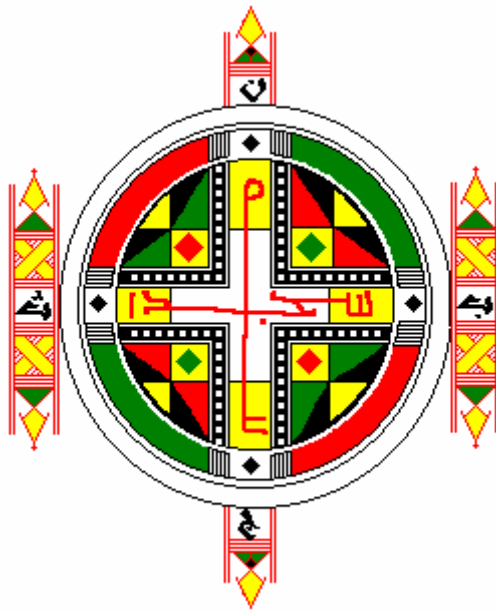


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Institute of Islamic-African Studies International

The Islamic Slave Revolts of **Bahia, Brazil**



**A Continuity of the 19th Century *Jihad* Movements of Western
Sudan**

Institute of Islamic-African
Studies International
by
**Abu Alfa MUHAMMAD SHAREEF bin
Farid**

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ وَصَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَي سَيِّدِنَا مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلَى آلِهِ وَصَحْبِهِ وَسَلَّمَ تَسْلِيمًا

The Islamic Slave Revolts of Bahia:

A Continuity of the 19th Century Jihad Movements of Western Sudan?

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Why This Study is Important

It was in 1980 when I first heard the news of the African Muslim slave revolts and insurrections in South America, particularly in Bahia, Brazil. Like most 'news' of that nature, I had no real quantifiable sources that I could refer to, with the exception of the persistent scholarly work of Dr. Clyde Ahmed Winters. I heard it mentioned again in a seminar presented by the Darqawi Institute in Norwich England that same year. It wasn't until I had the occasion to meet the activists and scholar Dr. Dawud Abdallah, from Grenada, who was still a graduate student at the University of Khartoum, in Sudan, that I read something of considerable worth on the subject of the African Muslim slave revolts of Bahia. It was in 1984 that I had the chance to read his concise paper on the subject. Most of the sources Dr. Abdallah used were secondary sources from area studies journals; however, his study did wet my tongue, so to speak, and raised many questions regarding African Islam and its persistence in the western hemisphere.

In 1991, while a sophomore in the History Department of Texas Southern University, I had the chance to reopen this subject in a Directed Reading course in the History Department, which was really for senior students. However, the Dean of the Department allowed me to register for that course. The course was a preparatory course for writing a graduate level thesis. We were instructed to pick a topic, and then submit an abstract along with at least 50 bibliographical sources on the topic. Each week we had to meet with the professor, who acted as our 'graduate adviser' to update our progress on the thesis. The paper had to be completed by the end of the semester, so it couldn't be too extensive.

I chose the topic 'The Slave Revolts of Bahia, Brazil from 1807-1837: A Continuation of the 19th Century Jihad Movements of West Africa?' I put it in the form of a question because I wanted to answer certain queries by my research and not to assert anything at that point. My advisor, who was an expert in South American area studies, immediately rejected my topic saying that there was no such thing as African Muslim 'jihad' in any part of the western hemisphere. I humbly informed him that this was not true and showed him my bibliography with some of the published articles that discussed the subject of the Muslim slave revolts in Bahia, in some detail. However, my professor was not persuaded. I realized that he didn't want to believe that African Muslims actively initiated *jihad*, let alone slave revolts in the western hemisphere. This was my first 'academic' encounter with what scholars call 'intellectual apartheid'.

The idea of Islamic presence in the western hemisphere during its formative history was too disturbing for this professor for some reason. He argued that even if some of the revolts were led by Muslims, this alone did not make them Islamic revolts. I understood his argument, but, my response was that this would also apply to the Bolshevik and Jacobin 'revolutions' as well. Because the ideologues of both 'revolutions' were few, it was the masses of the poor and dispossessed in Moscow and Paris that took to the streets and made it happen. Yet, today these two significant social upheavals in Europe were named after those few and somewhat shadowy figures known as Bolsheviks and Jacobins. So even if the masses of the people who participated in these revolts in Bahia, were not Muslims, and if they had been urged on by some 'shadowy' band of African Muslim ideologues, it would still be proper to call the revolts Islamic. However, as I told the professor, this was not the case at all. All the evidence that I had read pointed to the fact that the entire population in many of the revolts and the majority of the people of most of them were actively practicing Muslims from diverse African ethnicities.

After the professor examined my sources, still his chauvinism would not let him accept it. What I was encountering was 'a worldview' or 'a historical consciousness' well established in western academia which justified the present domestic colonization of all non-whites in the western hemispheres. He then said that he would only accept my paper if I included at least two PhD dissertations that asserted the same thing! I was taken aback, because here I was a sophomore in

college being asked to actually produce PhD level work in the face of a clearly hostile ‘advisor’. Many of the professors in the department felt that his conditions were unreasonable, but his antagonism to my thesis made every other professor curious about the subject. All praises are due to Allah ta’ala, I was able to consult with a few of my academic friends who instructed me in how to make a nationwide search for dissertations and to locate where these would be. They also instructed me how to make inter-library loans. Indeed, I was able to find two PhD dissertations. One, “*Slave Rebellion in Bahia: 1807-1835*”, by Howard Prince, (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1972); and the second “*Slave rebellion in Brazil: the African Muslim Uprising in Bahia, 1835*”, (PhD diss., University of Minnesota, 1983). Well you can imagine how my professor looked when I resubmitted an abstract renamed: The Islamic Slave Revolts of Bahia, Brazil: A Continuity of the 19th Century Jihad Movements of Western Sudan. Included in the bibliography were the two above-mentioned dissertations. My title was no longer an inquiry, but an assertion of fact!

All praises are due to Allah ta’ala, I was able to complete the paper before that semester ended. However, there was one setback, or maybe I should say *karaama* after completing this study. On the afternoon that I was scheduled to turn in my controversial paper, while printing out the master copy on my printer, two young teenage African Americans visited me. One of them was a friend who often visited my home to borrow books from my library. The other was an African American who I had been observing in the community for some years since my return from Africa.. He was a well-mannered, upright and very intelligent young man. He reminded me of a teenage Paul Robeson. I always saw the community leaders and organizations in the Houston African American community vying for his membership. There were the Wheeler Baptist Church Mentoring Program, the Nation of Islam, the Shape Community Center and a host of other local grassroots organizations that were vying for this young man’s membership. Whenever I saw him, I felt that one day this young man would be a city official, or community leader of some sort. Not only that, he gave the commencement speech at his mostly all white high school graduation celebration. I know because I was present along with my father and four of my brothers to commemorate my youngest sister, Aqilah’s high school graduation. I remember asking my sister about him and she told me that he was ‘pretty straight-laced and square’. That coming from her, who was probably the most straight-laced girl in the school, was surprising. She was basically saying that she thought he should probably join the Christian clergy.

Anyway! Here he was now in my living room sitting across from me. He said his name was Adyinke Mendes. I immediately asked him about his mother and father. He told me that his mother was a well-educated African American, and that his father was a physician from Nigeria. I thought that was interesting because how can his father be from Nigeria with a Spanish name? I thought I caught him up in some pretentiousness. But he told me that his name was not Spanish, but Portuguese and that his father descended from African slaves that were deported back to Lagos Nigeria around the mid 1800s! I was flabbergasted to say the least! By that time my controversial paper had just finished being printed. I reached for it and handed it to him and said: “*You need to read this!*” This young man took the paper home and showed it to his Nigerian father who read it and informed his son that he descended from the very people who survived the African Muslim slave revolts of Bahia, Brazil. Young Mendes asked his father if his ancestors were Muslims. He answered in the affirmative and added that some of them had converted to Christianity on the arrival in Lagos Nigeria! That was the reason that he was Christian now. So here, an amazing African American teenager rediscovers his African Islamic roots through this controversial paper. That was the miracle surrounding this paper.

The setback was that I had to reprint the paper and ended up turning it in about an hour later, to my professor’s delight. He said that he would have to give me an automatic B for it being late. Well, he read it and all praises are due to Allah ta’ala, I received an A+. He called me later that week and asked me to meet with him and some of the other professors along with the department head. We met and we discussed some of the controversial issues surrounding this paper. Many of these academicians really did not know that African Islam had penetrated so deeply into the western ethos. Many gave constructive criticism about my writing skills and grammar, but most were supportive. One of the professors did raise the issue that bugged me throughout my research. It was the question of the actual Arabic writings. He wanted to know if they were extant and what subjects did these manuscripts cover. Did they compose of legal decisions, constitutional theory, military strategy, or what? In all the sources I used, the Arabic manuscripts were discussed, but not in any detail. None of the published writers, including the two Ph.D dissertation authors, were experts in Arabic language. So clearly, this study had to be re-examined from the perspective of the writings of those who initiated the slave revolts. Only then, could a comprehensive understanding be had of the motivations, aims and

objectives of these African Muslims. Was their goal to make *hijra* back to Africa or to establish a *dar 'l-Islam* in Brazil? As I looked around the room at the faces of these academicians I saw sincere intellectual inquisitiveness, but I also noticed a hint of 'trepidation'. Some began to ask how did I come across such a topic. What made me choose that as a topic and what objectives did I have in writing about it? Their questions revealed more about their motives than it did of mine. There were many other questions, criticisms and suggestions, but they advised me that the paper was a PhD level research and should be published by a reputable publisher. I thanked them and told that I intended on publishing it, which I did the following year under my own institute, the Sankore Institute of Islamic-African Studies.

It was the nature of their inquiry which intrigued me, and some two weeks later I was approached by one academic in the history department who asked if it was ok for his brother, who worked for the United States diplomatic core in Africa to contact me. When he called he told me that his brother had informed him of my research and the work that I had been involved with in Africa. He was interested in seeing that I got 'support' for my work. I asked him in which section of the diplomatic core did he work, he replied the 'political sector'. I realized, then that this was an attempt to recruit me as an intelligence officer. Not being the kind of person to back away from a challenge I asked why was the political attaché interested in 'my work'? He replied that they were interested in sending an African American, who had command of the Arabic language as well as a deep understanding of African Islamic traditions and station them in northern Mali. I asked for what purpose. He replied that in northern Mali the country was having constant upheavals from the Tuareg and that the US believed that Muammar Qaddafi of Libya was providing the financing and military training for this insurgency. I laughed and explained that rather than spending needless amounts of money on a 'spy', that I could disabuse them of their misconceptions in one conversation. Besides, if I were to accept their 'support', then I would be destroying my credibility as a Muslim, an African and an objective scholar; not to speak of the fact that I agreed partly with the right of Tuareg or any 'national minority' in any country, be it in Africa or the US to have some internationally recognized right of autonomy or internal self determination. When I said this I noticed that there was a distinct change in his tone, and that I had failed my 'interview'. I informed him then that the problem of the Tuareg in Mali is not only a problem for Mali, but also Niger, northern Nigeria, Algeria and even Libya. In fact, Muammar Qaddafi has the same problem from the Tuareg nation that Mali has. So rather than spending millions of dollars on a 'spy', it might be more wise for you to examine the history of the Tuareg nation and see whether they constitute what international law defines as a 'national minority' and work to see that their internationally recognized rights are implemented. Of course, this CIA recruiter was NOT interested in that. At that time the US was only concerned with 'containing' Libya's influence in Africa. They wanted to 'cook up' some 'intelligence' to justify more sanctions and possible military intervention. The important thing is that this research regarding the African Muslim revolts in the Bahia, Brazil brought out 'the snakes from the grass', both academically and politically in the US. I realized, then, and more so now, that there was and is a clear relationship between western academics and their government intelligence agencies, especially when it comes to OUR Islamic historical legacy.

Prior to this time, I literally had no idea of the important role that 'academics' play in the formulation of state policy in the United States, nor of their crucial role in the deconstruction and marginalization of those 'historical narratives' which flow contrary to America's image of itself. It was after first completing this small insignificant paper that I realized the impact that it had on the minds of African Muslims in the Diaspora, but more significantly, I noticed the consternation that this area of research created in the minds of those intellectuals who guard and protect America's historical consciousness. It was then I realized how, African American, intellectuals, such as Condoleezza Rice, Barrack Obama and other 'black-anglos' are co-opted into the system and at what point they hit the 'radar' and get the notice of those who traditionally monitor how and what WE think. While on the other hand I realized the danger that transformative scholarship such as that of Walter Rodney, Chiekh Anta Diop, Inikore, Harding, Stuckey and others pose to the skewed self image of the west. More notably, I noticed the intellectual 'black out' of 'any real' research into the role played by African Muslims in the west and why it was vitally important to America's security that if this narrative is to be told that THEY and those 'academics' who mind the gates for them must be the ones to tell it. WE cannot tell our own story, neither for cultural regeneration and particularly NOT for the obvious questions this type of research raises in terms of international law and the rights of national minorities. I realized then that I was playing with fire; a FIRE which has been scorching my conscious ever since

I refused to be a 'team player' with the US 'state department back in 1991. The FIRE destroyed everything I held dear back in 1997 when this research hit the African Muslim penal population in California which led to a major successful class action lawsuit for incarcerated Muslims in that state.. With the advent of 9-11 and all the subsequent 'draconian' laws designed to 'protect' America, the government had a 'license' to profile and lump anyone who dared produce this type of research with the 'terrorists' that they created in Afghanistan in the 1980's. The 2003 Rand Corporation Study, on 'Democratic Islam' along with the leaked MI5 survey in the UK on the creation of 'media savvy' western leaning Muslim leaders and the marginalization of those whom they considered 'radical' or 'extremists' preempted many would be researchers from drawing the obvious legal and political implications from this study. Now, with the almost unanimous approval of the American public the S 1959 110th Congressional 1st Session Resolution called: "*National Commission on the Prevention of Violent Radicalization and Homegrown Terrorism*", most people will probably run from any research whose implications raises the political role that African Muslims have traditionally played in the formations of western states in general and the United States in particular. All one need do is examine closely the vehemence by which Obama denies having ANY association with ANYTHING that 'smells' of being Muslim to get a picture of what researchers such as myself face.

Nevertheless, and because I've already lost a great deal as result of not being co-opted, (and because I have acclimated to the singe of their 'fire'); I continued to forge on with this research, mainly because it is vital that WE tell our own story, from our OWN perspectives for the benefit of our OWN ends. Now with the Muslim Slave revolts of Bahia, the continued problem and questions raised regarding the Arabic manuscripts of these African Muslim freedom fighters continued to haunt me until in the year 2000, while in South Africa, my friend and intellectual comrade at arms, Dr. Abdallah Hakim Quick, afforded me digital copies of at least 60 of the extant Arabic manuscripts that he had received while doing Islamic *dawa* in Bahia, Brazil. When I was able to examine these ancient works, I was astounded at the similarity of the writing style with those prevalent in the Western *Bilad'as-Sudan*. It was my intention of revising my paper, however the events of 9-11 and all the subsequent disastrous events after that prevented me. It was as though the repression that the Portuguese unleashed upon the African Muslims was now being unleashed upon Muslims worldwide. With the 1999 arrest of *Imam* Jamil al-Amin and the subsequent FBI harassment of many indigenous Muslims in the United States including the targeting of Sankore` Institute and our national *Jama`at*, I realized that the implications of the Bahian Muslim revolts was far reaching. It wasn't until Allah ta`ala blessed me with the favor of escaping the plantation of pax-AmeriKKKana, that I was afforded the spiritual and intellectual space to re-examine this study. Now, with Muslim combatants being held all over the world in secret prisons and torture chambers, this study becomes pertinent. It gives a picture of the causes of Muslim unrest and reprisal in a manner that is much like a mirror into which we can look in and examine our own situations.

It is vital to our enemies that the implications of this research to the future of the United States has to be discredited, deconstructed and obscured at all cost. Today, we see the same coordinated efforts between US academia and its intelligence in the recent Congressional "S. 1959 resolution". What was clear then, when I began this research and is more so now, that the REAL TARGET for any United States 'homeland security' is the same traditional target that it has attempted to contain, control, disrupt and preempt for the past 400 years. Al-Qaeda and the other Muslim Frankenstein 'terrorist' organizations that the US invented, trained, financed and deployed have been simply a 'dry run' for a much older and recalcitrant 'threat'. The existence of civilized, educated and highly developed African Muslims with their own distinct since of historical consciousness present in the western hemisphere struggling for their freedom and liberty at a time when most countries in the region were still struggling for their 'national identities', constitutes a security threat to the historical consciousness of the US. It means that the African Muslim presence in the west is a key component of western civilization and constitutes, according to international law, those indigenous national minorities that played a major role in the formation and formulation of the state. Since every law, military base and ruling designed to contain and prevent the African Muslims from attaining their freedom is part and parcel of western constitutional principle; therefore the enslaved African Muslim were just as much apart of western civilization as the 'confederate insurgents' of the 'slave states' were prior to, during and subsequent to the Civil War. In fact, because the African Muslim revolts against slavery began as far back in mainland America as 1511, when Muhammad Sanbu led a two month insurrection in league with other Fulbe` and African Muslims in Baton Rouge indicates that the REAL American 'revolution' did not begin in 1776, when Anglo-Americans decided they had had

enough of their English overlords, but the REAL American Revolution began and continued from 1511 with Muhammad Sanbu. It persisted in 1812 with Muhammadu Bilali and his comrades' brave military assistance to the Anglo-Americans against the British on the sea islands off the coast of Georgia and South Carolina. In the mid 17th century the impact upon the thinking and lives of African American revolutionaries such as Denmark Vessey (who became Muslim at the hands of the enslaved Fulbe Muslims, Umar ibn Sayyid), David Walker (who became Muslim at the hands of the enslaved Fulbe Muslim, Abd'r-Rahman ibn Ibrahim Sori) and Frederick Douglas (who was a direct descendent of the above mentioned enslaved Fulbe Muslim, Muhammad Bilali). It persisted throughout the Great Seminole wars where African Muslims in confederation with the Seminole Nation fought against Anglo-American control in the Florida Everglades. Finally in 1864 when Muhammad Nicolous Said led the northern Union African Core into the southern states in their victory against anglo-American slavery. It is in this light that African Muslim revolts in Bahia Brazil from 1807 until 1835, must be understood and considered.

