority over the congregation, putting the women's auxiliary in its "place," while simultaneously blocking Karoub's plan to install his son at the head of the congregation.[12]

Dr. Mehanna was popular with those who grew up in the Middle East and with some American-born Muslims like myself who longed for a "purer" form of Islam and Arabic culture than what was available in Detroit. His soft-spoken manner accentuated his scholarly credentials, while his Egyptian identity added to his standing in the eyes of those who felt Egypt was leading the Arab world into the modern era.

His presence, however, did not resonate with everyone in the congregation, and it even exacerbated tensions within it. Atif Wasfi, who conducted anthropological field work in the mosque in 1963, noted:

> Although hundreds of letters were sent to al-Azhar University, asking for a religious scholar to teach the descendants [of] Islam, very few people attend the meetings held by this scholar. While

> the Shi'ah boycott the religious services of this Sunni mosque, many Sunni do not participate in the religious activities because of personal quarrels among the families. In addition, this reluctance to attend religious services, especially Friday group prayer, may be due to the weakness of the sense of religiosity in the community. (1964, 132–33)

Wasfi didn't elaborate further, but the "weakness" he found might be better viewed as an adaptation to American culture and way of life rather than to a slacking "religiosity," a point to which we shall return.

It is significant that the women who supported the new sheikh tended to be mostly immigrants who still spoke Arabic and were for the most part not employed outside the home. My mother fit this category. In her eyes, the young sheikh represented a "modern and well-educated" class of clergy (*ulama*), more symbolic of the future than of the past and better able to transmit "correct" Islam to American Muslims than Karoub. The women who sided with Imam Karoub, in contrast, tended to be mostly American-born or American-raised, and many held jobs outside the home.[13]

The two camps squared off during the election of new officers for the Women's Society. The outcome had direct implications for the broader struggle over leadership in the congregation. The election pitted the most assimilated women, who supported Imam Karoub's daughter-in-law, Ida, against the foreign-born members. The victory of Ida Karoub and her slate prompted accusations of cheating, which resulted in a walkout by the opposing side. When the losing group sought to hold a meeting in the mosque, they found they had been locked out. Some of the disaffected, like my mother, began attending the Shia-dominated Hashemite Hall.

The bickering and infighting took its toll on Dr. Mehanna, who left his post in 1964 at the end of his five-year contract. His greatest disappointment appears to have been the reluctance of the congregation's Men's Club to back his bid for a position on the board of directors. It is said that the men feared the sheikh would use a position on the board to dominate the mosque as Imam Karoub had done. This explanation has plausibility. If the example of other congregations has any bearing, mosques tend to be dominated by the founding imam—the case of Imam Chirri, who founded the Islamic Center on Joy Road is a good example. But after declining health or death removes a founding imam from the scene, the mosque's board of directors asserts control and subsequent imams are usually denied a position on the board. Sheikhs who demand complete control usually establish a breakaway mosque.

End of an Era

In the wake of the Egyptian sheikh's departure, tensions continued to simmer between the Men's Club and the Women's Society at the Dix mosque. The conflict reached a stalemate, as indicated by the congregation's inability to make a decision on the vacant lot adjacent to the mosque. When I was attending Arabic school at the mosque in the early 1960s, there was persistent talk that the lot, on which stood a large commercial billboard, would someday be developed as the location of a full-fledged Arabic school on the model of the Armenian schools that some of my schoolmates attended on evenings and weekends. The Women's Society argued for launching the school construction project immediately, while the Men's Club, which essentially controlled the board of directors, hesitated for reasons that remain unclear.

It was about this time that the congregation began experiencing a loss of members, particularly of second- and third-generation offspring who began moving from the Southend to east Dearborn and to the more middle-class suburbs that better reflected their social and economic progress. Wasfi (1964, 136) captured this group's attitude, writing, "Many young Arab-Moslems do not dare take their American friends or American wives to the old-fashioned mosques [in the Southend] because of their location. Moreover, the mosques are the symbols of the sectarian differences."

Not only were the middle-class children of the Southend congregations defecting to the newer suburbs, a good number were beginning to attend the new "upscale" Islamic Center on Joy Road. The biggest loss appears to have been suffered by the Hashemite Hall congregation that like the new Islamic Center was predominately Shia. Wasfi (1964, 146–47) reported that whereas the Hashemite Hall congregation numbered 600 in 1958, by 1963 its numbers had dwindled to 150; even some of its leaders "moved to the Islamic Center and obtained offices there." Like its longtime rival, the Hashemite Hall, the Dix mosque was facing competition from the new Islamic Center and its dynamic, young leader Imam Chirri. Assimilated members of the Dix mosque congregation also defected to the Islamic Center, ignoring the Sunni-Shia divide in the process. That is precisely what my family did in the mid-1960s after a short stint at the Hashemite Hall.