It is for this reason that a clear and rigorous study of the lives and culture of African Muslims in the western hemisphere is vitally important to the survival of this national minority, and it will also explain the 'mystery' behind the resurgence of Islam among Africans in the Diaspora of the Caribbean, Latin America and the United States. The existence of rare Arabic manuscripts by enslaved African Muslims in Brazil, Trinidad, Surinam, Panama, and the United States has not only cultural significance, but POLITICAL significance, which western academics and their colleagues in their respective intelligence agencies will be trying to 'obscure', 'discredit' and 'marginalize' for the foreseeable future. However, for those sincere African Muslim scholars who have dedicated themselves to the internationally recognized revival and resurgence of this legacy, it is mandatory that they give this research the rigor, and credibility that it deserves. Those dedicated to the regeneration of this legacy are in for a LONG FIGHT that will persist long after the 'war on terror' has been called off and the NEO 'romans' finally capture the 'resources' they were after and the 'terrorist' they trained and deployed are finally anathematized and sent back home from Guantanamo. Not only will our children have a sense of historical national accomplishment which is psychologically vital for them as national minorities, but every African Muslim political effort, be it within the participatory politics of the nations or an internationally recognized move for limited or complete self determination will be infused with a powerful historical consciousness which will not be overcome or preempted by any western resolution be it 'homeland security', resolution 'S 1959' or any other. African Muslims are a part of the very make-up of western civilization and we as scholars should have the intellectual resolve, moral courage and spiritual commitment to PROVE IT.

This study is the proof that identity construct is one of the most essential factors in a people's survival. By definition, the preservation of the cultural identity of any people can only be maintained through history. Thus, its preservation is the function of its people. No one else can tell a people's story. They must speak for themselves. This function is the primary goal of the Sankore Institute, to speak for US and to tell OUR STORY! I hope that the leaders of the indigenous Muslims in the western hemisphere will make this study apart of their archives. I hope that you will examine this study in the light of our present situation and add whatever comments, researches and criticisms needed. Al-Hajj Malik el-Shabazz, (*rahimuhu Allah ta'ala*) often said: "Those who fail to understand the lessons of history are doomed to repeat it."

Muhammad Shareef
Thursday, Shawwal 28, 1426 (December 1, 2005)
YanQing, China

"In the face of cultural aggression of all sorts, in the face of all disintegrating factors of the outside world, the most efficient weapon with which a people can arm itself is this feeling of historical continuity"¹

"The Islamic Revolts of Bahia: A Continuity of the 19th Century Jihads of Western Sudan"

Introduction

The Importance of Historical Consciousness

Resistance, revolt, and eventual social transformation is born out of an oppressed peoples awareness of themselves and the knowledge that their 'collective soul' is under attack by their oppressors. To the degree that this cultural cohesiveness persists determines the degree to which the oppressed group will go in order to assure its survival. It is knowledge of one's authentic culture, religion, social status that germinates the desire for resistance in the face of cultural aggression. However, when the historical conscience and culture of an oppressed group have been erased and destroyed, it determines the manner in which they will resist or if they will opt for resistance at all. Certain African-American leaders and organizations in the U.S. are examples where the collective historical conscience was successfully eradicated, they then chose not to resist the cultural aggression of their European American aggressors and opted to assimilate and gradually effect change in the society in which they were held captive, by means of 'civil disobedience' executed in a non-violent way. This, however, was not the norm. Historians points out, rather succinctly, that armed violent insurrections were "rather a regular and ever-recurring phenomenon in the life" of America.² Every year from 1511 until 1864, in every region of the North American continent, where Africans lived, there were revolts or insurrections for freedom and justice using the medium of armed struggle. These slave revolts occurred during a time when the Africans in America still possessed some small remnant of their cultural heritage. Nat Turner's mother and grandmother taught him about Africa, which engendered in Nat a sense of self worth and resulted in his eventual call to arms.³

In other cases where the historical and cultural conscience of the slave was eradicated, they resisted utilizing the terms and frames of reference of the oppressors. This type of resistance can be called secondary resistance, because it aims to define the insurgency in terms that the oppressor is familiar with. The ideological basis of the resistance is couched in the terms that are dear to the aspirations of the slaver or colonizer. In some ways, secondary resistance becomes a confirmation and corroboration of the 'innate superiority' of the oppressor's culture. For this reason, secondary resistances have been more successful in the short term, because the 'master' class and the "colonial official class could not disavow the normative validity of metropolitan standards".⁴ In the long term, however, secondary resistance works in the favor of the slave-master class or colonizers because the oppressed will be indebted to its oppressors on an ideological level and the ordeal of slavery and colonization becomes justified, because through it 'the light of civilization' is successfully passed to the 'inferiors'. And thus, the oppressor sits back and sighs, feeling exonerated and vindicated, as he benevolently looks down upon his ex-subjects or once slaves in their

¹ Cheikh Anta Diop, Civilization or Barbarism: An Authentic Anthropology, (Lawrence Hill Books, Brooklyn, 1991), 212.

² Herbert Aptheker, Negro Slave Revolts in the United States, 1526-1860, (New York, International Publishers), 1939, p. 11.

³ Stephen B. Oates, The Fires of Jubilee: Nat Turner's Fierce Rebellion, (Harper & Row Publishers, New, York, 1975), 84-85.

⁴ Crawford Young, "The African Colonial State and Its Political Legacy", in The Precarious Balance: State and Society in Africa, (eds.) Donald Rothchild and N. Chazan, (New York, 1991), 53.

awkward and inept attempt to replicate the dominant culture. The deplorable condition of African Americans in the U.S. and the present political crisis in the whole of Africa are glaring proofs of this phenomenon. In fact, those acts of resistance which met with eventual approval from the dominant Anglo-American culture, were those which had nothing at all to do with the 'ideals of the founding fathers', while those which were marginalized and rejected, were those acts of resistance which closely resembled the ideals that initiated the so-called 'American Revolution'. Thus, the un-American ideas of non-violence espoused by Martin Luther King, were accepted over the purely American ideas of military resistance espoused by al-Hajj Malik el-Shabazz.⁵

An oppressed group having the ability to define its own ideology and culture, on the other hand, represents primary resistance. It emerges from the priority of a cohesive belief system backed up by a nation state or polity and a continuous and persistent sense of historical conscience. This type of revolt or resistance sees itself inherently superior to its oppressor and it does not capitulate to the terms of reference of its oppressors, but defines itself and its oppressors from its own terms of reference. The oppressors have never tolerated this type of resistance, because it seeks to destroy the very foundation and structure of the oppressors' system. The ideals, customs, traditions and political constitution of the oppressor is seen as innately inferior and in need of eradication by means of a total transformation of society and the rebirth of the ideals and culture which induced the slaves or colonized group to revolt in the first place. Primary resistance can only emerge when the historical conscience, the linguistic factor and the psychological temperament are intact and extant.⁶

Historical examples of primary resistance to European hegemony, in particular, were the resistance demonstrated by the unitary state of Ethiopia in its war against Italian aggression. Another was the heroic armed struggle put forward by the Asante against the British in the late 19th century. Finally, there were the crushing defeats, which the Europeans suffered at the hands of various Islamic resistance movements throughout Africa. Among them were the resistance of Samore Toure in Guinea, Muhammad Ahmad al-Mahdi of the Sudan, Abd'l-Qaadir al-Jaza'iri of Algeria, the Sunissiya of Libya, Muhammad ibn Abdallah ibn Hassan of Somalia, and the Sokoto Islamic resistance of northern Nigeria. Each of these revolts against European aggression was characterized by a deep historical conscience of itself, a unified linguistic cohesiveness, and a psychological temperament which gave it a sense of innate superiority over their European aggressors.

Were examples of this type of cultural cohesiveness transmitted to the 'new world' during the Atlantic slave trade? Were there examples of the persistence of African traditions and historical conscience being diffused into the western hemisphere? And if so, to what degree did this diffusion of African culture exist? Was this the primary cause of the many slave revolts, which affected the Caribbean, the United States and South America? These questions and others will be examined in this study, which will attempt to demonstrate the emergence of primary resistance movements characterized by historical conscience, linguistic cohesiveness and psychological temperament (demonstrated through religious beliefs) in the western hemisphere, with specified reference to the slave revolts which took place in Bahia, Brazil between 1807 and 1835. The research will demonstrate that the slave revolts of Bahia were, for the most part, Islamic in character, and were not just a reaction to the degradations of slavery. There was a desire by the Muslim community of Bahia, both slave and freedmen (assisted by others), to replicate the responses, which were typical of Muslim responses to cultural aggression in the African continent. These responses can be summed up into two, which ultimately leads to self-governance. They are *hijra* (flight or emigration) and *jihad* (military struggle). These two terms defined the Islamic response to cultural aggression from the earliest times of Islam until the emergence of the 19th century West African *jihad*

⁵ Y. N. Kly, The Black Book: the True olitical Philosophy of Malcolm X (El Hajj Malik El Shabazz), (Clarity Press, Atlanta), 1986, 2-3.

⁶ Cheikh Anta Diop, Civilization or Barbarism, 211-219.

movements that had direct influence upon events in Bahia. It would be absurd for a scholar to say that the existence of Iberian culture in Brazil was no proof that Iberian culture was transmuted into Brazil. The refutation of that would not need documentation or citation. Likewise, no refutation is warranted to the fact that Bahia witnessed from enslaved Sudanese Muslims and freedmen a transmigration of the same Islamically inspired upheavals which were taking place in Central and Western Sudan from the 15th century to the 19th century. This research will highlight that these slave revolts were not just a reaction to Portuguese slavery, but was the persistence of a continuous tradition that emerged centuries before the Europeans arrived in Africa. Only historians who are obscurantists and who lack intellectual uprightness would assert the opposing view. Western academics as well as western intelligence agencies have long suppressed the full truth of the role that Islam, and particularly 'African' Islam has played in the formation of states in the western hemisphere. This humble study seeks to shed some light on this shadowy subject so that a true picture of western culture can be seen for what it is, having its sources not just in the Judeo-Christian and Euro centric ideas; but getting its most explosive ideas for freedom and justice from the persistence of enslaved Sudanic Muslims and their tenacity for self-determination.



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The Portuguese and African Slavery in Bahia

Although slavery and the trade of slaves in Africa existed hundreds of years before the Europeans came, yet the arrival of Portuguese explorers to the west coast of Africa in the 1400s was a major new development in the intensity, sources, destination and uses to which African slaves would undergo.⁷ Initially the Portuguese captured slaves from the northwestern coast of Africa and shipped them to Europe for primarily domestic use. The first of these raids took place in 1441 when two Portuguese vessels landed at Rio de Oro and captured several Idzagen Berber. These slaves were used to supply strategic information about Africa and were utilized as domestic servants in Lisbon.⁸ That next year the Portuguese contrived to elevate the raids on the west coast of Africa to the status of 'a religious crusade'. By doing so they would legitimize the war and attract badly needed troops. Prior to this, Portuguese men were reluctant to risk the arduous trip along the coast of West Africa, which could have ended in some of them being captured and enslaved by the Muslims.⁹ For this reason, in 1442 the Church authorities framed the edict called *Illius qui*, which promised all those who would join the slave raiding parties, spiritual reward and eternal salvation.¹⁰ Hence, the Christian religion was brought into the equation of slaving in Africa and would remain apart of it to the very end. This is not surprising given the depiction that Hellenistic Christianity and European Judaism gave to Africans in the myth concerning the 'curse of Ham'. This myth was generated into the literature of Europeans by way of the *Babylonian Talmud* and it 'holds that the descendents of Ham were cursed by being black'¹¹. In addition to this the myth held that Africans were natural thieves, fornicators, habitual liars and that they were destined by 'Providence' to be slaves. This myth became the key element behind the justification for the enslavement of African people by the Portuguese Christians during the 14th to 18th centuries.

Coupled with these religious justifications, and the Portuguese's insatiable need for labor, it created the demand for African bodies and souls. Saunders points out that this trend increased as the years passed and as Portugal began to need an increased labor force for its sugar plantations in the 'new world'. He said,

"Ten years later [1452] the Portuguese sought confirmation that they could enslave infidels seized in the crusade. The Pope responded with *Dum Diversus*, which allowed them to conquer and reduce to perpetual slavery all 'Saracens and pagans and other infidels and enemies of Christ', in West Africa."¹²

Thus, the Catholic Church declared a 'holy war' to justify the capture and supplying of African slaves to meet the needs of labor demand in the sugar plantations of the 'new world'. It is ironic that the slaves would later utilize the same tactic in trying to win their freedom from these most vociferous of Christian 'fundamentalist'. Consequently, with the introduction of sugar production in the 'new world', there materialized an increased demand for a constant and cheap labor force. Sugar production first began in Southeast Asia and gradually moved westward. By the 14th century the island of Cyprus in the Mediterranean became the major producer and supplier of sugar to Europe. The Muslims introduced sugar production to the Iberian peninsular in the early 14th century; however, by the 15th century the Portuguese were marketing sugar throughout Europe.¹³ In 1490 the Portuguese settled the island of Sao

⁷ Herbert S. Klein, *African Slavery in Latin America and the Caribbean*, (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1986), 13-14.

⁸ A.C. De C. M. Saunders, *Black Slaves & Freedmen in Portugal: 1441-1555*, (Cambridge University Press, 1982), 5-6.

⁹ Ellen G. Friedman, *Spanish Captives in North Africa in the Early Modern Age*, (the University of Wisconsin Press, Madison), 8.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 37.

¹¹ Joseph E. Harris *Africans and Their History*, (New York, 1995) 5.

¹² *Ibid.*, 38. The term *saracens* refer to the Muslims.

¹³ Stuart B. Schwartz, *Sugar Plantations in the Formation of Brazilian Society: Bahia, 1550-1835*, (Cambridge University Press, 1989), 13-15.

Tome' off the coast of Angola, which became a major supplier of sugar for Portugal.¹⁴ The labor forces for this enterprise were African slaves taken from Angola, Senegambia and the Bight of Benin. In 1554 there were more than one hundred and fifty to three hundred slaves working these sugar plantations.¹⁵ Thus, prior to European settlements in the 'new world', there had already been extensive utilization of African slaves in the many sugar plantations in Portugal and in the islands off the coast of Africa.

During the years between 1530 to 1540 sugar production became very intensified in Brazil making it the major source of sugar from the 'new world'. These sugar plantations were mainly located in the northeast area of Brazil in Pernambuco and Bahia. And thus sugar became the main product, which the Portuguese colonies in Brazil were responsible for producing. This meant an increased demand for labor, which accelerated the Atlantic slave trade to limits, which had never been reached prior to this time. First it was the christianized blacks from Portugal and Spain who made up the first Africans shipped to Bahia. These blacks were called *Ladinos* or 'latinized' blacks. But with the demand for more labor, Africans began to be shipped directly from places like Sao Tome' and other Portuguese holdings on the west coast of Africa. They were called *bozales*. What of the indigenous Indian population already living in Bahia? The Portuguese first conquered the Tupi-Guarani Indians and tried in vain to utilize them as a source of labor. This proved to be costly and unreliable as a guarantee of constant labor for the labor-intensive sugar plantations. The main reason for this was the Indians had binding relationships with the land and could flee from the plantations if need be. The ideal slave was one who "...lacked ties to the family, to kin, and to the community...".¹⁶ Thus, the African became ideally suited to the type of slavery, which was needed to accelerate sugar production in Bahia, because they were kinless and transportable. However, Klein asserts that Indian slaves were the primary producers of sugar from 1540 to 1570.¹⁷ After 1570 Africans slaves made up more than one-third of the labor force in Pernambuco and Bahia. These Africans came mostly from three areas along the west coast of Africa: Senegambia, the Bight of Benin, and Angola.

The slaves that were taken from the Senegambian coast were mostly of Wolof and Mande origin that were captured during the expansion of the newly formulated Bambara states.¹⁸ These slaves were sent from the Portuguese port town of Cape Verde. The Wolof people had long been established in Senegambia. They included the Walo, Cayor, Baol, Sine and Salum, which were all dominated by the central kingdom of Jolof. By the 15th century all of these people had become Muslim and according to Hiskett, they had reached a high level of learning according to Islamic standards by the 16th century.

"There were Senegambians (Jolofians) studying Arabic grammar, Arabic poetry and Islamic astrology...during that century...These *ulama* became, in due course, a powerful class in the Wolof kingdoms. Many of them had followings ...who were not only religious disciples but also, in a political and sometimes an economic sense, dependent on their masters."¹⁹

These scholars exerted substantial political power and were able to challenge the traditional Wolof authorities. Because of their learning and genuine religious interests, these *ulama* raised the banner of *Jihad* in Senegambia during the 16th to the 18th centuries. Men like Nasir al-Din, Malik Sy, Karamoko Alfa Ba, *Almamy* Abd al-Qadir Kan, and *Cheirno* Sulayman Bal all helped to create the Islamic revolutions which were going on in Senegambia during that period. This is very important to know, because it substantiates the political temperament that these slaves from Senegambia brought with them into Bahia and the resilience they would exemplify in the slave revolts to come.

¹⁴ Basil Davidson, *The African Slave Trade*, (Boston, 1961), 145.

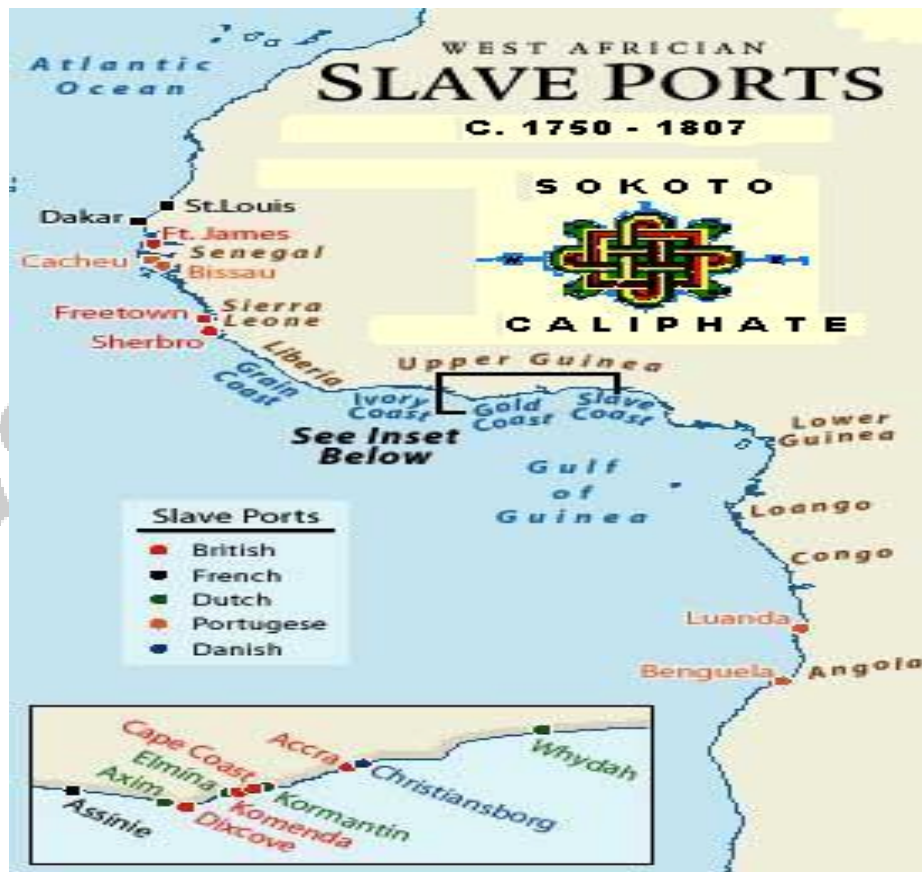
¹⁵ S. B. Schwartz, 14.

¹⁶ H.S. Klein, 2.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 40.

¹⁸ Philip Curtin and others, eds., *African History*, (New York, Longman, 1991), 230-231.

¹⁹ Mervyn Hiskett, *The Development of Islam in West Africa*, (London, Longman, 1984), 139.



Map of the West African ports from which Africans were taken to Brazil

The Malinke or Mande slaves of Senegambia were taken from regions further south of the Wolof kingdoms. According to Willis, the Mande-speaking people made up the largest linguistic groupings in Western Sudan.²⁰ They consisted of animist as well as Muslim elements. The reason for this was that the Malinke Muslims, called Dyula, were not as militant in spreading the religion as the Turudbe/Fullani and the Wolof. However, they did take part in the *jihads* that affected most of Senegambia during the 17th and 18th centuries. What is important is that like the Wolof people, the Malinke were not strangers to *jihad* and did fight when necessary. Again the relevance of this will reveal itself when we discuss the motivations of the slave revolts in Brazil. Stuart Schwartz points out that during the 16th century the majority of the slaves which were sent to Brazil were taken from the Senegambia region which were shipped from the Portuguese outposts of Sao Tome' and Cape Verde.²¹ During that period Bahia did not have as many sugar plantations as Pernambuco. Therefore most of these slaves were sent to Pernambuco. We will discuss the number of slaves later.

Another major source of slaves for Bahia was from Angola. The first of their kings was a ruler by the name of *Nimi a Lukeni* who ruled around the 14th century. The Portuguese arrived in the 15th century during the rule of Nzinga Mbemba, who was later 'baptized' as Dom Affonso. He was the sixth king of the Mani-Congo.²² He was responsible for introducing Christianity into Congo and had a good working relationship with the Portuguese. This 'alliance' fell through when Affonso sought to gain control over the activities of the Portuguese who had settled in Sao Tome'. From the very beginning the Portuguese were capturing slaves from Congo with the assistance of Affonso, but, because these slaves had to pass through Sao Tome', much of his 'slave currency' was appropriated by the Portuguese in Sao Tome'. In 1526 Affonso eventually attempted to direct and stop the slave trade from

²⁰ John R. Willis, "Reflection on the Diffusion of Islam in West Africa", in *Studies in West African Islamic History*, vol. 1, (ed.) John R. Willis, (London, Frank Cass, 1979), 14-15.

²¹ Stuart B. Schwartz, 339.

²² Basil Davidson, 129-131.

Angola and Congo.²³ The cause for this was that the Portuguese traders from Sao Tome' had undermined Affonso's monopoly of trade, upon which depended his authority and control over the region. It was during this same period that many of his vassals began to revolt against him assisted by the Portuguese traders of Sao Tome'.²⁴ By 1665 the Portuguese had broken the official alliance with the rulers of the Mani-Congo and Angola and waged war against them. During these wars the king of the Mani-Congo was killed, which marked the end of indigenous African rule in that region. From the Portuguese ports of Luanda and Benguela were shipped thousands of Africans to the ports of Brazil.

The next source for the majority of slaves brought to Bahia was from the Bight of Benin. The Portuguese had established El-Mina in the 16th century and latter Whydah. These trading posts remained the central trading post from that time until around 1770. After this period, trade moved towards Porto Novo and Lagos in the Bight of Benin. This region witnessed major political and religious upheavals during the 18th and 19th centuries. Along the coast the Oyo Empire, which included the city-states of the Yoruba, was going through the process of internal decay. Many of the kingdoms under Oyo began breaking away. Among them were the Ewes of Dahomey. Further north the *jihad* of *Shehu* Uthman Dan Fuduye' was underway, which led to the breakup of the old Hausa city-states and the creation of the Sokoto Caliphate. This turmoil produced large number of captives for the Portuguese who took advantage of these political upheavals. The Africans, which were captured from these areas, were Geges (Ewes), Tapas (Nupes), Ussas (Hausas), and Nagos (Yorubas).

The Nupe (Tapa) people were originally animist who lived along the Benue River. According to Hiskett, Islam made gradual inroads among the people of Nupe from the 15th century until the 16th century.²⁵ A ruler by the name of Etsu Jibrin who ruled Nupe from 1746 to 1759 was the first to introduce Islam as an official religion. Thus, Nupe had reached an intense level of Islamization by the time the *jihads* of Sokoto began in 1804. In fact, some of the early students of *Shehu* Uthman and his brother Abdullahi, were from Nupe.²⁶ By 1809, Nupe had become integrated into the Sokoto Islamic Caliphate and had witnessed numerous Muslim military expeditions in its vicinity under the leadership of *Amir* Muhammad the son of *Shaykh* Abdullahi Dan Fuduye'.²⁷

The Hausas (Ussas) were, without exception, Muslim. Islam had entered Hausaland as early as the 7th century and had gradually become the dominant religion by the 15th century. After this period Hausaland witnessed the genesis of militant Islamic scholars whose aim was to purify the practices of Islam among the Hausa. This trend culminated with the emergence of the Fodiawa/Fullani clan in the 17th century who led the Islamic *jihads* of the 18th and 19th centuries. Many writers overlook the fact that the Fullani who lived among the Hausa, first as clients/slaves and then as rulers, spoke the language of Hausa and were off times counted as one of them. Thus, many slaves in Bahia who were known as Hausas could have very well been Fullani. It was these Hausas/Fullani who led the majority of the slave revolts in Bahia. Thus they played the same role in Bahia that they had discharged in the diffusion of *jihad* in Central Sudan.

The Ewes (Geges) were included among the people of Dahomey. Islam had entered among them by means of Mande-speaking Dyula traders who settled there in the 17th century.²⁸ These Dyula were extremely literate in Arabic whose primary occupation was leather-working. They were employed by the king of Dahomey as military advisors and were sought after for their knowledge of charms and talismans. These Muslims intermarried among the people of Dahomey and as a result a strong indigenous Muslim community

²³ Ibid., 146-147.

²⁴ Ibid. 150-151.

²⁵ Mervyn Hiskett, 114-115.

²⁶ Murray Last, *The Sokoto Caliphate*, (London, Longman, 1977), 17n.

²⁷ Abd'l-Qadir ibn Mustafa, *Rawdat al-Afkaar*, Arabic, (Sankore' Institute, Houston), 1991, p. 23..

²⁸ Mervyn Hiskett, 127-128.

emerged.²⁹ Their lingua franca was Hausa, which could be the source of some confusion when identifying those Hausa slaves in Bahia.

Among the Asante kingdom there were many Muslims. The Akan established this kingdom in the 17th century. Like Dahomey and Nupe, the Asante kings were highly impressed by the administrative abilities of Muslim scholars and employed them in a number of official positions. Between 1764 and 1777, the ruler of the Asante, Osei Kwadwo, using Muslim clerics, made Arabic the official language for correspondence. He employed the Muslim scholar Abu Bakr Kyeame as chief advisor and after him his son, Imam Sa'id Bamba. Islamic influence among the Asante was so strong that the Asante civil servants were trained by Muslim scholars.³⁰

The Yoruba people are included among the Banza Bakwai or 'seven bogus' groups who are people not originally Hausa, but who have adopted certain Hausa characteristics and language.³¹ The Yoruba, however, are a distinct ethnic group with their own customs that distinguish them from the Hausa and other groups in the area. The interesting thing about the Yoruba, which confirms a long time relationship with Islamic culture, is their own account of their origin. According to Samuel Johnson, Yoruba traditions say,

"The Yoruba are said to have sprung from Lamurudu (Nimrud), one of the Kings of Mecca, whose offspring were: Oduduwa, the ancestor of the Yorubas, the Kings of Gogobiri (Gobir) and of the Kukawa, two tribes in the Hausa country...That the Yorubas originally came from the East there cannot be the slightest doubt, as their habits, manners and customs, etc., all go to prove. With them the East is Mecca and Mecca is the East."³²

In spite of the possible historical inaccuracy of the above account, what is interesting for us is that the Yoruba saw themselves as having some ties with the center of Islam in Mecca. This demonstrates why the Hausa Muslims considered them a subgroup among the Hausa people. It is clear that the Yoruba were victims at some point in history of cultural imperialism by the Hausa Islamic communities. Why else would the Yoruba trace their history back to Mecca the home of Islam? What is important here is that there had been a long-standing trend of domination of Yoruba traditions by Islamic culture. This alone explains the effect that a few Hausa would play in mobilizing the Yoruba in a revolt against the system of slavery in Bahia, Brazil. The question arises is did the Hausa or Muslim elements dictate to the Yoruba people their own view of them, or not? Writing in 1812, one of the leaders of the Sokoto *jihād*, Muhammad Bello, gave his account of the Yoruba when he said,

"The lands of the Yoruba are very extensive and possess rivers, forest, minerals and mountains. There are many amazing sights in it. The Christian ships alight there. The Yoruba are descended from the Banu Canaan and the descendents of Nimrud. Now the cause of their having settled in the west, according to what we heard, is that Ya`rub ibn Qahtan drove them out of Iraq to the west and they journeyed between Egypt and Abyssinia until they reached the land of Yoruba..."³³

This account is also interesting because it reinforces the report transmitted by the Yoruba themselves. The modern version of this story of the Yoruba seems to be more likely because of the linguistic factor, which describe the Yoruba as probably descendents from the people of Meroe along the Nile River who migrated to their present home between 600 and 1000 C.D.³⁴ The fact that this more precise account was eventually forgotten and the Islamic

²⁹ Ibid., 128.

³⁰ Ibid., 133-135.

³¹ Abd al-Qadir ibn al-Mustapha, *Raudat'l-Afkar*, TMs., in possession of the author, 23.

³² Samuel Johnson, *History of the Yorubas*, (London, 1921), 3-4.

³³ Muhammad Bello, *Infaq al-Maisur*, TMs., 73-74. I am deeply indebted to Dr. Abdallah Hakim Quick of the University of Toronto for sending me a copy of this manuscript in a timely fashion. He obtained it from the Sokoto History Bureau of the University of Shaykh Uthman Dan Fodio in Sokoto, Sokoto State, Nigeria.

³⁴ Basil Davidson, *African Civilization Revisited*, (Trenton, African World Press, Inc., 1982), 84.

version of it was accepted by the Yoruba indicates a deep cultural penetration of Islam among the Yoruba. The Yoruba call the Muslims among them *Imale* which indicates that these early Muslim travelers in their land came from the lands of Mali or that they were Mande-speaking Dyula traders. Another factor that points to the above argument is the fact that the Yoruba call an Islamic scholar *alufa*. This is no doubt taken from the term for jurist prevalent among the people of Mali and Songhay, *alfa*. Hiskett feels that this proves that Islam could have entered into the Yoruba by way of Songhay.³⁵ However, the term *alfa* is not a Soninke nor Mande word. Its origin is from the language of Fulube' deriving from the word *alfalu* which means 'to divine'. This word in turn is taken from the Arabic word *al-faqih* (jurist/scholar), thus the Fullani corruption of the word - *alfa*.³⁶ This indicates that Islam could have entered into the Yoruba at the hands of intenerate Fullani scholars making their way to Adamawa, an ancient destination for Fullani clans since the 15th century. Whatever the case, by the 16th century, there were large communities of Muslim clerics residing in Old Oyo, the capital of Yorubaland. Evidence of this is drawn from the fact that a renown 16th century Fullani scholar residing in Katsina named *Malam* Muhammad ibn al-Sabbagh (also known as Dan Marina) wrote a concise treatise called *Risalat ila Fuqaha Yuruba* ('A Letter to the Jurist of Yoruba'). In this letter Dan Marina discusses the methodology of determining the direction of Mecca from Yoruba. What is clear from this is that there was a large Muslim community in Old Oyo and that there were scholars who were literate in Islamic jurisprudence and astronomy. Islam was introduced by an Arab scholar named *Alfa* Yigi during the reign of the sixteenth ruler of Oyo, Alafin Ajagbo.³⁷ The early Muslim communities included Yoruba, Dindi, Hausa, Nupe and Bornu Muslims. The majority of the Hausa Muslims were slaves captured during the upheavals that effected Hausaland during the 17th through 19th centuries. These Hausa slaves played a very strategic role in the economy of Oyo because of the specialized services, which they performed among the Yoruba. These services included taking care of horses and cattle, barber, rope making, cupping, bone setting, and tapping. Attention should be brought to the fact that the Hausa were not cattle herders by custom. Therefore, those 'Hausa' slaves who were responsible for herding cattle were no doubt Hausa-speaking Fullani slaves.³⁸ There were thousands of slaves from th Central Sudan serving in various homes in Yorubaland the 18th and 19th centuries, which was borne out by the ease with which Muslim armies were raised in Ilorin around 1817 and 1823. These same Muslims took on a very militant aspect during the internal collapse of the Oyo kingdom around 1817 as a result of the revolt of Kankanfo Afonja. Because of political turmoil in the kingdom of Oyo, Afonja decided to make a move for the throne of the kingdom. He did this by enlisting the help of a Fulani scholar by the name of *Alfa* Salih Alimi. This scholar was among the students of *Shehu* Uthman Dan Fuduye' and was sent by him in 1813 to preach the religion of Islam among the people of Nupe and Yorubaland. This he did and became well traveled in these regions, gathering many students along the way.³⁹ During this period Shaykh Uthman had already conquered the whole of Hausaland and had retired leaving his brother, Abdullahi, and son, Muhammad Bello, to rule. When Afonja asked Alfa Salih for assistance, the scholar proceeded to proclaim a *jihad* against the kingdom of Oyo and to ally himself with his former spiritual master *Shehu* Uthman Dan Fodio. Hausa and Fullani slaves escaped and joined the community of *Alfa* Salih from every region of Yorubaland.⁴⁰ Also free Muslims from

³⁵ Mervyn Hiskett, 113-114.

³⁶ F.W. Taylor, *A Fulani-English Dictionary*, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1932), 3.

³⁷ T.G.O. Gbadamosi, *The Growth of Islam Among the Yoruba: 1841-1908*, (London, Longman, 1978), 5-6.

³⁸ Mahdi Adamu, "The delivery of Slaves from the Central Sudan to the Bight of Benin in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries", in *The Uncommon Market: Essays in the Economic History of the Atlantic Slave Trade*, (eds.), Henry A. Gemery and Jan S. Hodgendorn, (New York, Academic Press, 1979), 176.

³⁹ Robin Law, *The Oyo Empire: 1600-1836*, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1977), 256-257.

⁴⁰ Samuel Johnson, 193-194.

Gbanda, Kobayi, Agoho, Kuwo and Kobe flocked under the banner of the *Jama`at*.⁴¹ The consequence of this *jihād* was the establishment of the Illorin emirate led by the son of *Alfa* Salih, Abdal Salaam. He was recognized by the Caliph of Sokoto as the *Amir* of Yoruba and was placed under the immediate authority of the *Shehu*'s brother, Abdullahi Dan Fuduye', the *Amir* of Gwandu.⁴² The fact that there was a large army of Yoruba Muslims led by the chief of Kuwo, Solagberu, who participated in the *jihād*, indicates that it was a fight on religious and not ethnic grounds. Illorin became the Yoruba Muslim leg of the great Sokoto Caliphate. This corroborates that Islam had become well established among the Yoruba during the time of the Atlantic slave trade. This must be understood when examining the role of the Yoruba Muslims in the Bahian slave revolts. The Yoruba Muslims were not nominal Muslims, but had embraced Islam deeply and had fought a *jihād* in order to demonstrate their conviction to it.

Time was taken to discuss the influence of Islam upon the Yoruba, Nupe, Ewes, Asantes, Hausa, and Fullani in order to demonstrate that the revolts in Bahia did not happen in a vacuum. The groups which participated in the revolts were either natural Muslims or new converts to the religion and were involved with religiously inspired militant armed struggle in Africa prior to being brought over as slaves to Bahia. The Hausa, Fullani and Nupe Muslims reached the Bight of Benin by three ways. The first was through being captured in the many military expeditions that were taken place at that time in Central Sudan. The second way was by means of trading caravans that were attacked and its people taken and sold on the coast of the Bight of Benin. An example of this was the capture of the scholar/merchant Muhammad Abdullahi. He was originally from Kano and was captured in Borgu by highway robbers. He was later sold to Yoruba traders and later resold and shipped to Bahia from Lagos. His name in Bahia was Manuel and according to his interviewer, he was quite learned in Islam.⁴³ The third way that Central Sudanese slaves reached Bahia was through being domestic slaves in many of the homes of the forest belt, and then sold away to the Portuguese. The reason for this was that slaves who proved to be difficult to live with, were sold away. Realizing the pride and bearing which Islam engendered among its adherence, there is no doubt that many Muslims captive in the homes of Yoruba or Dahomey masters saw themselves shipped off for this reason.