Chirri held a full-time position as director and president of the Islamic Center, in contrast to the imams at the other mosques, who were denied similar positions. He also had the most schooling in religion, and therefore he had the greatest authority. Moreover, he spoke

English better than his rivals—with the exception of Mike Karoub who hadn't yet assumed the mantle of leadership at the Dix mosque. Chirri adopted an embracing attitude toward all Muslims, ignoring the Sunni-Shia cleavage that had long divided the Dix and Hashemite mosques. He also garnered support from two Sunni-dominated Arab governments: Nasser's Egypt as well as Jordan, which donated forty-four thousand dollars and seven thousand dollars respectively to help build the Islamic Center. "He collected other contributions from the community members themselves. In two dinner parties he collected $30,000" (Wasfi 1964, 136). In comparison, the financial situation at the Dix mosque was dismal, according to Wasfi (145), who found:

> Most of the members do not pay the subscription of one dollar per month. While there are more than 120 members (married and unmarried males and females), only 40 of them pay the subscription. These are old Sunnis. In order to get money to maintain the mosque, the association arranges dinner parties accompanied by Arabic songs and dances. Some Arab-Moslem girls perform belly dances to collect contributions. At a recent party, they collected about $700.

In the late 1960s, an influx of new immigrants from the Arab world began to change the complexion of the neighborhood and with it the makeup of the Dix congregation. The new arrivals were mostly Yemenis and Palestinians, the latter from the Israeli-occupied West Bank. The Dix mosque also began attracting worshipers, mostly men, from nearby areas of Detroit, recent immigrants from Jordan, Egypt, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Lebanon, as well as African American converts to Islam. Most of the new Lebanese immigrants in the Southend at the time were Shias, who preferred to attend the predominately Shia mosques. This was not the case with the Zeidis, who are nominally Shia but preferred to attend the Dix mosque.[14]

The influx of new immigrants to the Southend not only brought new worshipers to the mosque, it brought a demand for a different kind of Islam—a more traditional Middle Eastern Islam. This type of Islam placed a strong emphasis on male-oriented public piety and worship and left no place for women except in the home. Initially, the mosque's old guard viewed the influx of new members as a sign of resurgence after years of declining attendance. The established leadership also saw in the new members a revival of "Islamic tradition" in the mosque. The members of the Women's Society viewed the matter differently—they saw the men recruiting the newcomers to their side as a way of cementing their control over the mosque.

Conflict soon erupted over a proposed revision in the mosque's bylaws. Imam Karoub and the leaders of the Women's Society argued for an amendment restricting membership in the mosque. They feared that the newcomers would eventually form a majority and come to dominate the mosque. They were naturally opposed by the newcomers who resented being shut out of the mosque's decision-making body, considering it "un-Islamic." The Men's Club opposed both the Women's Society and Mike Karoub, who had replaced his father in semiofficial capacity after the latter's death in 1973. Confident of their control of the mosque, the leaders of the Men's Club dismissed their opponents' warnings. Although the debate over the proposed bylaw change never came to a vote, it was a harbinger of things to come.

Following the forced entry of the *musalee'een* into the mosque in 1976, the *musalee'een* gained positions on the mosque's board of directors. Their leader, a Palestinian immigrant by the name of Hajj Fawzi, was a firebrand Islamicist, who vehemently opposed Mike Karoub and his followers. Not long afterward, a showdown occurred between the *musalee'een* and Mike Karoub and his wife and their supporters. "The police were summoned, but not before Karoub and his followers were physically assaulted and chairs flew. Karoub's wife triggered the melee because she had walked into the mosque wearing a large cross on her chest."[15]

At the urging of the *musalee'een*, the mosque's board of directors invited a young Yemeni sheikh to head the congregation. The Saudi-trained imam was extremely conservative, even anachronistic, by the standards of the congregation. He banned all social activities from the mosque, saying there would be no music or dancing in it. Women visiting the mosque were required to dress modestly by covering their hair, arms, and legs. The new imam ended coed Islamic classes, forcing boys and girls into separate classrooms. He also called on members of the congregation to withdraw their savings from interest-bearing bank accounts, in keeping with the Muslim injunction against charging or accepting interest on money. The imam further advised fellow Muslims to refrain from keeping dogs as pets, as they are traditionally considered ritually impure by Muslims.

When the women's auxiliary protested the imam's decrees, particularly his ban on the holding of social functions like weddings and fund-raising parties in the mosque basement, he sternly told them, "I am here to teach you the right way; you have gone astray." When they complained, he unceremoniously banned the women's group from the mosque.

By the standards of the Middle East, the new imam's attitudes were not altogether atypical, his Wahhabi-training notwithstanding.[16] Nor were his positions necessarily at variance with those expressed by several other imams at the time. Haddad and Lummis (1987, 100) interviewed several North American Muslims in autumn 1983 whose respective imams echo the Dearborn sheikh's position. One informant said, "The imam is always stressing that we ought not to take interest, it is *haram* [sinful]." Another notes, "The imam says that interest is forbidden." Unfortunately, the authors of the study do not reveal the specific identities or locales of their informants so it is impossible to know if there is an overlap with the Dix mosque. During my own fieldwork in the Dearborn Yemeni community (1976–77) informants reported compliance with the new imam's directive to withdraw their savings from the bank and keep their money at home. This resulted in at least one theft of a Yemeni worker's savings.

In their study of five mosques in the Midwest, upstate New York, and on the East Coast, Haddad and Lummis (1987, 120) found several imams who disapproved of music that inspired "love and sexual feeling" and at least two imams who banned music and dance from mosque buildings. They relayed the following stories, "Two mothers in their thirties, trying to interest young people in attending mosque functions, were reprimanded for trying to bring music and dance there. In one instance the mother was told she could not have any music in the mosque building, even for children to dance and sing." The mother relates the following incident, which resembles what happened at the Dix mosque, "Music was intoxication. . . . So you could not have music. It is against Islam to listen to music. At that time they said there will be no music downstairs (in the mosque basement) and I made the suggestion that I would hold the party in my house, and I would like to have music. The imam said no, I could not bring the boys and girls together and have them listen to music or dance as couples" (120). "In another mosque," report Haddad and Lummis, "a mother upset the mosque leaders greatly by inviting a belly dancer as entertainment for a community dinner. The event was canceled before the dancer had a chance to perform" (120).

Walbridge (1997, 111) recorded the reactions of recent Lebanese Shia immigrants to the past practice of holding wedding celebrations in mosques by Dearborn's assimilated Arab Muslims:

> In Lebanon, weddings do not occur at the mosques. "People went to the mosques for prayers and funerals, not for weddings and engagements like they do here," one woman told me. When the new

> immigrants arrived and saw weddings with dancing and music at the mosques, they were shocked. Very recent immigrants who never witnessed such things can hardly believe their ears when they are told that people actually danced in the mosques. One woman, a college student who is quite liberal in her dress and attitudes, was astounded when she learned of this and exclaimed, "That's terrible!" In the old country, weddings and engagements took place in halls, private homes, and gardens but not in mosques.

Although the board of directors of the Dix mosque liked the Yemeni sheikh's stress on upholding "Islamic tradition," they were uneasy about some of his actions. Ironically, the sheikh was forced to resign and return to Yemen because of allegations of impropriety. According to Yemenis I interviewed in the mid-1970s, the sheikh allegedly molested a twelve-year-old girl. After the girl's parents complained, he purportedly offered to marry her, but her family rejected the offer. I was never able to confirm the story, but the sheikh left the community shortly after the rumors began circulating in the Yemeni community.

The sheikh's brief tenure seems to have emboldened the newcomers. By 1978 they not only constituted a majority at the mosque, they also won a court battle with some of the old guard who challenged their interpretation of the mosque bylaws. The court decision, along with the loss of the mosque's treasury of forty thousand dollars, only deepened the humiliation of the Bekaai men who once controlled the mosque. In the eyes of other Bekaais, especially the women, the men had "lost" the mosque. The humiliation visited upon the Bekaa old-timers was compounded by the disdain the women harbored toward them for initially having allied themselves with the newcomers for the purpose of keeping the Women's Society "in its place." In a moment of lament, one former board member remarked, "We lost the mosque. We lost the treasury. And, now, we have lost our women."

An "American" Mosque in Arab Detroit

The passage of time allows us to put developments at the Dix mosque in perspective. What the newcomers who eventually took over the mosque found so scandalous and so "un-Islamic" at the Dix mosque in the mid-1970s was that it had become an American mosque, a kind of "Islamic Protestant church" that was run largely by and for Americanized Sunnis whose roots in the Bekaa region of Lebanon extended

back two generations. The leadership was still mired in petty family quarrels, still stuck in Lebanese-style Sunni-Shia prejudices as well as other Old World impulses. But at its zenith in the 1960s, the congregation of mostly working-class families had acquired American social and cultural sensibilities and outlooks, irrespective of what some of the old-time male immigrants who ran the mosque thought or felt.

In 1963 Wasfi (1964) found an institution that would have been unrecognizable to any Middle Eastern Muslim. He observed that "An average of 12 persons attend the Friday group prayer" (132), which he mistakenly attributes to a "weakness of the sense of religiosity in the community" (133). In this he is echoing conclusions drawn by Abdo Elkholy (1966), who studied the congregation in 1959, where he found many second-generation and better-educated Arab Southenders lax in their observance of the Ramadan fast, in meeting their obligation to pray five times a day, in attending the Jumaa Friday prayer, and in their knowledge of the five basic pillars of Islam.[17] This decline in the congregation's "religiosity" is further bolstered by the finding, which alarms Wasfi, that there are "increasing" conversions to Christianity by Dearborn Muslims. Wasfi (141) is quick to add, however, that "their number is very small," not more than "two percent" of the community. In reality, the "converts" are a handful of Muslim women who married non-Muslim men.[18]

Wasfi, an Egyptian doctoral student, appeared surprised by other developments in the Dearborn Muslim community as well. To a Middle Easterner's mind in the early 1960s, these developments would have appeared alien and scandalous. Commenting on the fact that 82 percent of the families in his sample fit the nuclear family model, Wasfi (1964, 110–11) observed:

> The wife in this nuclear family insists on her American right of being equal to her husband. Even the wives who were brought up in the old country insist on this advantage. At the same time, the husbands of the first generation are not convinced of this right. Most of the quarrels between the husbands and their wives are related, directly or indirectly, to this claimed equality. Some of the unconvinced husbands beat their wives to ensure their superiority. But the wives who refuse to be beaten sometimes call the police, and the husbands are put in jail. Old men of the first generation, who are very upset, always say that America is for women and not for men. The American law gives the wife many privileges, such as the right of divorcing her husband, the right of taking the half [*sic*] of his wealth in case of divorce, and the right of being the only wife. She will never be a second or third wife. Consequently, all the

> decisions in the family are made by the wife and the husband. In fact, she has become the boss of the family, because the husband is always busy in [*sic*] making money. This conflict is almost nonexistent when both the couples [*sic*] are brought up in the United States.