Knowledge of Sudanese Muslim slaves being sold to Europeans was well known among the leaders of the Sokoto Caliphate at that time. This is what prompted Muhammad Bello in his *Infaq al-Maisur* around 1812 to condemn the selling of Muslims free or captive to the Portuguese.⁴⁴ When the Yoruba captured the Nupe, they gave them the name of *Tapas*. And when the Yoruba were in turn captured by the people of Dahomey, they were called *Nagos*.⁴⁵ The Hausas kept their name (Ussas), but the Fullani, and Malinke people were just called *Imale*, or were subsumed under the Hausas.

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⁴¹ The term *jama`at* means community and was used by the Sokoto Caliphate to distinguish the Muslims from non-Muslims. Its ironic that this term will be utilized by the Muslims in Bahia to define themselves and to distinguish themselves from non-Muslims.

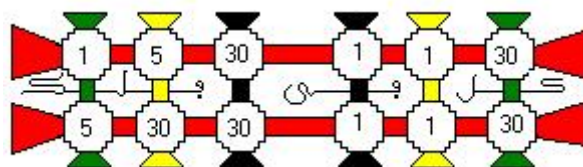
⁴² Murray Last, 96.

⁴³ Mahdi Adamu, 175.

⁴⁴ Robin Law, 227; and Muhammad Bello, 93.

⁴⁵ Basil Davidson, *The African Slave Trade*, 103.

The Role of Islam in Allying Diverse Ethnic Groups in Western Sudan



Reference should be made here of the cementing element of Islam upon the ethnic diversity in Africa. Islam has played a major role in uniting diverse ethnic groups in Western and Central Sudan. The basis for this ethnic unity was established in theory in the Qur'an, where it is said, "*O mankind! Verily We have created you all from a single male and female, and then made you into nations and clans so that you may know; surely the best among you all in the sight of Allah is he who is most mindful of Allah.*"⁴⁶ This verse implies, at least on the theoretical level, that the brotherhood of Islam superseded the old ties of kinship. A new dispensation had been established where men of all color and ethnic background could move up vertically in a Muslim society. Prophet Muhammad clarified this by his statement, "The white is no better than the black, nor is the Arab better than the non-Arab, except by his mindfulness of Allah." More than a tenth of the Companions of Muhammad had come from the status of being a slave or the sons of slaves, yet this did not prevent them from having a prominent status in the newly emerging Islamic society. Among these were Bilal ibn Rabah, Zayd ibn Haritha, Umar ibn al-Khattab, Salman al-Farsi, `Ammar ibn Yaasir, Mihja and more than fifty-five other men and women of plebeian origin, yet who distinguished themselves as leaders of the Muslims in all walks of life.⁴⁷

In the decades just after the time of Muhammad and his Companions, it was men of this plebeian status who actually ruled most of the metropolises of the Islamic Empire. Ada ibn Abi Rabah, an ex-slave ruled Mecca because of his superb erudition in Islam. Ta`us ibn Kysan, an ex-slave, ruled the Arabs of Yemen. Yazid ibn Abi Habib, an ex-slave, ruled the people of Egypt. Makhut al-Dimasqi, a Nubian ex-slave, ruled Syria. The ruler of Mesopotamia was an ex-slave named Maymun ibn Mahran. And the ruler of Basra was none other than the illustrious scholar and mystic al-Hassan ibn Abu'l-Hassan al-Basri, also an ex-slave. All this occurred within a short time after the time of Prophet Muhammad and it exemplified a pattern that would continue with the spread of Islam in Africa.⁴⁸ The great Turudbe ruler of the Songhay Empire was an ex-slave of the Sosso leader Sonni Ali. His trusted secretary of state, Ali Fulani was a slave who had distinguished himself by his erudition and piety among the scholars of Timbuktu.

Thus, Islam had the ability to unify different ethnic groups on the basis of the religion and what the Qur'an defined as 'god-fearing' (*taqwa*). The manifest sign of a person possessing this quality was his ability to learn and understand the Islamic sciences. The Qur'an explains the intellectual benefits of *taqwa* which laid the foundation of upward mobility in an ideal Muslim society in a series of verses. They are: "*Be mindful of Allah (ataqu allaha), and Allah will teach you.*"⁴⁹ There is also His saying: "*O you who believe! If you are mindful of Allah, He will make for you an intellectual and spiritual astuteness.*"⁵⁰ This was further underlined by the statement of the Prophet of Islam when he said, "When Allah loves a servant, He gives him understanding of the religion". Thus, learning became the currency by which individuals could distinguish themselves in society and in the life to come.

⁴⁶ Qur'an, 49:13.

⁴⁷ Daniel Pipes, "Mawlas: Free Slaves and Converts in early Islam", in Slaves and Slavery in Muslim Africa, vol. 1, (ed.) John R. Willis, (London, Frank Cass, 1985), 210-211.

⁴⁸ Constance Hilliard, "Zuhur al-Basatin and Ta`rikh al-Turubbe: Some Legal and Ethical Aspects of Slavery in the Sudan as Seen in the Works of Shaykh Musa Kamara," in Slaves and Slavery in Muslim Africa, vol. 1, (ed.) John R. Willis, (London, Frank Cass, 1985), 167-168.

⁴⁹ Qur'an, 2:282.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 8:29.

In Central and Western Sudan, literacy and learning was associated among the illiterate "...with magical or supernatural powers which gave special status even to the least-learned literati"⁵¹. Certain crafts like tailoring was set aside especially for those who were *alfas* or disciples, thus guaranteeing economic security. The lucrative trade of writing of charms, talismans and amulets was related to ones status as a scholar. And in times of political security there existed the chance for salaried semi-legal post with the judiciary arm of the state. All these factors imply that, literacy became a means of social upward mobility among the Sudanese Muslims. These qualities were exemplified in the person of the *alfa*, *alim* or *modibo*..

The spread of Islam in Africa was accompanied by a spread of literacy. This is true because Islam is not a religion that revolves around a 'man-god', but the religion that revolves around a Divine script, the Qur'an. Consequently Islam placed a high degree of importance upon the ability to read it and correctly interpolate it. The language of the Qur'an is Arabic, which has provided a common form of literacy over large areas of the Sudan and in creating a means of both localized and international contact and a medium for education.⁵² As we mentioned earlier literacy allowed for upward mobility in a given Muslim society. This was the same for traditional African societies as well. For the scholars of Islam were held in awe by many of the pagan chiefs and were employed to write charms for the kings and their courtiers and to make talismans to protect their soldiers in battle. This was the case for the Yoruba, Asante as well as the Dahomey kings. These scholars, who were also merchants, used Arabic to record their routes, their profits and losses, debts and credits, the places they visited and where they stayed. Arabic was the language by which *malams* and *alfas* corresponded with each other on all matters.⁵³

The Islamic scholar was seen as dynamic agents and manipulators of spiritual powers and esoteric knowledge. This esoteric knowledge was divided into various forms. The first kind was that which was related to prophecy and prophetic revelation. This knowledge usually was accompanied by visions or dreams resulting from spiritual exercise. The scholar who possessed this sort of knowledge was called *wali* (saint) and allegedly had the ability to perform miracles (*karamat*). The second kind of esoteric knowledge was that related to the power of words, letters and numbers. Supposedly this knowledge was drawn from the Qur'an. It included recitation of the names of Allah, the esoteric meanings of certain verses of the Qur'an and the science of letters. From this knowledge emerged numerological practices, the science of numbered squares utilized in the creating of amulets and talismans. The third kind of esoteric knowledge was those related to astrology and geomancy.⁵⁴ Granted, the last two kinds of esoteric sciences were usually condemned by the conservative Muslim scholars, yet they were widely utilized by certain scholars in many of the African kingdoms during the 16th to 19th centuries. These scholars operated in response to the needs of ordinary people as well as to the demands of rulers. The impact of the esoteric sciences upon the spread of Islam of west Africa should not be underestimated, because it was the most dynamic element in the diffusion of Islamic culture among different African ethnic groups.⁵⁵ This will be seen in the emergence of the use of the science in the slave revolts of Bahia.

Another aspect of Islamic scholarship, which had strong influence upon the actions of many Sudanese societies, was the Muslim concept of eschatological beliefs. These concerned the topic of the 'End of Time' and all the cataclysmic events which herald it's happening. According to Islamic sources the End of Time would be preceded by a series of 'signs'. These

⁵¹ Elias Saad, The Social History of Timbuktu, (Cambridge, 1982), 159.

⁵² J.O. Hunwick, "The Influence of Arabic in West Africa", Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana, vol. VII, 1964, 24-25.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 36.

⁵⁴ Louis Brenner, "The 'Esoteric Sciences' in West African Islam", in The Changing Role of the Ulama, Conference, March 29-31 1984, Northwestern University, Lansing, 2-3.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 6.

signs included natural and man-made disasters, the breakdown of Islamic morality, civil upheaval, war, and social decay. These signs also included the primacy that the Europeans (*Ahl 'r-Ruum*) would gain over Muslim polities. These signs would culminate with the appearance of the *Mahdi* (the Islamic messiah), the appearance of the *Dajjal* (the anti-Christ), the heavenly descent of Jesus the son of Mary, the release of Gog and Magog, the raising up of the Qur'an from the Earth, and finally the rising of the sun from the West - which will signal the destruction of the universe and the ushering in of the Day of Judgment.⁵⁶ All of these eschatological beliefs were drawn from the text of the Qur'an and the oral traditions of Prophet Muhammad, which gave them the status of creed or foundation of belief. This meant they were apart of the basic education of any *Malam*, *alfa*, *marabout* or *alim*.

It was sometimes these ideas that scholars utilized to rally support for their endeavors to establish Islamic governance in the Sudan. In addition to these classical sources for the End of Time, there also emerged a mass of accumulative oral traditions about the End of Time developed out of the Sudanese society itself. These traditions spoke of the destruction of a particular society or city as being one of the signs of the End of Time. One popular tradition, which had profound and universal affect upon the role of the scholars of Western and Central Sudan, was the prophecy made by a Timbuktu sage, Ahmad ibn Abdallah, saying that the conquest of Timbuktu was an eschatological sign of the End of Time.⁵⁷ On the eve of the 1591 invasion of Timbuktu, many of the scholars were forcibly deported or fled to other regions of the Sudan. In fact, it is alleged that it was this dispersal that brought many Dyula/Mande-speaking scholars into Yorubaland, Asante, Hausaland and other regions near the Bight of Benin around the 16th century. What is known is that the destruction of Timbuktu marked the beginning of the quasi-militant era of Muslim scholars throughout the Sudan. Prior to this period, Islamic scholars were quietist and were involved with education and advising existing traditional rulers. However, after the Moroccan and Portuguese invasion of Timbuktu in 1591 millenarian ideas became widespread among the scholars. Normally millenarian movements were characterized by other-worldliness and withdrawal from participating in the society; since society was irretrievably destined for divine destruction. However, millenarian movements in Islam, particularly those in Africa, were characterized by militancy and 'the rule of the jurists'.⁵⁸ This involved the scholars resting the reigns of governance from the hands of those who were not deserving of it in order to establish the rule of Allah on earth in preparation of the End of Time. This was not a passive millenarian approach, but an activist approach that would characterize the Islamic reform movements that swept Africa during the 16th to the 19th century. These Muslim armies, who called themselves 'the Army of Allah', were allegedly motivated by their conviction of the nearest of the End of Time; or at least this was the propaganda used to rally the massive support which they received. Enslaved African Muslims no doubt carried this phenomenon across the Atlantic to Bahia. It was recognition of this, which caused some scholars to define the slave revolts of Bahia as millenarian. This will be discussed at length later.

The methodology that these militant scholars and their followers utilized in realizing their aims was the classic Islamic response of *hijra* (tactical withdrawal and flight) and *jihad* (military struggle). This was a consistent theme throughout the Islamic reform movements of Africa. This is corroborated by the voluminous writings that emerged on this subject during that period. These writings drew its precedents from the classical Arabic sources of the Qur'an and the traditions of Prophet Muhammad. This meant that the concept of *hijra* and *jihad* were apart of the common teachings of Islamic education, since they were apart of the very early life of Islam. Thus, to the scholars of African society, *hijra* and *jihad* were

⁵⁶ Uthman Dan Fodiyo, *Tanbeehu'l-Umma `Ala Qurb Hujuum Ashraat'l-Saa`at*, TMs, 1-4.

⁵⁷ Elias Saad, *The Social History of Timbuktu*, 183.

⁵⁸ Elizabeth Hodgkin, "The Ulama Under Muslim Colonialism: the Timbuktu Ulama After the Moroccan Invasion", in *The Changing Role of the Ulama*, Conference, March 29-31 1984, Northwestern University, Lansing, 5-6.

common knowledge and religiously mandated responses to cultural aggression. Following is an example of how the African scholars utilized classical Arabic text to call to *hijra*;

"Emigration (*hijra*) from the lands of the disbelievers is an obligation according to the Book, the *Sunna*, and the consensus. As for the Book there is the word of Allah: 'Surely those whom the Angels cause to die, while they are wronging themselves, the Angels will say, 'In what circumstances were you? They will say, 'we were oppressed in the land.' Then the Angels will say, 'But was not Allah's earth wide enough, that you might have emigrated in it?' For such their refuge shall be Hell.' The commentators said, 'And in this verse is a proof for the obligation of emigration from the lands of the disbelievers.' Al-Suyuti said in his *Takmila*, explaining the meaning of Allah's words 'wronging themselves' 'it means by remaining among the unbelievers and failing to emigrate.' As for the *Sunna*, there is the saying of the Prophet 'Allah is free of a Muslim who lives among the polytheists', and by his saying,...'He who mixes or lives with a disbeliever is just like him.' As for the consensus...it upholds the obligation of emigration'."⁵⁹

An analysis of the above demonstrates that *hijra* especially in the face of aggression was an obligation that was binding upon Muslims. These Qur'anic proofs for this obligation could not go undetected by any person who claimed to be a scholar, because the above verses and their commentary were apart of the fundamental education of the student. For this reason scholars knew well that *hijra* was not an option but a religious duty. It is in this light which the slave revolts of Bahia must be examined. What of the concept of *jihad*? Are there also legal precedents for the obligation of *jihad* in the classical Arabic texts? If so, then there can be no doubt that any Muslim scholar who takes up arms against the state does so with a religious mandate and he will utilize those relevant Qur'anic verses and prophetic traditions to convince his followers of the obligation of putting their lives on the line for his cause. That does not imply that the scholar is genuine in his call, for he may well be a charlatan who uses the text for his own political or economic purposes. There were many examples of this in Africa and the Arab world. However, in order for him to garner the support from his followers, there had to be established as law the legal precedents for such a *jihad*. And if there were legal precedents, then it was there to be used by those genuine reformers and charlatans alike. The point here is not the genuineness of the scholar, but the existence of legal precedents in classical religious texts. For if they did exist, then they were apart of the common knowledge of Islam and any scholar worth the name 'scholar' would at some point in his education come across these legally binding injunctions. This would then obligate a response on his part, genuine or bogus.

The fact is there were legal precedents in the Qur'an, the prophetic traditions and consensus regarding the obligation of *jihad*, and this obligation was not necessarily defensive or offensive. It was apart of the injunctions of Qur'an, which meant it was to be followed for the sake of obedience to Allah only, without examining the wisdom or motive behind it. Warfare is uncomfortable and it entails the inevitable lost of lives, property and wealth. Under normal circumstances war is conducted for defense against attack or for offense to seize the property and wealth of the enemy (in other words, to conquer). This is the normal aim of warfare. However, in the Islamic contexts, *jihad* includes defense and offense, but transcends these two because it is an injunction from Allah in the Qur'an. It says;

"Fighting is legally ordained for you, although it is an object of dislike to you. Perhaps you dislike a thing which is good for you, and perhaps you love a thing which is bad for you. Allah knows, while you do not know."⁶⁰

The scholars drew from the verse the binding nature of *jihad* upon the Muslim, whether for defense or offense, whether there was material advantage or purely spiritual advantage. The aims of *jihad* were clearly delineated, "And fight them until persecution is no

⁵⁹ Uthman Dan Fodiyo, *Bayan Wujuub al -Hijra Ala'l-Ibaad*, trans. F.H. El-Misri, (Oxford, 1978), 48.

⁶⁰ Qur'an 2:216.

more, and religion is all for Allah."⁶¹ African scholars explained the meaning of this verse by citing traditional scholars, "Al-Suyuti said in his Takmila, explaining Allah's words, '*until persecution is no more*', that means until polytheism is no more. And Allah's words, '*...and religion is all for Allah*', means until obedience and worship are entirely and purely for Allah to the exclusion of anything else."⁶² This verse delineates the concept of perpetual jihad which is fought for the sake of Allah, not for defense or offense. Finally *jihad* is connected with millenarian beliefs as demonstrated by the following statement by a 19th century African Muslim scholar/warrior;

"Further proof for the continuing obligation of *jihad* is Allah's words: '*So when you meet those who disbelieve in battle, then it is the striking of their necks until, when you have routed them, then take them captive; and afterwards set them free either by grace or ransom, till war lay down its burden*'. The commentators said; 'That means until war comes to an end and nobody except Muslims or those in covenant with Muslims are left, until those being fought abandon their polytheism and sins, which is the ultimate end of the striking, tying, grace, and ransom which were mentioned; meaning that they are to be subjected to such measures until there is no war with the polytheists because their power has gone. It was also said that it means until the coming of Jesus.' In Ahmad's Musnad in the tradition about the *Dajjal* (the anti-Christ), it is mentioned; 'Jesus will descend...and kill him until the trees and stones call out 'O Spirit of Allah! this is a Jew,' so Jesus will kill all those who followed him...' "⁶³

Here *jihad* is connected to millenarian concepts which gives it the idea of perpetuity and persistence. My line of reasoning here is that a Muslim scholar who takes up the *jihad* he does so out of a deeper conviction than the removal of oppression or revolt against slavery. There lies embedded in the concept of *jihad* an eventual establishment of a new order whose foundation is based upon the laws of Allah as expressed in the Qur'an and the *Sunna* of the Prophet. And this *jihad* is continuous, as the Prophet said, "...from the time Allah sent his Prophet; neither the injustice of the oppressor nor the justice of the equitable ruler shall abrogate it."⁶⁴

What we have tried to do here in this section was to show that Islam united diverse ethnic groups under a single umbrella of religious conviction. The bearers of the ideals of Islam were the Muslim scholars who were employed by Muslim as well as non-Muslim rulers for clerical or shamanistic purposes. After the sacking of Timbuktu in 1591, these scholars embarked upon a more militant and millenarian approach to spreading the call of Islam. The methodology of this novel approach was by means of the religiously, thus legally, binding obligations of *hijra* and *jihad*, which was perpetual until the End of Time. This was the reality of Islam in the Bight of Benin during the height of the Atlantic slave trade. The insecurity which the slave trade created and the apparent strength of the Christian Portuguese could only have increased millenarian feelings amongst the Muslims of the coast, especially those who were unfortunate enough to be captured and shipped to Bahia. Bahia, Brazil witnessed the persistence of this ongoing African trend on the shores of Brazil. And this can be deduced from the opinions that the Portuguese had of these Sudanese Muslims as they were unloaded from the ships to be integrated into the slave plantations of Bahia. Consequently, between 1640 and 1890 1.9 million Yoruba, Ewes, Hausas, Fullanis, Asantes, Nupes, Effans and Malinkes were shipped from the ports of Lagos, Forte de El Mina, and Whydah. According to Patrick Manning,

"Over half the slaves exported, both overall and in each century, appear to have gone to Brazil. For the entire 18th century, an average of over 11,000 slaves

⁶¹ Ibid., 8:39.