Wasfi observed other social phenomena among Detroit's Arab Muslims that must have appeared outlandish to his Middle Eastern sensibilities and that bolstered his view that religiosity was waning in the Muslim community. "Some Arab girls," he notes, "performed belly dances to collect contributions" for an Arab American organization (1964, 151), and some members of the Islamic Youth Association "dance the 'Twist' and the Arabic 'Debka,' but they like the 'Twist' more" (153).

In light of Wasfi's observations on the Dix mosque and Detroit's Muslim community in general, we should not be surprised by the reaction of the *musalee'een* who followed him a decade later. Wasfi, after all, was highly educated and presumably sophisticated as well. The same cannot be said of many of the newcomers, who for the most part were semieducated laborers. Although they claimed to be more devout than their assimilated coreligionists, the source of their fervor was a Middle Eastern model of what a mosque should be. Everything they found at the Dix mosque (social parties, Nasser's portrait, the women's auxiliary, coed Sunday school classes, a preference for spoken English, Sunday as opposed to Friday communal prayer) was at variance with their entire life experience.[19] In this light, it is no small matter that the Women's Society used to run bingo games at the mosque, both as a source of entertainment and as a way of raising funds.

The irony is that the Dix mosque and similar "American" mosques seem to have—unwittingly, no doubt—reverted back to the model of the earliest type of mosque (*masjid*) in Islam. Following the work of Oleg Grabar (1969), Walbridge (1997, 98) reports that in the "very early history of the Islamic world . . . the masjid was basically an open space that served exclusively Muslim purposes such as prayer, collection of taxes, and military recruitment. There was no formal structure or well-defined purpose." To some extent one could argue that the Americanized Dix mosque (and others like it in Arab Detroit) represents a distant outpost of Islam, which by necessity serves multiple functions—as a community center, a school, a social venue, a place to hold weddings and funerals, a place for community solidarity and political expression, and as a house of

worship.[20] These various purposes suited the needs of an immigrant community settling into a new cultural milieu, but the new forms may not have been recognizable to later immigrants (or recent converts) who held a model of the mosque prevalent in the contemporary Muslim world.[21]

The reaction of the newcomers to the Dix mosque in the late 1970s is entirely understandable—they either would have to "reclaim" the mosque for Islam as they understood and practiced it, or failing that, withdraw from the congregation and establish a new mosque. In this instance, they succeeded in wresting control of the mosque and forcing the founders group, the Bekaais, to leave and establish a new institution. In so doing, they were foreshadowing a conflict that has played out several times in the mosques of Dearborn (and presumably in mosques throughout North America), albeit in various ways and with different outcomes.

The Joy Road Mosque: Similar Conflict, Different Outcome

A similar struggle between the established (and generally Americanized) Muslims and a wave of immigrant newcomers subsequently took place within the larger Lebanese Shia community in Dearborn. It centered on the long-established Islamic Center. Unlike the Sunni-dominated Dix mosque, the struggle at the Islamic Center resulted in the old guard prevailing over those newcomers who sought to redefine the tenor and role of the mosque. The newcomers and their respective imams were forced to establish separate congregations only a few miles from the Islamic Center. This struggle has played out at least four consecutive times at the Islamic Center. Walbridge (1997, 112) documented three of those cycles, which occurred in the 1980s, and drew the following sweeping conclusion:

> In Dearborn, there is a new interpretation of the purpose of the mosque. It is actually part of a process that was started in the early part of this century. The mosque initially was used for all social events, many of which had nothing to do with religion. Then an earlier group of the new wave of immigrants came. Steeped in tradition, they tried to bring the mosque in line with what was done in Lebanon, so they moved weddings out of the [Islamic Center]. A slightly later group, strongly influenced by political changes in the Middle East, arrived, and once again the mosque (particularly the Majma' [Islamic Institute of Knowledge]) became

> a center for all types of occasions. But all of these occasions have been redefined as religious. For this latest group, the Shari'a minded [of the Islamic Council], there simply is no distinction between religion and nonreligion, between sacred and profane.

Of the many factors that conspire to determine the outcome of the struggle to control a mosque (personalities of key players, relative numbers of the opposing sides), leadership, particularly in the person of the "founding imam," seems to be the determining factor. As we have seen in the case of the Dix mosque, as long as Imam Karoub was running the affairs of the mosque, the board of directors were unable to reverse the Americanization of the mosque or curtail the activities of the women's auxiliary. As Imam Karoub prepared to retire, however, his grip weakened, allowing those who longed for a more Old World mosque to temporarily thwart the rise of the imam's son to the head of the congregation.

In the first confrontation, the younger Karoub and his allies in the women's auxiliary were able to retain control of the Women's Society and send the Egyptian sheikh packing. Even if the Egyptian sheikh had wanted to assert his influence on the mosque, he lacked a critical mass of potential supporters because the new immigrant segment of the congregation was still small at the time.

The Women's Society was emboldened by the support it received from Imam Karoub and his American-born and American-educated son. To the traditionally minded men in the Men's Club and on the board of directors, Imam Karoub was too Americanized. His unwillingness to impose a Middle Eastern behavioral code on the congregation (and thereby "curb" the women's auxiliary) made him suspect. But Karoub was also the founding imam who helped establish the mosque, and thus there was little the conservative men could do while he was alive, other than to stall his plan to have his son replace him as the mosque's part-time imam. He died in 1973, three years before the takeover of the mosque by the newcomers.

Consider, in comparison, developments at the Islamic Center on Joy Road, which since the early 1980s has found itself where the Dix mosque was in the 1970s. As long as Imam Chirri, the "founding sheikh," was in stable health, he was able to control the board of directors, oversee the hiring of a series of assistant imams from the Middle East, and maintain control in the face of a massive influx of new immigrants. Chirri was able to maintain his grip on the mosque while making essentially cosmetic concessions to the newcomers.

In the period before the late 1970s, when the recent wave of

immigrants began arriving, Chirri was quite Americanized, having immigrated to the United States in the late 1940s. He wore a small white turban and a cloak over a Western-style business suit, and was more comfortable speaking English than Arabic to his largely Americanized mosque congregation. "A photograph of a children's class in 1965 shows a group of school-aged children dressed in their 'Sunday best.' The girls, sitting among the boys, wear crisp, frilly dresses and, except for one little girl in an 'Easter bonnet,' no head coverings at all," observes Walbridge (1997, 47). Social parties and wedding receptions were held at the Islamic Center just as at the Dix mosque. Services were held on Sunday, with Chirri giving the sermons in English with a little Arabic thrown in for emphasis. Although it is an exaggeration to claim, as one of Walbridge's informants did (47), that "the women used to wear curlers in their hair to the mosque!" it is quite true that no woman wore "Islamic dress" and few covered their heads. I once took a German American girl I was dating in high school to the Islamic Center for an ecumenical introduction to Islam. It was the mid-1960s and no one at the mosque thought it strange, least of all Sheikh Chirri, who always seemed to relish the prospect of a new convert.

With the influx of new immigrants from southern Lebanon in the 1980s, Chirri made stylistic accommodations, but otherwise made no substantial changes. Few people, I suspect, know that for many years a framed photograph of Imam Chirri shaking hands with President Nixon in the White House hung in his study at the Islamic Center. I remember scrutinizing the photo at length while listening to Chirri suggest to a group of Palestinian nationalists gathered for a lecture on Palestine that "half-a-loaf is better than no loaf." The reference was to the notion, then gaining currency, that Palestinians would be better off abandoning their maximalist goals and resigning themselves to live in peace with Israel in only part of their ancestral homeland. At the time, the idea was anathema to most Arabs, and those promoting it were suspected of being pro-American.

After the fall of the Shah of Iran in 1979, a large poster-sized photograph of Ayatollah Khomeini suddenly appeared in the foyer of the Islamic Center, where it stayed for several years. Nearby, hung a handwritten sign in Arabic and English requesting women entering the building to cover their hair. A box brimming with polyester scarves of assorted colors sat on an adjacent table. Soon, letters under Chirri's signature were being sent to the congregation celebrating the anniversary of the founding of the Islamic Republic of Iran, "whose establishment is the greatest gift to the Muslims and mankind at this time."[22]

Other curious missives emanated from the Islamic Center as well. One, dated May 20, 1989, notified Muslims that Imam Chirri would no longer "perform burial services at Roseland Park [the cemetery used for Muslim burials in the Detroit area for decades] because of the improper positioning of the plots." Apparently, someone noticed that the burial plots set aside for Muslims were not facing east as prescribed by Islamic precepts. An arrangement was reached with Roseland Park to reinter "loved ones" in another section of the cemetery "in accordance with Islamic requirement." My hunch is that one of the new imams discovered the "error," and in the process created undue emotional strain on Chirri and countless hapless American Muslims, who had long assumed their loved ones had received a proper Muslim burial.

Unlike the Dix mosque, the Islamic Center has, under Chirri's leadership, successfully weathered the strains created by the arrival of newcomers by simply holding the reins of power and not allowing control of the mosque to devolve to the congregation. Chirri was inadvertently aided by the very imams he had brought over from the Middle East who led the dissatisfied out of the Islamic Center and founded their own mosques. The population of Lebanese Shia Muslims in Dearborn has been sufficiently ample to sustain four spin-off congregations, all located within a ten-minute driving distance of the Islamic Center.

Following Chirri's death in the early 1990s, the old guard of established and Americanized families who helped found the Center has strengthened its own hold on the mosque. The board has refused to appoint any of the successor imams to the board or to the presidency of the center. Unlike the Dix mosque, the Islamic Center has never relaxed its opposition to elections—seats on the board of directors are filled by invitation only. That oligarchical policy may have ultimately saved the Islamic Center from the fate that befell the Bekaais at the Dix mosque.[23]

The largely Americanized board continues to make cosmetic accommodations to those in the congregation who yearn for an Old World–style mosque while it simultaneously pursues the long-established policy of adapting to the political and social realities of Dearborn and the wider American society. The Islamic Center is preparing to build a new complex on land purchased in Dearborn. The complex is projected to cost seven to eight million dollars, and will include a new mosque, social center, and Islamic school. The school is already operating out of an existing structure at the site. When asked if the social center would be a return to the days of

"dancing and singing in the mosque," board member Ronald Amen said "no, that won't be the case." Confronted with the fact that having a social center where wedding parties will be held means "dancing and singing," Amen paused momentarily, before saying, "The social center will be in a separate building connected by a walkway to the mosque" (interview, May 6, 1998). Such are mosque politics in the 1990s.