⁶² Uthman Dan Fodiyo, Bayan Wujuub al-Hijra, 79.

⁶³ Ibid., 83.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 79.

appear to have been exported every year. The high point of the trade was from 1700 to perhaps 1725, with another great peak of exports in the 1780s."⁶⁵

The estimates of Manning were taken from the assessment made by Philip D. Curtin in his The Atlantic Slave Trade.⁶⁶ J.E. Inikori demonstrated that Curtin underestimated the volume of slave exports from Africa to the Americas. This is because Curtin failed to include slave mortality during the Atlantic crossing or slave mortality while waiting to be shipped. Hundreds of thousands of African souls perished while being captured or while being confined on the African coast. However, tens of millions died and were murdered during the tortuous Middle Passage. Another factor was the phenomenon of slave smuggling in Portuguese territories in order to cheat the Customhouses and not pay heavy taxes.⁶⁷ Inikori demonstrates that the total number of slaves imported into Brazil from 1801 to 1850 came to approximately 3,700,000.⁶⁸ Many of these Yorubas, Ewes, Hausas, Fulanis, Asantes, Nupes and Malinkes were imported from the ports of Lagos, El Mina and Whydah. According to Donald Pierson, Bahia was the destination of mainly of Yorubas, Ewes and Hausas. He maintained that the majority of the Hausa were strict Muslims who had converted many of the Yoruba and Ewes to Islam.⁶⁹ The Portuguese described these Muslims as shrewed and intelligent and were superior in cultural equipment to their masters. "Many were literate, and some are said to have written Arabic fluently...Often they banded together...to buy the freedom of a favorite friend."⁷⁰



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⁶⁵ Patrick Manning, "The Slave Trade in the Bight of Benin: 1640-1890", in The Uncommon Market: Essays in the Economic History of the Atlantic Slave Trade, (eds.) Henry A. Gemery and Jan S. Hodgendorf, (New York, Academic Press, 1979), 124-125.

⁶⁶ Philip D. Curtin, The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census, (Madison, 1969).

⁶⁷ J. E. Inikori, "Measuring the Atlantic Slave Trade: An Assessment of Curtin and Andsey", Journal of African History, XVII, 2, (1976), 197-223; and also "Measuring the Atlantic Slave Trade: A Rejoinder by J.E. Inikori", Journal of African History, XVII, 4, (1976), 607-627.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 623.

⁶⁹ Donald Pierson, Negroes in Brazil, (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1942), 39.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 42.

Political Turmoil in Bahian Society During the 18th and Early 19th Centuries



Map of 17th century Brazil

During the period of the 1800s up until 1835, Bahia enjoyed economic growth as a result of the demand for Brazilian sugar on the world market. The causes for this were the economic insecurities created by the American and French Revolutions. These wars cut productivity from the French colonies and American plantations. The result was the rise in the price of sugar and Brazil was forced to accelerate its sugar production to meet the demands of the world market.⁷¹ The number of sugar plantations (*engenhos*) in Bahia increased from 260 in 1802 to 603 in 1834.⁷² There was a marked increase in the population of Bahia as well as a growth in the importing of goods from abroad. This proved good for the improvement of the economic and social life of country. However, with this expansion of economic prosperity, Bahia suffered from increased political instability. These disturbances included not only the Muslim slave revolts, but also military barracks uprisings, political assassinations and profound social movements. Among these was the independence movement called Bahian Inconfidencia in 1798. There was another independence movement called Sabinada in 1837. Both of these rebellions were led by mulattos and included some pure African freeborn, but excluded slaves from participating in the rebellion.⁷³ Between these two rebellions many other disturbance occurred, although not as threatening to the security of Bahia, yet helped create an atmosphere ripe for revolution. These revolutions

⁷¹ Howard Prince, "Slave Rebellion in Bahia: 1807-1835", (Ph. D. diss., Columbia University, 1972), 15.

⁷² Ibid., 15.

⁷³ Ibid., 22-26.

would occur from the slave and free-born Muslims of Bahia during the years of 1807, 1809, 1814, 1816, 1822, 1826, 1827, 1828, 1830, and 1835.

There were two types of slaves in urban Salvador: the traditional slave (*escravo*) and semi-independent slave (*de ganho*). The *escravo* was a slave who worked and lived with his master. He depended upon his master for food, clothing, shelter and other essentials. While the *de ganho* slave lived apart from his master and hired himself out for labor purposes on a daily basis and would pay his master a fixed sum and the rest he used to pay for his daily expenses. The majority of the slaves living in the urban cities of Bahia, like Salvador, were *de ganho* slaves. These *de ganho* were semi-skilled and sometimes were skilled in a craft, which gave him/her a specialized profession in the town. Many times the owner of these slaves was skill-less and relied solely upon the revenues, which the *de ganho* brought in. They labored as tailors, blacksmiths, stoneworkers, carpenters, masons, barbers, musicians, painters, boatmen, porters, stevedores and street cleaners. Some of these skills the slave brought with him from Africa, while some he acquired while in Bahia. The women *de ganho* labored as domestic workers and selling food and other items on the street markets. Some of the masters encouraged some of the women into prostitution, thus becoming like 19th century 'pimps'. The *de ganho* slaves congregated in the streets in order to be hired for menial jobs. While waiting these slaves would industriously sell mats, hats and other goods. Thus these meeting points became known as *cantos de pretos* and eventually developed into semi-street markets controlled by them. Although the *de ganho* slave possessed some degree of independence, his social position was much like the traditional slave. They could not own land, inherit property, testify in court, nor marry without his master's permission, secular education was prohibited to them and also the carrying of weapons and they could not take on honorific titles. Thus, they remained the property of their master, with the only advantage of living separate from them.⁷⁴ These conditions, coupled with the persistence of Islamic or African traditional culture were the ingredients for revolution and revolt. The slave, whether he was *escravo* or *de ganho*, had everything to gain by striking for their freedom. Another factor is that these slaves made up more than 61% of total population and controlled less than 1% of the total wealth. The wealthiest elements of Bahia were no doubt the landowners, 10% of the population who controlled 67% of the total wealth.⁷⁵



Fig: 1 -An illustration of the *de ganho* or semi-independent African Muslim slave. Here a Muslim 'physician' is practicing cupping and acting as barber.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 28-35.

⁷⁵ Joao Jose Reis, "Slave Rebellion in Brazil: The African Muslim Uprising in Bahia, 1835", Ph.D. diss, (University of Minnesota, 1983), 6-22.

Another demographic element in this impending equation was the manumitted slaves. Between 1822 and 1872, a little more than 75,000 bondsmen were manumitted from slavery, giving the population of freedmen 39% of the total population.⁷⁶ The cause of the manumission of slaves was sometimes gratuitous or through ransom. The gratuitous manumission of slaves usually occurred: as the result of the death of a master, the birth of a son, daughter's wedding, a religious holiday or for some outstanding deed, which demonstrated the slaves loyalty to his master.⁷⁷ Manumission by ransom or purchase provided a relatively profitable source of revenue for slave owners. This was because the owner would charge the slave to manumit himself a price considerably higher than his sale would have returned on the open market. Because of the freedom of the *de ganho* slave, it was easier for him to purchase his manumission than the *escravo* slave. Having said this, it must be highlighted that manumission by purchase was very difficult and took considerable time. For this reason there emerged in Bahia of organized societies dedicated to the manumission of slaves. These societies were called *Juntas de Liberadade*. In the societies loan funds were established which members could borrow from to purchase their freedom. This sum was paid back once the person obtained his freedom.⁷⁸ However, this did not guarantee the ex-slaves perpetual freedom. If a former slave showed any ingratitude to his former master, or harmed his former master, his family or business interests, in his former masters presence or absence would mean re-enslavement.

Social status for African freedmen and mulatto freedmen varied in proportion to the amount of white blood they possessed. There developed a sought of caste system based upon white ancestry as opposed to African ancestry.⁷⁹ For the African there was always the threat of re-enslavement, which in effect inhibited their behavior and movement. Both *escravo* and *de ganho* slaves lived under impoverished conditions. The streets of the lower city where the African slaves lived in Salvador was deplorable with poor or none existent sanitation facilities. African slaves and freedmen inhabited small and overcrowded quarters.⁸⁰ The clothing and diet of urban slaves was deficient and demonstrated their masters unwillingness to look after the needs of his slaves. This was highly unlikely, considering the fact that there was the chance to obtain other slaves from the ongoing slave trade. The availability of fresh water was scarce which led to ill health and periodic epidemics. Salvador had more cases of dysentery, cholera, smallpox, measles, yellow fever, typhoid, syphilis and tuberculosis than any other city in Brazil.⁸¹

Life in Salvador, Bahia was extremely hard and abominable. All the conditions were present for revolt and rebellion on the part of the slave. If the slaves lacked a sense of self worth and dignity, then the chances of them revolting against Bahian society was highly unlikely. As we have established earlier many of the Africans brought into Bahia came from societies that were highly complex with a high degree of socialization. These along with certain agents, which ferment slave revolt, were prevalent among these Africans that would make violent rebellion inevitable. The social agents, which contributed to the Muslims rising up in revolt, are many. Some we have already discussed, like the social and economic conditions of the slaves, and the persistence of Islamic traditions, which obligate revolt against the rule of non-Muslims. However, there were other demographic and pragmatic factors, which made the Muslims, feel that they had a chance to win a protracted struggle in Bahia.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 6.

⁷⁷ Howard Prince, 35.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 38-39.

⁷⁹ Herbert Klein, "The Colored Freedmen in Brazilian Slave Society", *Journal of Social History*, vol.3.,(Fall, 1969), 52.

⁸⁰ Howard Prince, 43-45.

⁸¹ Ibid., 49.

Among these factors was the demographic balance of race. In order for slave revolts to occur there must be a larger population of slaves than masters. H. Orlando Patterson put this idea forward in his study of the general causes of the slave rebellions in Jamaica.⁸² His theories show some correlation with the demographic ratios in Bahia, which may validate his theory. The slave population in Bahia around 1775 was much less than the population of the whites and the free colored populations by half, which explains the lack of slave rebellions during that period.⁸³ However, during the period of 1807 to 1835 there was an increase of the importation of slaves into Bahia, which increased the ratio of slave to free persons considerably. A census made in 1807 of the population of Salvador was 25,052 slaves, 14,260 whites and 11,350 free persons of mixed race.⁸⁴ Thus the year of the first slave revolt, the population of the slaves doubled that of the whites. This ratio remained relatively constant during the period between 1807 and 1835. Another factor which act as agents in generating slave revolt is religion. In Bahia it was the practice to baptize the slaves as soon as they arrived from Africa and to give them Christian names. These mass 'conversions' were superficial because the Africans continued to practice their religions. The *candomble* practiced by the Ewe and Yoruba continued to have major impact upon the animist of Bahia. This tradition was a synthesis of African and Catholic beliefs.

Many of the Africans were Muslims (like the Hausa, the Nupe, the Fulani and the Malinke) or were in the process of Islamization (like the Yoruba, the Asante and to a lesser degree Dahomey). They were described by Portuguese to be "exceedingly spirited and resolute individuals"⁸⁵, and as "the most intellectual element among the imported Africans, many of whom could read and write Arabic"⁸⁶. Charles Gardner wrote about these Africans during his travels to that region in 1837;

"The stranger visiting Bahia, even if he comes from other provinces of Brazil, is struck by the appearance of the blacks whom he meets in the street. They are the most handsome to be seen in the whole country; tall men and women, well built, usually intelligent, some of them being fairly proficient in the Arabic tongue. They have all been imported from the Mina coast; and, not only because of their greater physical and intellectual sturdiness, but also because they are more united among themselves, they show themselves more inclined to movements of revolt than mixed races of other provinces"⁸⁷

Charles Gardner hits upon the very essence of the revolt. Amidst the oppression, degradation, and squalor that characterized African existence in Bahia, there existed the proud bearers of a noble and militant Islamic people. The fact that there were actual *alfas*, *malams* and Islamic scholars among them only adds to the potential of the transmigration of the traditions that characterized Western and Central Sudan during that same period. These scholars possessed the historical conscience, the linguistic potential and the psychological temperament necessary to unleash upon Bahian society a *jihad* whose aims was not only the removal of the oppression of slavery, but also to reinstate a new form of government being created on theological foundations and which had inherit in it millenarian sentiments. As mentioned earlier the elements which made up Islamic scholarly life and thus, Islamic social transformation were: [1] the merging of diverse ethnic groups under the umbrella of the brotherhood of Islam; [2] the emergence of charismatic scholars who allegedly possessed knowledge of Islamic exoteric as well as esoteric sciences; [3] the choosing of a single leader who embodied the aims of the Islamic community to whom obedience and reverence was binding; [4] embodying millenarian beliefs; and [5] executing the *hijra* (tactical withdrawal)

⁸² H. Orlando Patterson, The Sociology of Slavery, (Rutherford, Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1969), 274.

⁸³ Howard Prince, 56-57.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 58.

⁸⁵ Donald Pierson, 42.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 221.

⁸⁷ Charles Gardner, Travels in Brazil, (London, 1849), 64.

and *jihad* as an obligation to Allah in order to remove oppression and establish the rule of Islamic law.



Fig: 2 -One of the Arabic manuscripts from Bahia Brazil, where the author makes intercession with several Angels as well as the four Righteous Khalifs and ask protection from Allah against many evils.

In examining the events and characters of the slave revolts of Bahia, evidence will show that some of the above characteristics emerged in total, while some manifested in a lesser degree. The reasons for this are many and they will be highlighted during the examination of the actual revolts. The first element was the unifying of diverse ethnic groups under the umbrella of Islam. In Africa religion for the most part evolved out of the ethnicity of a people. In other words religions were influenced by ethnicity, where the worship of ones ancestors who were the first to inhabit the land prevented other ethnic groups from joining the others religion. For each ethnic group there were ancestral totems around which evolved beliefs systems highlighting the sanctity of ones ethnicity and origin. However, Islam was not ethnocentric. It was a universalist religion which united people under a monotheistic concept of One Creator, Allah. This factor allowed for the barriers of ethnicity to be overcome and a more cohesive society to be developed based upon the unity of belief and worship. Yoruba and Hausa were ethnic enemies for centuries, but Islam permitted an alliance, which under normal circumstances would not have ever occurred.⁸⁸ During the revolts of 1809 and 1835, they were allied in a joint revolution. However, there were other ethnic groups who were Muslim and who had joined the revolts. Among them were men from the Kanuri, Bornu, Nupe, Malinke and at least one Ewe. All this demonstrates that Islam served as the tool to both solidify unity between these divers groups and to redeem them from oppression.

Another element that is indicative of the advent of Islamic social transformation is the emergence of charismatic scholars who possess knowledge of exoteric and esoteric Islamic sciences. All Islamic revolutions in Western and Central Sudan revolved around an individual of this sought. He embodied by his knowledge and character the ideals of the newly emerging Islamic community. In Bahia, Nina Rodrigues noted that the Muslims of Bahia were led by leaders who were called *alufa*, who instructed the Muslims in memorization of the Qur'an, how to read and write Arabic, and the fundamentals of the religion. They dressed in white tunics and turbans and taught the people to observe austere

⁸⁸ Ibid., 73.

dietary customs.⁸⁹ Donald Pierson points out; "Bahia was ... the seat of the *imam*, or head of all the African disciples of Prophet Mohammed. Those who were resident in Rio, Ceara, and Pernambuco *owed allegiance to him*."⁹⁰ This is significant because the *bay`a* or oath of allegiance was the key element in the structure of African Muslim societies throughout the *Bilad's-Sudan* and indeed the whole of the Muslim world.⁹¹ In a sound prophetic tradition from Prophet Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, related by al-Bukhari, an-Nasai, and al-Bayhaqi on the authority of al-Harith al-`Ashari that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace said:

*"I command you to do five things, which Allah ordered me to do. They are: [1] holding to the Jama`at; [2] hearing and [3] obeying the amir; [4] emigration (hijra) and [5] military struggle (jihad) in the Way of Allah. Whoever breaks away from the Jama`at even a handspan, has removed the noose of Islam from around his neck, except if he returns."*⁹²

Sultan Muhammad Bello commented on the above prophetic tradition when he said: "The legal decision drawn out of the above tradition is that it is not permissible for anyone to remain aloof without having on his neck the *bay`a* (the oath of allegiance). This is because every *bay`a*, as Ibn Abi Jamra said in his *Buhja an-Nufuus*, is actually a renewal and a confirmation of the original *bay`a* given to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. In turn, the *bay`a* given to the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace is actually the oath of allegiance given to Allah based upon His words: '*Verily those who give the oath of allegiance to you, have given the oath of allegiance to Allah. Allah's Hand is over their hand.*'"⁹³ Clearly, the Muslims of Bahia introduced Islamic governmental ideals into the western hemisphere the same time the Portuguese were developing their new concepts of government.

In addition to introducing Islamic governmental theories in Bahia the *alufa* performed a host of other functions on behalf of the Muslim communities of Bahia. According to Sylviane Diouf the Muslim scholars of Bahia and the common Muslims held to their covenant with Islam, by actively preserving their religious customs of prayer, fasting, giving alms and belief in the oneness of Allah ta`ala.⁹⁴ She said: "During slavery, on both sides of the Atlantic, Africans were devout Muslims, sincere believers, strict practitioners, and active agents in the development and shaping of their religious and cultural world."⁹⁵ Along with the jobs described above, the *alufa* officiated over Muslim marriages and divorces; they performed the *aqiqah* naming ceremonies for newborn children, performed medicinal roles - like cupping, tapping and bone setting. They performed the washing of bodies of the dead and overseeing their burial.⁹⁶ These functions were the normal functions expected of an *alufa*. Consequently, there evolved around this individual a community of Africans of diverse ethnic background, who in the face of the oppressive slave system of Bahia, looked to the *Alfa* as a savior and guide. This role was nothing but the persistence of a post fulfilled by *alims*, *alfas*, *malams*, and *marabouts* for centuries in Islamic Africa. This role would naturally evolve into a charismatic leadership over the Muslims aspiration for freedom against Bahian oppression.

⁸⁹ Nina Rodrigues, *Les Religions Africaines au Bresil*, (Paris, 1960), 45-46.

⁹⁰ Donald Pierson, *Negroes in Brazil*, 43-45.

⁹¹ Muhammad Bello, *Ghayth'l-Wabl Fi Seerat 'l-Imam'l-`Adl*, unpublished manuscript in possession of author, folio 4-7.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Sylviane A. Diouf, *Servants of Allah: African Muslims Enslaved in the Americas*, (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 69-70.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Nina Rodrigues, 51-57.

The Islamic Revolt of 1807 -1809

For the first time since the importing of African slaves into Bahia, there would emerge a series of revolts that would rock the 'calm' of Bahian society. The first such revolt was that which occurred on the evening of May 27, 1807. Its principle organizers were two African Muslims of Hausa descent. One was a slave named Balthazar who was 'owned' by Francisco das Chagas. Balthazar was the *imam* of this revolt, whose home on Corpo Santo Street was used as the mosque and meeting place where weapons and Arabic literature were kept.⁹⁷ The other leader was a freedman by the name of Antonio, who was chosen as the *wazir* or 'ambassador' to establish contacts and coordinate the plans between the urban slaves and the rural ones. This job was easy for him because he alone possessed the freedom of movement that would not be suspect. He worked as a merchant traveling between Santo Amaro and Salvador.⁹⁸ What is significant here, is that a freedman had accepted the leadership of a 'slave' simply because of the latter's superiority in knowledge and *taqwa* (fearful awareness of Allah). This would seem problematic in Islam because it is not permissible to give the oath of allegiance to a slave.⁹⁹ The only exception is when the *Amir* or *Imam* is captured in war and there is cause to believe that he will be eventually freed. *Sultan* Muhammad Bello said:

"The contract with Muslim leaders (*a'ima*) is only annulled when the objectives of leadership has been rendered null and void, like apostasy, recognized madness, **or when the leader has been made a war captive or imprisoned and there is no hope of him being freed**, likewise by a sickness which causes the leader to forget knowledge, by blindness, deafness or muteness, or when he removes himself due to his inability to establish the welfare of the Muslims..."¹⁰⁰

The choosing of the enslaved African Muslim, Balthazar, as the *Amir* of the *Jama`at* had to be that the Muslims hoped that there was a chance that he could be freed. There is no doubt that he had to have had been a traditional leader prior to being captured and enslaved. His learning and piety allowed the Muslim freedmen and enslaved alike to choose him as their *Imam*. His leadership, piety and organizational skills superceded the fact that he was enslaved and under the penal jurisdiction of Bahia. Whatever the case, the problematic issues that resulted from his enslavement was mitigated with the appointing of a Muslim freedman, Antonio, as his second in charge (*wazir*). The duty of the *wazir* was clearly defined in Islamic government as an upright person who awakes the leader to important affairs when he sleeps, makes him see political affairs clearly when he is blind and reminds him of historical precedents when he forgets. He must be compassionate towards creatures by naturally having affinity to their needs.¹⁰¹ Thus, Antonio, as a roving merchant and organizer, had the ability to know the circumstances of the rural and urban enslaved Muslims as well as the ability to assess the strength or weakness of the Portuguese enemy.¹⁰²

There had been a long-standing tradition of organization by the Muslim slaves of Bahia, and especially in Salvador and the surrounding suburbs that did not go unnoticed by the authorities. On April 7, 1807, at least one month before the impending revolt, the Governor, Joao Saldanha de Gama reported;

"...in the suburbs of this Capital and in the bushes surrounding it, there were innumerable groups of these people who, organized by industrious charlatans attracted the credulous, the vagrants, the superstitious, robbers, criminals and the sick; and, with an absolute liberty, with dances, capricious dresses, false medicines, blessings and fanatical prayers, they lounged about, ate, celebrated

⁹⁷ Howard Prince, 91-92.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Uthman Dan Fuduye', *Bayan Wujuub al-Hijra*, folio 20.

¹⁰⁰ Muhammad Bello, *Ifaadat 'l-Ikhwaan*, unpublished manuscript in possession of author, folio 2.

¹⁰¹ Uthman Dan Fuduye', *Bayan Wujuub al-Hijra*, folio 23.

¹⁰² Howard Prince, 92.

and ruled themselves in the most scandalous offense to all rights, laws, orders and public tranquility."¹⁰³

In the rural as well as the urban areas these African Muslims set up secret meeting places called *casebres* from where the revolutionary planning took place. In these *casebres* were also collected arms and where other lesser leaders were elected.¹⁰⁴ The aim of the revolt was to "make war upon the whites", "kill their masters, poison the public fountains", and then commandeer several ships in the harbor and make a *hijra* (escape) across the sea to Africa.¹⁰⁵ They chose to begin the insurrection on the morning of May 28, 1807, after the *fajr* dawn prayer. This date was chosen because it was the religious holiday of Corpus Christi and the general populous would be preoccupied with festivities and the movement of large numbers of slaves would not then be suspect. It was during this same period, between January and July of 1807, that the Muslims of Hausaland launched their major military campaign against the Habe' authorities, culminating in the attack upon Alkalawa, the capital of Gobir.¹⁰⁶ It is highly likely that the Muslims chose this time to revolt because of the successes that their fellow Muslims in Hausaland gained over their enemies.

The Muslims under the leadership of Balthazar and Antonio, planned to first set fire to the customs house and church of Nazareth in order to detract attention. Then the Muslims would seize the Nazareth arsenal, where guns and other weapons were stored. The revolt was many months in the planning, but on May 22, 1807 the Governor of Bahia received news of an impending revolt by the "Hausa nation". The Governor conducted an investigation that lasted for three days in which he gathered all of the details of the plot. 'Reliable slaves' were employed to infiltrate the insurrection and to report upon its activities. By the 26th of May the Governor learned a full description of the size of the rebel organization and its leaders.¹⁰⁷ As a result of this knowledge the Governor ordered his soldiers to surround the staging areas of the revolt in Nazareth where they were scheduled to assemble. The soldiers, led by Captain Joao de Chastinet, were able to arrest seven Muslims in the city and four in the rural districts. Many of the other rebels escaped realizing that their leaders had been captured. An investigation of the *casebres* revealed "four-hundred arrows, sticks, cord for the fabrication of bows, knives, pistols, a rifle, and a Hausa war drum."¹⁰⁸ The leaders or *amirs* of this revolt were thirteen Muslims. Twelve of them were Hausa and one of them was Malinke. Their names were Tiburcio, Guilherme, Andre', Jose', Luiz, Faustino, Alexandre, Simplicio, Francisco, Cosme, Ignacio, Antonio and Balthazar. These prisoners were all sentenced to receive 150 lashes in the public square of Salvador. The leaders Balthazar and Antonio were executed.¹⁰⁹

The Bahian slave revolt of May, 1807 was a bloodless affair and was crushed before it could get underway. This was due to the hypocritical informants who because of their collaborative efforts took the element of surprise from the revolt. The conditions of success for the revolt were not present and it fell short of its expectations. However, the Bahian authorities were alarmed that a revolt of such magnitude could have initiated in the first place. As a result of this revolt the Governor decreed a series of laws that would rigorously check the movement and activities of the *de ganho* slaves in the urban districts of Bahia. This decree stipulated that "all bondmen found in the streets after nine p.m. without a letter or in the company of his master would be arrested and administered 150 lashes."¹¹⁰

¹⁰³ Joao J. Reis, 94-94.

¹⁰⁴ Howard Prince, 88-89.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 89-90.

¹⁰⁶ Abdullahi Dan Fuduye', *Tazyin Al-Waraqaat*, trans. Mervyn Hiskett, (Ibadan University Press, 1963), 120.

¹⁰⁷ Howard Prince, 90.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 90-91.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 92-93.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 94.

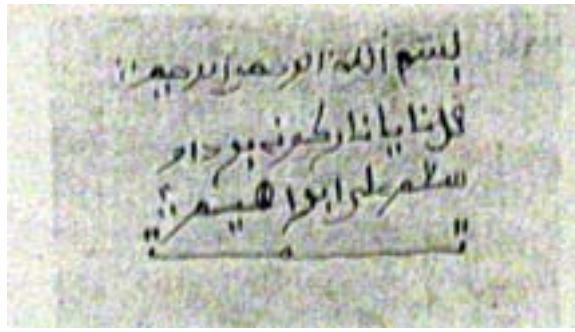


Fig: 3 - The above manuscript is the writing of Alexandre, one of the *Amirs* of the 1807 Muslim slave revolt. The text is a quotation from the *Quran*: “*In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful. We said: O Fire be cool and safe for Abraham.*”

Many of the written documents by the Muslims were seized and burnt and there only survived small fragments of the written testimony of these African Muslim freedom fighters. However, one such writing did survive and gives some insight into the motivations and zeal of the Muslims of Bahia. One of the *amirs* of the revolt named *Amam* (or *Imam*) Alexandre left us a small manuscript that had written on it the *basmalla* (In the name of Allah the Beneficent the Merciful) followed by verse 69 of *Surat al-Anbiya*. The calligraphic style is a clear western *jihaadi* mode prevalent in the Central *Bilad's-Sudan*, which demonstrates that Alexandre was trained as a scribe or was among the scholarly clerics before his capture. The text he chose to write is significant because it demonstrates how the Muslims viewed themselves in the light of Bahian slave culture. The manuscript reads:

“In the name of Allah, the Beneficent the Merciful: *We said: O Fire! Be cool and safe for Abraham*”¹¹¹

This small manuscript was probably written as a form of talisman of protection, supplication and exhortation. *Shehu* Uthman Dan Fuduye’ gave us an indication of the meaning that this statement: ‘*In the name of Allah the Beneficent the Merciful*’, had to African Muslim clerics during that period, in his *Kitab al-Ism al-Athem* where he said;

“Realize that the noble *basmala*¹¹² is composed of four words: *In the name of (bismi)*; the expression of majesty (*Allah*); the Beneficent (*ar-Rahmaan*); the Merciful (*ar-Raheem*). The first word points to the personal pronoun of the Name that comes after it. As for the word that comes after it, it is the Great Name, which is *Allah*. This is because the Great Name is the name of majesty and is the axis (*qutb*) of the Divine Names to which they all return and around which they all revolve. The name *Allah* is like the distinguishing mark of the remaining Divine Names. This is because if you were to ask for example: ‘Who is the Beneficent (*ar-Rahman*)?’ Then you would say: ‘*Allah*’. Then, this would be the answer regarding the remainder of the Divine Names related to it. The Beneficent (*ar-Rahman*), the Merciful (*ar-Rahim*) are two Divine Attributes of this noble Name. For each of the three Divine Names there are intrinsic qualities (*Khawwaas*) and secrets (*asraar*), which only Allah ta’ala can enumerate.”¹¹³

Shaykh Muhammad Tukur, one of the students of the *Shehu*, who had reached an advanced level of learning in the science of the secrets regarding the Names of Allah said the following about the *basmalla*: “*Bismillahi* is the share of those in need of the Merciful One. It is the share of those who are reliant upon the Compassionate One. It is the share of all the believers. The ‘*Bismillahi* protects the ship from inundation. The ‘*Bismillahi* will redeem the *Umma* of Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace on the Day of Standing among the masses of the people...The *Bismillahi* was raised up in the time of Abraham *al-Khalil*, upon him be peace. It was revealed to him when he was in the catapult and then Allah redeemed him from the fire.”¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ See fig: 3 above.

¹¹² This means the *Bismillahi'r-Rahmani 'r-Raheem* – In the name of Allah the Beneficent, the Merciful.

¹¹³ Uthman Dan Fuduye’, *Kitaab al-Isma al-Adheem*, trans. Muhammad Shareef, (Sankore’ Institute, 2003), 1.

¹¹⁴ Muihammad Tukur, *Qirat al-Ahibba*, trans. Muhammad Shareef, (Sankore’ Institute, 2003), 5.

Thus, Alexandre, was evoking the power of protection that is intrinsic within the *basmalla* to guard the Muslims against the onslaught of the Portuguese disbelievers. He then followed this with recording the verse that the *basmalla* is intimately connected with and the personage with whom the *basmalla* redeemed from the fires of Nimrod. According to *Imam al-Qurtubi* in his *Jaami' al-Ahkaam*: "When Prophet Abraham disrupted the aims of Nimrod by means of the Divine evidence given him, they fell back on their pride and might, committing sins by setting about on the path of oppression, repression and dominance. He then called for the burning of Abraham by saying: 'Give assistance to your gods by burning him because he has denounced them and imputed faults to them.' It was related that Nimrod built a tall edifice that was eighty cubits tall and forty cubits wide. Ibn Is'haaq said: They gathered together firewood for an entire month and then lit it until the fire blazed and became so severe that if a bird was to fly over it, its wings would catch afire from the heat and the flames. They then chained Ibrahim and placed him in a iron catapult. Then the entire heavens and earth and the Angels and the entire creation (besides men and *jinn*) sent up a single cry: "Our Lord! Ibrahim is the only human on earth who truly worships You. He will be burnt for Your sake. Give us permission to assist him." Allah ta`ala then said: "If he seeks any assistance in anything from any of you and calls out, then he should assist him. I have given permission for that. However if he does not call upon anyone except Me, then I am most knowledgeable of him and I will be his guardian and protector." When they wished to throw him into the fire, an Angel who is the keeper of the treasure of the waters came to him and said: 'O Abraham, if you like I can extinguish the fire with water.' He responded: 'I have no need of you against it.' Then there came to him an Angel who is responsible for the winds and said: 'O Abraham, if you like I can cause the fire to vaporize and evaporate.' He said: 'No!' He then turned his face to the heavens and said: 'O Allah You are Singular in the heavens and I am singular on earth! There is no one who will worship You besides me. Therefore I rely upon Allah the best of Guardians.' It was related by *Abi ibn Ka`b* that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace said: "When Abraham was thrown into the fire by means of the catapult, the Angel *Jibreel* came to him while he was flying towards the fire and said: 'O Abraham do you have any need of me?' He replied: 'As for as from you, no!' Then *Jibreel* said: 'Then ask of your Lord!' Abraham replied: 'His prior knowledge of my condition suffices me from asking of Him!' Then Allah ta`ala said: 'O Fire! Be cool and safe for Abraham'" The scholars of Islam have agreed that this state of Abraham was the essence of reliance upon Allah ta`ala (*tawwakkul*) and comprised of the servant being completely empty and not in need of anything except Allah. This state necessitates the Divine Assistance against tyrants and oppressors. It is for this reason that *Amir Alexandre* deployed this particular *Qur'anic* verse in the face of the repression and tyranny of the Portuguese.

The revolt of 1807 was led and planned by Muslims. The leaders of the eleven *casebres* where all the planning and coordinating took place were Muslim. The two leaders, the *imam* and his *wazir*, were Muslim. The number of those other slaves and freemen who participated is unknown. But one can perhaps speculate that each *casebres* had at least ten rebels under one leader, which would bring the rebels number to about 120 men. I suspect the number was considerably higher than that. Some obscurantist scholars may assert that the fact that the leadership of the revolt was Muslim does not mean that the others shared the same ideals and aspirations as they did. That is true for any revolution or insurrection. The masses of the oppressed people are hardly ever ideologically neither inclined nor motivated to rebel. They are mostly motivated by the basic desire for freedom, justice and the removal of oppression. However, it has always been the leaders of the movements who defined the movement and after whom the revolt was named. The Bolshevik revolution was only so named because of its leaders. The Jacobin revolution was so named because of those few who laid down the ideological basis of the revolution. In this same manner, committed Muslims led the revolts and insurrections of Bahia during this period. Therefore, the revolts were Islamic revolts.

The second in a series of revolts to take place in Bahia was the revolt of January 4, 1809. Again the Hausa Muslims dominated this revolt. However, there was a cross-ethnic alliance between Hausa, Yorubas and Ewes. These diverse ethnic groups were recent converts to Islam by the efforts of the Hausa *alufas*.¹¹⁵ This revolt was mainly organized in the rural areas among the food-producing regions of Nazare das Farinhas. Perhaps these organizations were the same elements that were able to escape capture during the first revolt of 1807. These slaves were all runaways from the plantations of Nazare' das Farinhas, the capital of Salvador and from surrounding plantations in the Reconcavo. Thus, the makeup of this rebel force was *de ganho* slaves as well as *escravo* slaves. Little is known about the leaders of this movement or its plans and objectives. But this revolt was much bloodier than the previous one. It began on January 4, 1809, when an attack was made against Nazare' in order to capture arms and supplies; which was done by an estimated 200 to 300 runaway slaves.¹¹⁶ Unlike the 1807 uprising, this revolt did have the element of surprise, but it was unsuccessful in capturing the armament house in Nazare'. The slaves were forced to retreat back into the bush, leaving many dead behind them and killing several soldiers. Two days later Salvadorian soldiers accompanied by local militia chased the rebels and defeated them in a bloody battle. Many of these rebels escaped and made the *hijra* into the neighboring province of Sergipe, where they fomented more slave uprisings.¹¹⁷ Some 124 Muslim freedom fighters were captured by the authorities of whom 85 were men. They were taken back to Salvador where, on September of 1810, they were publicly beaten and deported to other provinces in Brazil.¹¹⁸

The revolt of 1809 demonstrated that diverse ethnic groups could form an alliance for a common cause of revolt against slavery in Bahia. The cement of this unity was Islam. The aftermath of this revolt is that the Bahian authorities made tighter controls and regulations on the movement of slaves resulting in the end of the first phases of the slave revolts of Bahia.



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¹¹⁵ Donald Pierson, 39-40.

¹¹⁶ Joao J. Reis, 96.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 96; and Howard Prince, 101-103.

¹¹⁸ Howard Prince, 102.