Present and Future Mosques

Tell a typical Muslim in the Middle East that people sing and dance in the mosques of America, and you will surely scandalize him or her.[24] Yet for decades American Muslims in Detroit and elsewhere thought nothing of holding social and political functions at their local mosques and Islamic centers. They simply built their mosques in such a way that they could segregate the prayer area from the social area. It was an ingenious intellectual division not unlike what the early Muslims did when they built their mosques in the first flush of territorial expansion. For American Muslims, their model of the mosque was a necessary adaptation to the world in which they found themselves. It was an act of cultural survival.

Curiously, the cultural ingenuity of earlier generations of American Muslims is ridiculed by today's Muslims. Even American-born Muslims who attended Dearborn's "American" mosques have succumbed to the claims of the latest waves of immigrant Muslims that they, the newcomers, and only they, practice Islam properly; and it is they who have rid Islamic praxis of artificial cultural accretions and adaptations that corrupted and undermined it in Dearborn.

A 1993 article titled "Muslim Community Growing—and It Shows," published in the November 21 *Detroit Free Press*, counted twenty-five mosques in the Metro Detroit area. There are at least eight mosques in the Dearborn area alone. To be sure, Dearborn's Arab Muslims tend to eschew calling them "mosques," preferring more ambiguous and broader titles like the Islamic Center of America, Islamic Council of America, Institute of Knowledge, House of Wisdom, to name several. Nonetheless, technically they are mosques given that they are places where Muslims gather and perform the Friday communal prayer. In that sense, they cannot escape their primary raison d'être. But, like the Dix mosque of old, these Islamic "centers," "institutes," "councils," and "houses of wisdom," also perform other vital social functions as social gathering points, as quasi community

centers, as schools for religious and language instruction, and as reservoirs of cultural and ethnic identity. It is precisely these functions that distinguish Dearborn's "mosques" from mosques in the Middle East rather than the lack of minarets and the other non-Middle Eastern forms in their architecture.[25]

The great irony is that Dearborn's new mosques have already taken a giant step toward becoming "American congregations," and thus are well on their way, once they abandon the outward displays of religiosity (beards and veils), to becoming as unrecognizable to future Middle Eastern immigrants as the Dix mosque had once been to the *musalee'een*. The absence of the *muezzen*'s daily five calls to prayer is but one obvious difference between Dearborn's mosques and those of the Middle East.[26] Other departures from the Middle Eastern model are equally apparent. Dearborn's mosques, both new and old, operate under the direction of (mostly elected) boards of directors, a major departure from the Middle Eastern model. These boards hire and fire imams ("founding imams" excepted) and busy themselves with fund-raising, a task essential to the survival of all mosques in the area. All of this is unheard of in the Middle East.

Imams play roles in Dearborn for which they feel unprepared and that were unimaginable when they entered the *madrasas* (seminaries) in their native lands. They must administer mosques that are for all intents and purposes community centers. Further afield, Dearborn's imams, even those steeped in notions of "pure, scholastic" Islam, are called upon regularly to provide marriage and family counseling, a task that, if done at all outside the kinship network in the Middle East, was best left to others. In lieu of Islamic courts, Dearborn's imams must also serve as experts on the fine points of Islamic law and serve as arbiters in disputes. Dearborn's sheikhs must also assume the role of school administrators, as nearly every Dearborn-area mosque operates or has plans to open an Islamic parochial school.[27]

Perhaps the greatest departure from the Middle Eastern mosque model is in the participation of women in the local mosques. That women attend mosques regularly in Dearborn (and elsewhere in the Metro Detroit area) in itself constitutes a radical departure from Middle Eastern practice. Mosques in the Middle East are mainly the preserves of men, places in which women almost never set foot. In even the most scripturally minded congregations in Dearborn, women (and children) attend communal prayers, if not on Fridays, then at least on Sundays. Sunday communal prayers are another American innovation, something unheard of in the Muslim world, where Sunday is usually the first day of the workweek. The presence

of women and children in Dearborn's mosques is superseded only by women's participation in the life of the mosques, from teaching Sunday school to preparing communal and holiday meals at the mosques.[28] Even in the new mosques, where Middle Eastern sensibilities and norms are prevalent, women have formed auxiliaries. In at least two Dearborn mosques, women sit on the boards of directors. Can Saturday night bingo be far off?

Taken together, these developments demonstrate the extent to which Dearborn's new mosques have become, for lack of a better term, "American mosques." The histories of the Dix mosque and the Islamic Center provide a glimpse into the future. Each crop of new immigrants will attempt to wrest Dearborn's mosques from the myriad adaptations they have made in the New World. Some will succeed; others will fail.

Even before the flow of new immigrants turns into a trickle, it can be expected that the ardor of today's newcomers will eventually wane. Cultural accretions and accommodations will become normal to local Muslims. Gradually, women will assume greater roles in the mosques, just as the Bekaa women did two generations earlier in the Dix mosque. Today's Muslim women in Dearborn will be compelled by a need to transmit their religion and ethnic culture to their children. They will be driven by the fear, as one of the Bekaa women once put it, "of losing their kids and grandkids to another faith." Ultimately, today's women will demand that English be spoken in the mosques, that the Sunday school classes be given more than passing attention, that only sheikhs who have a solid command of English and an understanding of American culture be hired, that interdenominational marriages be tolerated, and that religious belief and practice be less outwardly devotional and more inwardly spiritual. If the past is any guide to the future, it will be these women and their daughters who will one day resist the demands of future immigrants for a return to a Middle Eastern form of Islam. For they will have discovered that "Islam" and "Islamic identity" are really code words for their respective Lebanese, Yemeni, Iraqi, and Palestinian cultural identities. When the Middle Eastern model of mosque has faded into a memory, and when people once again sing and dance in the mosque, it will be the women who will constitute the backbone of Islam in Dearborn. For the time being, however, they will be content to prepare the communal meals, teach Sunday school, and sit in the audience at mosque functions while the men dominate the podium.