The Islamic Slave Revolts of 1814-1816

The revolts of 1807 and 1809 were insignificant in comparison to the revolts of 1814 and 1816. The first of these was the revolt that took place on February 28, 1814. More than 200 enslaved Hausa Muslims from the city of Salvador, and the rural district of Itapoa united together to free themselves from the yoke of slavery.¹¹⁹ The insurrection was planned to coincide with the holiday *Semana Santa* that would last a whole week. Again like the 1807 revolt, it was to be started after the *fajr* dawn prayer at 4 a.m. in the morning. The name of the leader of this revolt is unknown, but he was a freedman and merchant of Salvador.¹²⁰ They first attacked the home of Manuel Ignacio da Cunha Menezes and killed his foreman and several members of his family. They liberated the slaves of his plantation, who joined the rebellion. The rebels then attacked two neighboring plantations owned by Joao Vaz Carvalho and Francisco Lourenco Herculano. Here they liberated slaves and killed some who would not join them. The rebels then moved on to Itapoa and destroyed buildings, burnt crops and killed several whites. From there they went to the rural areas surrounding Salvador.¹²¹ When Condos dos Arcos, the Governor of Bahia, received news of the rebellion, he dispatched a cavalry led by Colonel Jose' Thomas Boccaciari to put an end to the revolt. This army along with local militiamen tracked the revolutionaries to the region of Santo Amaro near the River Joanes. A heated battle ensued where many Africans and Bahian soldiers were killed. However, because of the superior arms of the soldiers they were able to defeat the insurgents after two hours of fighting.¹²² More than 31 Hausa Muslims were taken prisoner and led back to Salvador. Other Hausa rebels were captured in other rural regions in the Reconcavo. Of these captives 4 were executed by hanging, 23 deported to Portuguese colonies in Africa¹²³, and the remainder died while in custody from ill treatment by their captors.¹²⁴

In this revolt more than 13 whites were killed and 8 others seriously wounded. This induced the Justice of the Peace, Francisco Jose' de Freitas, on March 16, 1814 to send a general complaint to the Governor of Bahia;

"...those Negroes of Bahia, who are most resolute, fearless, and capable of any enterprise, particularly those of the Hausa nation; our proof is that furnished by Your Excellency, who cited their attacks undertaken with such fury and abandon, some refusing to surrender until dead."¹²⁵

As a result of this complaint, the Governor increased the number of police in the city, dispatched rural militia into the bushes of Bahia to destroy *quilombo* communities, and renewed the punishment of 150 lashes for slaves out at night after nine p.m. without a pass. However, these measures did nothing to halt the escalation of the revolt of 1816. This revolt took place on February 12, 1816 near the Santo Amaro region of the Reconcavo. This area was the same area where the fierce battle occurred between the Hausa Muslim led revolt and the government soldiers in 1814. However this revolt was not a planned rebellion like the previous ones. It was a spontaneous revolt executed by about 50 Hausa *escravo* slaves and lasted for four days. The possible cause of this revolt was the unusually harsh winter which hit the Bahian Reconcavo in 1815. Many horses and oxen died which increased the average work load of the slaves. There was also an increase in prices of staple goods at that time which added to the difficult plight of the slaves.¹²⁶ The revolt began at 1 a.m. in the morning of February 12, 1816 when 25 to 30 slaves burnt the crops and barns of some eight

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 105.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 246.

¹²¹ Joao J. Reis, 98-99.

¹²² Howard Prince, 107.

¹²³ Joao J. Reis, 99.

¹²⁴ Howard Prince, 117

¹²⁵ Ibid., 110.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 118.

plantations. By nine o'clock that morning Colonel Bento de Araujo Lopes Villasboas received news of the revolt. He then organized a local militia and with regular troops set out towards Santa Amaro. By this time the Africans had retreated back in to the woods of Cabaxi and Poucoponto where they had established a base of operations.¹²⁷ After three days the insurgents raided the village of Santo Amaro and killed a number of whites and wounded some and then again retreated into the woods. On February 15th the army and local militia tracked down the insurrectionists to their camp where a battle took place, killing many Africans and capturing about eight. The soldiers also captured some weapons and musical instruments. Nothing is known about the punishment the prisoners received.¹²⁸

The repressive measures created by the authorities of Bahia were designed not only to check the revolutionary spirit of the slaves, but also to humiliate all Africans, whether slave or free. The Court passed a decree on 24th August, 1816 prohibiting all Africans, slave or free, from being in the streets after nine p.m.¹²⁹ It is clear that the whites of Bahia saw the slave revolts in Bahia as a hostile encounter between whites and Africans. The white and mulatto citizens of Bahia used the courts to humiliate all Africans and to 'put them in their places'. Among these measures was that Africans should not be allowed to sit before any white, but always be forced to stand up as a sign of respect. Another one was that the government provided for the immigration of European families into Bahia in order to diminish the racial imbalance in favor of the Africans. The Hausa and Yoruba Muslims were a proud and dignified people and thus the whites wanted to deflate as much of this dignity as they could. This revolt proved to be the last of the Hausa Muslim dominated revolts.



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¹²⁷ Ibid., 120.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 123.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 124.

The Slave Revolts of 1822 -1830

The year of 1822 marked the beginning of the Independence movement for Brazil, led by the free population of Creoles of mixed race origin. Like the war of independence in America, it was not fought to bring freedom, justice and equality to everyone, but for Anglo-Americans only. This double standard seemed to have been a trend among slave owning whites and Creoles all over the world. From the very beginning of the institution of slavery in Brazil, the Creoles were given more privileges than the African slaves. They assimilated more readily than them and they spoke the language of the Portuguese masters exclusively. Creoles were given domestic labor as opposed to field labor. They were given gifts, granted time-off periods and given early manumission. Creole women were preferred as concubines as opposed to their African sisters.¹³⁰ For this reason considerable resentment existed between the Creole and the Africans of Bahia. Many of the free Creole owned their own plantations and were reportedly "more cruel in their treatment of Africans than the whites".¹³¹ And the Creoles were thoroughly opposed to the African slave revolts because it would put them at a disadvantage with regard to social status if the revolutions had obtained their aims. For this reason the Bahian whites encouraged rivalry between Africans and Creoles in order to divide and rule the colored population.

It is for this reason when the Creoles and certain whites rose up to demand independence from Portugal in 1822, this did not include the freeing of the slave population as well. In fact during the wars of independence, neither the Portuguese nor Brazilians utilized bondmen in the beginning of the conflict. Slaves were prohibited from carrying arms and the ordinances concerning the movement of Africans were strictly enforced.¹³² However, both sides gave in and recruited a limited number of bondsmen soldiers. More than two hundred Africans were employed by the Portuguese, with the promise of manumission once the Creole rebellion was stopped. The Brazilians employed about 1100 Africans called *Batalhao dos Libertos*, who were also promised their liberty once independence was achieved.¹³³

Throughout the struggle for independence, African slaves took advantage of the insecurity and instability of the state to launch many minor revolts. There were at least three reported slave revolts in the year of 1822, yet little is known about them. However, what is known is that they were mainly led by the Yoruba. The first of these revolts took place on February of 1822 in the village of Sao Mateus. This revolt was led by two Yoruba slaves named Claudino de Jesus and Luiz Benguela. Under their leadership some 70 African slaves and freedmen attempted to establish an African kingdom in Sao Mateus. The leader of the revolt, Luiz, was referred to as 'king'. This revolt was quickly smashed, killing more than 51 insurgents and capturing 20. Little is known what became of those who were captured.¹³⁴

Again on June 13, 1822, a slave revolt broke out on the island of Itaparica. The amount of insurrectionists involved is not known and nothing was recorded about the ethnic origin of these slaves. However, like the revolt earlier that year, it was swiftly put down with some 20 Africans being killed and about 20 injured.¹³⁵

The most serious slave revolt in 1822 occurred on November the 6th, when fugitive Africans conducted a raid on the capital city of Salvador. The leader of the creole forces, General Pedro Labutat, led his army against the insurgent camp on the 12th of the same

¹³⁰ Ibid., 62-67.

¹³¹ Ibid., 63.

¹³² Ibid., 127.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 127-128.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 128.

month. In this fight 21 Africans were killed, 51 males were captured and immediately executed, and twenty females were publicly whipped.¹³⁶

Four years later on August 24, 1826, a Yoruba slave named Jose' da Silva Barros, led an insurrection in the village of Cachoeira. The leader declared himself and his spouse "King and Queen" and attempted to establish a kingdom modeled on the old Oyo Yoruba kingdom. The "Queen" was killed earlier on in the fighting. The "king" was captured after being seriously wounded. Many of the insurgents fled, but were gradually apprehended by the militia and soldiers.¹³⁷

One of the most significant uprisings during this period was the Uruba revolt of December 15th, 1826. An estimated 100 Africans had escaped their plantations and took refuge in a *quilombo* called Uruba ('the vulture'). This place had been a traditional center for the practice of *Candomble* (a combination of Yoruba and Christian practices similar to Voodoo).¹³⁸ Many runaway Africans sought refuge there and planned a detailed revolt against Bahia. The Africans first began by raiding some of the villages on the outskirts of the Reconcavo and then retreated back into the jungle. On this raid the insurrectionists attacked a white community in Cabula and killed a white family.¹³⁹ On December 16th, a small militia conducted a search for the Africans' *quilombo*, having found it a battle took place. The soldiers were surprised by the large number of Africans and were repulsed by the *quilombo* inhabitants. Three of the militia was killed (one mulatto and two white).¹⁴⁰ The militia was able after their defeat to escape.

On December 17th, the President Manuel Ignacio da Cunha, ordered Captain Jose' Balthazar da Silveira to lead an army cabula and Piraja to destroy the *quilombo* of Uruba. On their way to Uruba, they encountered the defeated militiamen and were forewarned about the number and strength of the insurrection. Thus, they proceeded with caution. However, the Africans had been waiting and prepared for battle. When the soldiers reached the *quilombo*, the Africans launched an attack wounding two men. The soldiers held their ground and killed three of the insurgents, causing them to take flight.¹⁴¹

The army managed to arrest only one slave, a woman by the name of Zeferina. She was one of the leaders of the rebellion and after being severely beaten and tortured, she revealed the plans and objectives of the revolt.¹⁴² She testified that the planned assault was first to be made upon Cabula as a diversionary maneuver. Then they would join more insurrectionists in the capital at Salvador, who were armed and waiting for the Africans from Uruba to arrive. They planned to attack the capital by night and take their liberty by killing all the whites they could find.¹⁴³ As a result of this alarming news, all the slave quarters of Salvador were searched and the fugitives in the jungle were tracked down. At least 23 Africans were captured in the jungle and 51 were killed. In the town fourteen arrests were made. In these homes the soldiers found various musical instruments, muskets, an iron spear, an eight cartridge belt filled with gunpowder, and *madeira* religious objects used in Yoruba fetish practices.¹⁴⁴ The revolt of Uruba alarmed the citizens of Bahia, causing them to unleash a general repression upon the people of African descent, slave or free. One of the ironies of this rebellion was that it was led by a mulatto, named Antonio. Thus, being the only slave revolt to be led by a mulatto. In spite of this, the Yoruba dominated this revolt because their fetish rites and leaders determined the direction and ideals of the revolt.¹⁴⁵

¹³⁶ Ibid., 129.

¹³⁷ Joao J. Reis, 101-102.

¹³⁸ Howard Prince, 130.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 131.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 132.

¹⁴¹ Joao J. Reis, 102-103.

¹⁴² Ibid., 103.

¹⁴³ Howard Prince, 134.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 136.

¹⁴⁵ Joao J. Reis, 104.

On April 27th, 1827 another slave revolt broke out in Cahoeira, led by the Yoruba slaves. The Africans armed themselves with whatever weapons they could find and attacked and burned the plantation called Victorio, killing two whites.¹⁴⁶ The revolt lasted for two days, after which, a militia was organized which resulted in the arrest of some thirty slaves. Their punishment was unknown.¹⁴⁷

The following year, 1828, four more revolts occurred in Bahia. The first happened on March 11th in the district of Piraja.¹⁴⁸ The second and third revolts occurred in Cachoeira on the 17th and the 21st of April. And the fourth revolt occurred on the 4th of June in Ilheus. Little is known about the causes or outcome of these uprisings, except that there were Yoruba dominated these revolts and that at least 20 Africans were killed, several whites and creoles were killed, and only 5 Africans were captured.

The following year, 1829, in Cotegipe, the Africans of Colonel Jose' Maria de Pina e Mello rebelled. This took place on October 16th. More than 100 Yoruba slaves killed some three whites and burned down crops and plantations.¹⁴⁹ Troops were dispatched to stop the rebellion, but local militia had already squelched the revolt. It was reported that extremely repressive measures were meted out to Africans, free and slave, guilty or innocent.¹⁵⁰

One of the more serious slave uprisings in Bahia broke out in the capital Salvador on the 10th of April, 1830. An estimated 20 Yoruba *de ganho* slaves raided a hardware store in the lower part of the town.¹⁵¹ More than fifteen swords and long knives were taken. From there the Africans went to the slave market of Wecelau Miguel de Almeida and liberated more than 100 newly arrived Yoruba.¹⁵² From there the rebels with their increased allies attacked the police station and killed one soldier, Francisco Lopes de Carvalho.¹⁵³ The police put up a successful defense and with the help of white and creole civilians drove the Africans off. A massacre followed where over fifty Africans were slaughtered and ten were lynched by the soldiers and the populace.¹⁵⁴ Of the Africans that were captured, one woman, Alexandria Joaquina da Conceicao, informed the authorities that the revolt of April 10th was the prelude to a major revolt planned for April 13th of that year. As a result of this information, more searches were conducted and at least seven Africans were arrested.¹⁵⁵

Because of the ruthlessness by which the whites and Creoles punished the Africans during the revolt, decreased the emergence of any revolts for at least five years. It is interesting that none of the free Creoles or poor whites assisted the Africans in their fight for freedom. The period from 1822 to 1830 witnessed many political changes and turmoil in Bahia. There was the war of Independence in 1822, the military revolts of 1823, the plebian riots of 1825, and the general disorder and tension created by the liberal, federalists and republican clashes of this period. However, never were the Africans enlisted in the clashes. The fact is that the common civilian as well as the elite of Bahian society had an invested interest in maintaining the slave system in Bahia. Anyone who had the means could own a slave, whether white, Creole or free African. In such cases the very livelihood of the individual depended upon the work of his slave. For this reason freemen, both white and otherwise helped squelch the slave uprisings. The only allies that the Africans had were the African born freemen who in many occasions joined the slave revolts.¹⁵⁶

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 106.

¹⁴⁷ Howard Prince, 139.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 140.

¹⁴⁹ Joao J. Reis, 108.

¹⁵⁰ Howard Prince, 145.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 146.

¹⁵² Joao J. Reis, 109

¹⁵³ Howard Prince, 147.

¹⁵⁴ Joao j. Reis, 109.

¹⁵⁵ Howard Prince, 148-149.

¹⁵⁶ Joao J. Reis, 111-112.

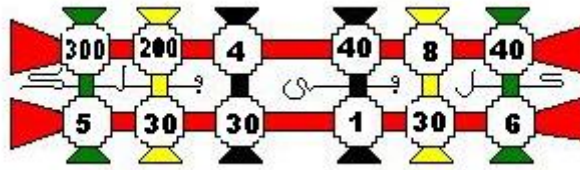
Another unique thing about the revolts of 1822 to 1830 is that not only did Yoruba people dominate them, but Yoruba religious beliefs also were utilized to unite the people. There is no mention of any Hausa, Yoruba, or Nupe Muslims participating in these revolts. The reason this may be is because after the Hausa Muslim led revolts of 1816, there was a general repression of Muslims, forcing them to abandon their religion or to take their religion underground. What must be noted is that *salaat* (congregational prayer) played a major role in galvanizing and inciting the Muslims to collective actions. Furthermore, the unique white dress and turban, and the Hausa war drums were prohibited in Bahia after the 1816 revolts. All these measures may have had negative impact on the morale of the Muslims, allowing for the traditional Yoruba to fill the vacuum of rebellion. Thus, from 1816 to 1830, a total of thirteen years, the Muslims were quiet or it seemed so. For in 1835, the largest most organized slave revolt would emerge, dominated by Muslims and cutting across many ethnic lines and class lines. This great slave insurrection is known in history as the "Revolt of the Males", which had no precedence in the history of Bahia based on its size, motives, objectives and reactions. This revolt, unlike earlier revolts, can be easily reconstructed because of the well-preserved documentation of the testimonies of its organization, leadership, planning and execution.¹⁵⁷



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¹⁵⁷ Howard Prince, 152.

The Great Islamic Revolt of 1835 or the 'Revolt of the Males'



We mentioned earlier that Islam as a religion was utilized as a mobilizing factor for the diverse ethnic groups of the Western and Central Sudan. We also discussed at length some elements of the diffusion of Islamic civilization in these regions of Africa. Proof was given of the transmigration of, some if not all of, these elements into the society of Bahia. Islam played a major role in the slave revolts of 1807 to 1816, where Hausa Muslims dominated these revolutions and directed its movement. This, however, did not mean that other ethnic groups were excluded. On the contrary, Malinkes were apart of the leadership of the revolt of 1807 and Yoruba Ewe converts participated in the revolts of 1809. However, the revolts of 1814 and 1816, seem to have been exclusively Hausa.¹⁵⁸

After the revolt of 1816, which was followed by a thorough repression of Muslim slaves in their religion, dress and customs, there seem to have been a withdrawal underground of the Muslim community and a change of tactics. From the revolts of 1822 until 1830, the slave revolts were dominated by Yoruba animist. There is however reports that a Yoruba Muslim slave named Cornelio took part in one of the revolts in 1826 and a free Nupe Muslim, Antonio Bomcaminho faced trial for his role in the revolt of 1828 and in supplying weapons to the Creole military conspiracy that same year.¹⁵⁹ It is clear that the Muslim made a cautious tactical withdrawal as a result of three decades of failure to realize their goals. This withdrawal took the form of a spiritual *hijra* where the Muslims could regroup for a few years until destiny could afford them to make a final attempt at overthrowing the repressive Bahian society. This tactic was not new to the Muslims. This was their methodology among the Yoruba, Asante and Dahomey animists until they were afforded the opportunity to establish the *jihad*. This tactic finds its precedents in Islamic jurisprudence, especially in the writings of the reformer who influenced the ideas of Muslims in the whole of the Sudan, *Shehu Uthman Dan Fuduye'*. In his famous book on *hijra, jihad*, and Islamic governance - he says;

"...emigration from the lands of the disbelievers is obligatory upon every Muslim...and nobody is excused for neglecting it except the oppressed. Allah says; 'Except the oppressed from among men, women and children who have not the means', i.e. who have neither power nor funds to emigrate, 'Nor can they find a way to escape,' i.e. a way towards a land into which they can emigrate, as al-Suyuti said in his *Takmila*."¹⁶⁰

There is no doubt this was the situation of the Muslims of Bahia. The aim of the 1807 revolt was to "commandeer ships in order to go back to Africa". After this physical *hijra* failed, they attempted *jihad*. It was only after these attempts failed that they were forced to withdraw within themselves until an opportunity for success was afforded them. This tactic in Islamic terminology is called *taqiyya* (dissimulation) and is allowed when the Muslims are oppressed and do not have the means to make the *hijra* or to conduct the *jihad*. The main advantage of *taqiyya* is that it gives the opportunity for the Muslim scholars to mix with the people and proselytize on behalf of the religion. The legal precedent for this was again given by Uthman Dan Fuduye';

"If Islam could be granted victory in the lands of disbelief then that would become thereby an abode of Islam. It is better to remain there than to leave, since it may be expected that others would accept Islam....Dissimulation

¹⁵⁸ Howard Prince, 246.