NOTES

I wish to thank Andrew Shryock and Sally Howell for their valuable comments on an earlier version of this study. Responsibility for any errors and omissions is entirely mine.

1. For a detailed look at the nationalist community see my *National and Local Politics: A Study of Political Conflict in a Yemeni Immigrant Community of Detroit, Michigan* (1978).
2. I shall use the terms "sheikh" and "imam" interchangeably; both refer to a Muslim cleric knowledgeable in the Quran, *Hadith* and *Sunna* (sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad), and some aspects of Islamic law.
3. Information on this period is gleaned from interviews with several informants while I served as a consultant to a study of five U.S. Muslim congregations conducted by Yvonne Haddad and Adair Lummis. The Haddad/Lummis study was published as *Islamic Values in the United States: A Comparative Study* (1987). I would like to thank Mohammad Okdie for the insights he provided while working as a field-worker on the project.
4. On this period, see also Elkholy (1966); Aswad (1974); S. Abraham, N. Abraham, Aswad (1983); and Naff (1985).
5. While conducting field work in Dearborn in 1963, Atif Wasfi (1964, 153) noted the existence of a women's organization affiliated with the Hashemite Hall. He says little else other than to observe that the women's group affiliated with the Dix mosque was "the most organized and has a President and a Secretary."
6. Elkholy (1966, 131) observed that the congregation "had no regular respectable religious leader." He added, "Their religious leader, not an imam, but a volunteer sheikh, had a limited degree of self-education, despite the weekly Arabic newspaper which he publishes in Detroit. All religious activities performed by him were on a voluntary basis. When he did not go to the mosque, because of sickness, out-of-town marriage or funeral ceremonies, the Friday noon prayer was suspended."
7. For many years, a framed picture of Nasser contemplating a chess move was displayed prominently on a lamp table in my family's living room. Nasser's popularity among Dearborn-area Arabs, which continued in the Southend after his death in September 1970, is described in detail in Wigle and S. Abraham (1974). The euphoria of the period should be contrasted with the embarrassment that existed before the 1956 Suez War, when many parents "tried to hide their origin. Some changed their Islamic names and others identified themselves with Italian or Armenian ethnic groups" (Wasfi 1964, 113). For a discussion of how Arab Americans coped with anti-Arab, anti-Muslim stereotypes, and hostility, see my studies on this and related topics (1989; 1992; and 1994).

8. Mike Karoub first visited the Middle East in 1974 at the age of fifty. He died in April 1998.
9. Elkholy (1966, 125) observes that, "Having searched a very long time for a scholarly religious leader, Detroit was offered the services" of a highly trained Yugoslav graduate of al-Azhar University but demurred. "He was rejected," Elkholy noted, "on the grounds of being non-Arab."
10. One outsider saw the situation differently. Elkholy (1966, 90) found that the older generation's "traditionalistic approach to religion" actually weakened religious practices in the congregation. "The mosque is still seen by the Detroit members as a place for men. Even in the rear ranks they do not tolerate participation by women. As a result, the youth associate the mosque with the aged and the backward." Elsewhere, Elkholy describes a development that might have been at the heart of the tensions dividing the men and women of the congregation. Elkholy discovered that many of the Dearborn Muslim women were marrying Christians and turning away from the faith. The women told Elkholy that they had "converted out of frustration, having been slighted by the Moslem men who left them to marry Americans." By marrying outside their community, they "found themselves rejected by their relatives and the entire community," in contrast to the Toledo congregation, also studied by Elkholy, which absorbed outsiders into the community.
11. Cf. Gilsenan (1982, 27–54 passim); Bates and Rassam (1983, 54ff.); Keddie (1972). See also the useful discussion on the subject of the Dearborn imams and their functions by Walbridge (1997, 113–26).
12. As previously noted, the congregation refused an offer from a non-Arab scholar (Elkholy 1966, 125). One member of the leadership explained to Elkholy, "the majority, and I am one of them, would rather have a sheikh from Cairo [i.e., an Arab] for reasons one of which is (Arab) nationalism."
13. Wasfi (1964, 105) found that 30 percent of the assimilated men in his sample (defined as those having grown up in the United States) had wives who worked outside the home, as opposed to only 8 percent of the wives of men who spent their formative years in Lebanon. Wasfi limited his study to Lebanese married men who were members of the Dix mosque.
14. The majority of Yemeni immigrants were probably Zeidis, one of several Shia sects worldwide and the majority in the northern part of Yemen. Yemeni Sunnis refer to themselves by the name of their "legal school," Shafei. The Shafei-Zeidi schism, while real in the home country, tends to be played down among immigrants. See Wenner (1967) for discussion of the Shafei-Zeidi split in Yemeni society.
15. Personal communication from Ronald Amen (May 6, 1998). My mother had heard an identical claim about Mike Karoub's wife and the large cross around her neck. Neither informant actually witnessed the altercation,

news of which had circulated widely in the Southend at the time. I am unable to locate any eyewitnesses who actually saw the cross. Personally, I doubt the veracity of the claim and believe it to be an after-the-fact distortion created to justify the physical expulsion of the Karoubs from the mosque by the *musalee'een*.

16. Wahhabism is arguably the most conservative and literal of all the Sunni sects. It calls for a return to "an unadulterated Islam of primitive simplicity—the Islam of the Prophet and the Qur'an." It is puritanical, disallowing all innovation in theology and practice. The Quran is consulted for direction regarding all economic and social problems of the day (Cragg 1975, 115–18).
17. Nevertheless, the group still identified themselves as Muslims, and significantly, as Wigle (1974, 162) found in the early 1970s, "religion [among Southend Arabs] appears to have taken on a political nature due to recent events in the Middle East. Being a Moslem is synonymous with being an Arab and there is a strong relationship between this fact and sympathies over the Middle East conflict."
18. Curiously, a quarter-century later Walbridge (1997) documented similar laxness in the maintenance of the monthlong Ramadan fast, simmering heretical beliefs, doubts about the existence of the afterlife, widespread belief in superstition, and malicious gossip at a time of extreme and overt religiosity (expansion of mosques, Islamic schools, mosque attendance, and widespread wearing of "Islamic dress" by women and girls) in the Lebanese Shia community. On the all-important issue of prayer, Walbridge (137) found: "Most Lebanese Shi'a in Dearborn will say that they pray, that is, perform salat, the obligatory prayer. However, they might be exaggerating. Salat takes time, not only for the prayers themselves but also for the ablutions that precede them. There is a strong tendency in this community to want to convince others of one's religious commitment. Religiosity is held in high esteem. Those who are lax in their religious obligations are the ones who are on the defensive these days."
19. The display of photos of political leaders, such as Nasser, in the mosque, albeit the social area, could be offensive to Muslims who take seriously the Islamic injunction against graven images. Moreover, the Egyptian president was known for his repression of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood organization. Even in the heyday of Arab nationalism in the mid-1960s, Nasser was resented by politically active Islamists, who considered Arab nationalism antithetical to their goal of establishing an Islamic state.
20. In commenting on the various functions of the Dearborn mosques, Wigle and Abraham (1974, 294) note that in the wake of the June 1967 Arab-Israeli War, "Meetings were called in the [Dearborn] Mosque and the Islamic Center where funds were collected and sent to the defeated countries."

21. In the second stage of mosque development (between A.D. 650 and 750), Walbridge (1997, 98) notes, "Mosques were built so that they could be expanded or contracted according to the needs of the community. They were enclosed by walls and did not have exterior facades," a structure entirely befitting a religion on the move, as it were, expanding and contracting as its freshly won borders shifted. Again, a parallel of sorts can be drawn to the Muslim communities in America (and elsewhere) as distant ethnic-religious settlements on the far reaches of the Muslim "expansion." The contemporary model of the mosque in Arab Muslim society probably harkens back to the twelfth century, an era known for its monumental mosques. Most noteworthy from the standpoint of our discussion is that "the trend for the separation of secular buildings from the religious sanctuaries became more pronounced during this period" (99).
22. These commemorations were being held as late as 1989 (the date of the most recent announcement in my files), fully a decade after the founding of the Islamic Republic. Presumably, the celebrations continued thereafter.
23. Maintaining control was not always easy. The fourth and most recent spin-off was precipitated by a stormy confrontation between the board and Chirri's initial replacement, Imam Ilahi, in the early 1990s. Ilahi and his youthful supporters were "thrown out of the mosque," according to current board member Ronald Amen. The event has entered the lore of the Islamic Center as "black Sunday," the day when the Iranian-born Ilahi was accused of "bringing in his armed Iranian supporters" in a power grab—an inflammatory claim similar to the allegation that Ida Karoub wore a large cross to the Dix mosque. According to Amen, Imam Ilahi "challenged the authority of the old guard, and you don't do that. Had they been democratic they would have been voted out." Amen was speaking from firsthand experience. In the early 1970s he had been "invited" to sit on the board, only to find himself unceremoniously tossed off it several months later amid charges that he was a "commie" for helping to build ACCESS (Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services). At the time ACCESS was viewed as an organizational interloper run by Arab American radicals and atheists. Amen accepted a seat on the Board again two decades later.
24. Most Levantine Arab Muslims seem to be utterly unaware that Sufi Muslims have been "singing and dancing" in praise of the Creator, the Prophet, and their faith for over a millennium. To be sure, Sufis periodically suffered grievously for their ardor at the hands of purists and literalists.
25. Dearborn's mosques have no architectural merit to speak of, being mostly converted stores, banks and other run-of-the-mill former commercial

buildings. Of Dearborn's "mosques" only the Islamic Center is adorned by a minaret. Located in a struggling neighborhood inhabited mostly by non-Muslim African-Americans, the minaret serves a decorative purpose, more of a reminder of the past than a functioning part of the present, as putting it to use would border on the surreal.

26. In the early 1980s, the *musalee'een* began broadcasting the daily calls to prayer over loudspeakers from the Dix mosque to the great annoyance of some residents of the Southend. The city of Dearborn attempted to prohibit the practice but failed when the courts considered the broadcasts the Muslim equivalent of church bells.
27. Some also have small businesses on the side with which to supplement their income. One owns a doughnut shop; another, an ice-cream parlor.
28. See Walbridge (1997, 195ff.) for a discussion of the developments of women's involvement in mosques.

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