¹⁵⁹ Antonio was a gunsmith with a shop in Salvador. See Joao J. Reis, 159.

¹⁶⁰ Uthman dan Fodiyo, *Bayan Wujuub'l-Hijra*, 52.

(*taqiyya*) should only be practiced when one is in fear of being killed and then with a sincere motive."¹⁶¹

The traditions from which these intellectual traditions had emerged had diffused throughout Hausaland, Nupe and Yorubaland by 1835. The books of *Shehu* Uthman Dan Fuduye', Muhammad Bello and especially Abdullahi Dan Fuduye' were memorized by the scholars of Illorin and Nupe, not to speak of the scholars of Hausaland. We can safely assume that if there were indeed full-fledged Muslim scholars captured and enslaved in Bahia, they were quite familiar with the ideas of *Shehu* Uthman and his chief helpers. Especially since Illorin and Nupe were under the political jurisdiction of the Sokoto Caliphate.

There were at least ten Muslim scholars who conceived, organized and led the revolt of 1835. *Shaykh* Dandara, *Shaykh* Sanim, *Malam* Bubakar Ahuna, *Malam* Bilal Licutan, *Imam* Manuel Calafate, Silvestre Jose Antonio, Antonio, Thomas, Dassala, and Nicobe. These men established mosque and Islamic *madrasas* (schools) for the purpose of keeping alive the Islamic traditions that had generated the Sudanese Islamic states in Africa. Some of these scholars were Yoruba, some Hausa, and some were Nupe. A few of these scholars were freemen and merchants, while others remained enslaved to men whom they considered barbarian. Many court records of 1835 reveal that a strong movement of Islamic conversion and proselytism was under way in Bahia during the 1830s. It was the above scholars who were essentially responsible for this growth in the ranks of the Muslims.¹⁶² In order to understand the revolt of 1835, closer examination should be made of these scholars.

The first of them was *Shaykh* Dandara, the freedman Hausa tobacco merchant. The whites of Bahia called him, Elesbao do Carmo. *Shaykh* Dandara was a teacher of Islam back in Africa among the Hausa and Fulani of Tambawel.¹⁶³ The unique thing about Dandara was that he participated in the Islamic revolt of 1816 in the count of Arcos some 20 years earlier. He managed to escape undetected because as witnesses testified, "because he is smart he always avoided arrest".¹⁶⁴ After his escape he resumed his trade as a tobacco seller. He rented a shop in the Santa Barbara neighborhood of Salvador, where he established a mosque and *madrasa*.¹⁶⁵ In this shop his African students met to perform the daily prayers and to learn from him the fundamentals of the Islamic religion. Of all the Muslim scholars, he was the most prosperous, having a house in the Caminho Novo do Gravata. He made frequent business trips into the Reconcavo among the rural plantation districts.¹⁶⁶ In this way he was able to take the Islamic message among the Muslims and non-Muslims in the rural area. His zeal in calling the Africans to Islam was corroborated by at least five witnesses during his trial. A mulatto tailor who lived above the shop said about him,

"I often saw him distributing rings and books with unknown writings...and several times I saw him with a big rosary, praying and rubbing it against his hands and shouting to the sky."¹⁶⁷

The Brazilian born mulattos and whites demonstrated their ignorance of Islamic practices on many occasions during and after the revolts. The above citation is an example of this sought of ignorance. There is no doubt that the books, which Dandara was giving to his students, were Arabic books, or even perhaps copies of the Qur'an. The "big rosary" which Dandara "rubbed against his hands" was called a *sibha*, which does resemble a rosary and with which a Muslim recites the Names of Allah, meditates and prays. Because of *Shaykh* Dandara's freedom, he provided information to all the different Muslim centers in Bahia, and sometimes he would donate funds to manumit some of his Muslim brothers. He was a key element in the organization of the revolt of 1835 and a scholar who nurtured the ideas of

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 55 & 59.

¹⁶² Joao J. Reis, 148.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 146.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 159.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 152.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 178.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

Islamic revolution in the minds of his young students. Because of his participation in the last Muslim revolt of 1816, he possessed sound advice and council on the maneuvers of troops and militia.



Fig: 4 -An example of the *tessebe* or *tasbih* used by the African Muslims of Bahia to perform meditation and remembrance of Allah.

The second of the Muslim scholars who organized the revolt was *Shaykh* Sanim, whose slave name was Luis. He was a Nupe by lineage and was a merchant back in his land. There he acted as an *alfa*, teaching the young and old the fundamentals of Islam. In Bahia, he was a slave who belonged to Pedro Ricardo da Silva.¹⁶⁸ Because of his lack of freedom one of the Yoruba Muslim freedmen established part of his own house, located on Oracao in the downtown area of Salvador, as a mosque and *madrassa* for *Shaykh* Sanim to teach.¹⁶⁹ He was advanced in age with gray hair and a thick gray beard, average stature and a large forehead. He worked as a tobacco roller and lived in the same house as he master. He could not speak Portuguese in spite of his long stay in Bahia. However, he could speak Yoruba, Hausa, Arabic and his mother tongue, Nupe.¹⁷⁰ He was a dedicated preacher of Islam, being known for his patience and tolerance towards his students. Most of his students were young men averaging between the age of 25 to 30. The freedman who owned the house, which housed the mosque told the authorities during his inquisition, "Sanim taught me and the other Males our prayers."¹⁷¹ *Shaykh* Sanim also collected *zakat* or poor alms from his students every month which he used for three functions: one to buy or make Muslim garments; another to pay daily sum owed to the master by Africans for not working on Friday; and the third portion was to help buy letters of manumission. The amount of the *zakat* was 320 reis per month, which

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 175.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 152. This Yoruba Muslim slave name was 'Gaspar da Silva Cunha.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 175.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

amounted to about one days work for a slave.¹⁷² Sanim was a very practical person who was highly respected even by his master.



Map of Pernambuco the center of *Malam* Abu Bakr Ahuna's revolutionary activity

The third and most important leader of the 1835 revolt was *Malam* Bubakar Ahuna, an extremely erudite Yoruba scholar who was distinguished among the Muslim community and highly loved. He was a man of average stature with four tribal marks on each side of his face. He belonged to a man who lived in the Rua das Flores.¹⁷³ *Malam* Bubakar was the *almamy*, or spiritual leader of the Muslim communities of the whole of Bahia, Pernambuco, Ilheus and Sergipe.¹⁷⁴ He was considered by his followers to be a holy man (*wali*) who possessed *baraka* (or spiritual power) that earned him the love of all the Muslims.¹⁷⁵ He, like *Shaykh* Sanim was advanced in age and his slave status increased the tension between the Muslims and the Bahian slave system. As a slave he could not dedicate himself to teaching as he liked nor address the spiritual needs of his community. Furthermore, he was subjected to humiliation, which naturally outraged the Muslim community of Bahia.¹⁷⁶ *Malam* Bubakar taught at a mosque on Victoria Street built by two Yoruba slaves named Jaime and Joao.¹⁷⁷ In this mosque many Muslims met for the congregational prayer and the Friday *juma`a* prayer. Dinner parties were served in this mosque where Muslims could get meals, which were prepared in accordance to Muslim dietary laws. The Muslims also met at this mosque for special occasions like *lailat'l-mi`raj* (the Night Journey of the Prophet), *lailat'l-qadr* (the Night of Power) and the two *eid* prayers to mark the end of *Ramadan* fasting and the *Hajj*.¹⁷⁸ And it was from this mosque that the initial instructions for the slave revolt took place. Less than two months before the revolt on the 29th of November 1834, the Muslims met to

¹⁷² Ibid., 176.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 171-172.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 163.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 179.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 156.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

celebrate with many Africans worshipping, learning and teaching, and enjoying food - when a block inspector broke into the gathering and forced them to cease their activities. After the Muslims dispersed the mosque was torn down and *Malam* Bubakar was placed in chains by his master and forcibly sent to Santo Amaro. At that humiliating moment, his companions among the scholars and his disciples accompanied him to the harbor where he was to take the boat to Santo Amaro.¹⁷⁹ What the authorities did not know was that *Malam* Bubakar had long ago organized the revolt, which was to strike Bahia in the coming months. At least six months prior to the attack upon the mosque, *Malam* Bubakar had composed an Arabic document that called for the unity of all the Muslims of Brazil, a declaration of *jihad* against the whites and Creoles, and a proclamation that no harm would come to the Muslims.¹⁸⁰ Thus, the general order for revolt came from the very mouth and pen of *Malam* Bubakar.

It was during this period that police noted that the Muslims were becoming more and more self-assured. They began to show intolerance to Africans who did not accept Islam. One of the animist Yoruba recalled the attitude of the Yoruba Muslims,

"The Nagos (Yorubas) who knew how to read and associated with the insurrection neither shook hands nor treated the other (Nagos) well, calling them *kafiri* (unbelievers) with disdain."¹⁸¹

Those Africans who embraced the Catholic faith were singled out as polytheist and pagans. One of the African women named Marcelina, who was the slave property of a nun recalled this vociferous criticism from the Muslims, "They said I attended mass and worshipped a piece of wood on an altar because the images were not saints."¹⁸² This aggressive spirit exemplified by the Muslims of Bahia was no doubt inspired by their teacher and guide *Malam* Bubakar. The humiliation which he and other scholars who were slaves received at the hands of the Brazilians added to the general repression which Muslims received as a whole in Bahia. The aspirations of the Muslims were all focused upon *Malam* Bubakar and in spite of his status as a slave, he would chart the course for the revolt that would take place in 1835.

The next Muslim scholar and key player in the 1835 revolution was *Imam* Pacifico Licutan, who was known as *Malam* Bilal among his disciples. He was described as an elderly man, tall and thin with a small beard. Like *Malam* Bubakar, he had tribal scars on his cheeks.¹⁸³ He was Yoruba and the *de ganho* slave of Antonio de Mesquita Varella. *Malam* Bilal was highly esteemed among the Muslim community of Bahia. This no doubt was because of his learning and his unselfish patience in teaching others. His status and esteem among the freedmen and slaves of Bahia provoked the jealousy of some of the Christian monks who plotted to put a halt to the increasing influence which *Malam* Bilal had upon the African populous.¹⁸⁴ He rented a room together with another Muslim named Joaquim and established it as a mosque and *madrasa*. At this mosque *Malam* Bilal frequently slaughtered sheep in accordance with Islamic custom to feed the students who gathered around him during the day.¹⁸⁵ There gathered around him men and women who loved him dearly. Even those who were non-Muslim were afraid to disrespect or defame him for fear of death. His master was a professed medical doctor and was extremely cruel towards Bilal. On two occasions his students collected money among themselves and from the *zakat* of *Shaykh* Sanim in order to purchase his freedom and on both occasions Antonio refused and refrained from returning the money as well. This cruel slave master had debts with the above mentioned Christian monks for an unnamed sum. The monks used that as a pretext to further humiliate *Malam* Bilal by having him jailed and later to be sold on auction in order to meet the debt that Antonio owed

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 172.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 162.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 157.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 173.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 155.

the monks. This happened just two months before the revolt was to take place and heightened tensions between the Bahians and the Muslim community. Some scholars believe this incident was the main cause for the slave revolt. However, the revolt of 1835 had been in the planning at least two years prior to 1834. Even though the monks attempted to humiliate *Malam Bilal* by placing him in jail, yet this act of repression only seemed to reinforce his status as a holy man (*wali*). The jailer in the prison where he was jailed said,

"Though he is in prison, he has a lot of power, so much so that after he was arrested African men and women jammed Licutan's cell, every day and every hour...and everyone kneeled with great respect to ask for his blessings."¹⁸⁶

All this took place during the month of *Ramadan*, when all the Muslims were fasting and trying to get closer to Allah. All this seem to have increased the belief that *Malam Bilal* possessed mystical powers which induced people to come to him at all hours. However, there is another reason for the coming and going to *Malam Bilal's* cell. His cell became one of the *casebres* from which the revolt was organized. Every day he sent instructions to the *casebres* in the city and in the rural areas and they in turn sent messages to him.¹⁸⁷ All this happened under the very noses of the Bahian authorities.

The next Muslim scholar who led and organized the revolt of 1835 was *Imam Manuel Calafate*. He was a freedman of Yoruba origin and a caulker by profession. He lived in a house which belonged to another Yoruba freedman *Aprigio* located in *Ladeira da Praca* street.¹⁸⁸ This house was also established as a mosque and *madrassa* where Muslims met to perform the prayer, to celebrate and to plan the liberation of the Muslim community. *Malam Manuel Calafate* was probably the most essential person in the organization of the revolt. According to one witness, *Maria Clara da Costa Pinto*, who lived across the street from the *malam's* house,

"He gathered others of his nation in that place...whom he taught how to write with pens with an ink they had in bottles and several times I also saw them teaching each other prayers in their language."¹⁸⁹

Along with teaching, *Malam Manuel*, or "Father Manuel" as his students called him, was responsible for organizing *casebres* all over the *Reconcavo* rural plantations and villages. In these areas *Malam Manuel* converted many non-Muslim Yoruba to the religion of Islam and promised them their freedom by joining the revolt and eternal salvation for entering the fold of Islam.¹⁹⁰ His efforts were quite successful because on his return to *Salvador* there were reports of freedmen and unknown Africans (perhaps runaway slaves) from the rural towns of *Santo Amaro* and from as far as *Cachoeira* going in and out of his house just three days before the revolt.¹⁹¹ Evidence demonstrates that he was the military strategists of the revolt and was to lead the military maneuvers.¹⁹²

Other key figures who were Muslim teachers in this revolt included *Silverstre Jose Antonio*. He was a wealthy Hausa freedman and trader who made frequent trips into the rural areas of *Reconcavo* trading and organizing the revolt.¹⁹³ There was *Antonio*, who had studied Islam in *Hausaland*.¹⁹⁴ He was a teacher of Islam and was a trader of amulets to Muslim and non-Muslim alike.¹⁹⁵ His regular profession was a fisherman and he lived out on the *Itapagipe Peninsula*.¹⁹⁶ There was *Thomas* who belonged to an Englishman, named *Federick Robillard*. He helped build the famous mosque located on *Victoria street* where most of the Muslims

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 174.

¹⁸⁷ Howard Prince, 153.

¹⁸⁸ Joao J. Reis, 176-177.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 152.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 160.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 161.

¹⁹² Ibid., 177.

¹⁹³ Ibid., 149.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 146-147.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 150.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 224.

congregated. Thomas was one of the teachers in this mosque, who taught recitation of the Qur'an and Arabic language.¹⁹⁷ There was Dassalu who was very advanced in Islamic knowledge and a chief organizer of the revolt. Finally, there was Nicobe Sule' or *Malam* Sulayman, who acted as *Imam* in the Victoria street mosque during the fast of *Ramadan* in 1834, at least two months before the revolt.¹⁹⁸ He was a teacher back in the land of Yoruba and continued that function in Bahia.¹⁹⁹

The profile of the Muslim scholars and leadership in Bahia demonstrates the egalitarian feature that Islam is known to have in regard to the recruitment of its clergy. From the earliest time of Islam, as mentioned earlier, slaves moved up the social ladder based upon the amount of Islamic knowledge they possessed, which was also a key feature of Islam in Africa. Most of the *malams*, *alfas*, and *almamys* in Bahia were slaves, yet they were respected and revered by the African Muslim community, by slaves and freedmen alike. *Malam* Bilal and *Malam* Bubakar Ahuna were holy men who were constantly sought after for their spiritual power and intellectual leadership. What is also common about these leaders is that most of them were aged 50 and above, which heightened their prestige among the African community.

It should be noted that Joao Reis has pointed out that many of the freedmen who participated in the revolt of 1835, were themselves merchants who were in contact with what was happening in their homeland.²⁰⁰ This point is very important because it demonstrates the likeliness of contact between the Muslim scholars of Bahia and the Muslim scholars in Yorubaland, Nupe or even Hausaland. Among these men who were merchants and who were also essential in the revolt were *Shaykh* Dandara, *Malam* Manuel Calafate, Silvestre Jose Antonio, Jorge da Cruz Barboza, Jose Francisco Goncalves, Gaspar da Silva Cunha, Amora Ba, and Ajadi Luis Duple. All of these men were freedmen and especially Jorge da Cruz, Amora Ba and Gaspar da Silva were involved with direct trade with the Bight of Benin.²⁰¹ It is valid here to conclude that if they could speak and write Arabic as demonstrated earlier, there is a great possibility of some communication between them and the Muslims in Africa. However, no evidence from the written documents has as yet proved that. However, these merchants were informed with events which were happening in their homeland, as Reis demonstrates,

"African merchants brought fresh news from West Africa, keeping alive the links with the homeland, and spreading the word of Islam, along with the goods they sold, throughout the Reconvaco."²⁰²

One of these African merchants who made frequent business trips to West Africa was a Kanuri Muslim named Jose. This man was a freedman and the fact that he was from the Kanuri, there is no doubt that he was in contact with the Muslims of the northern regions of Central Sudan.²⁰³ This fact allows us to say without hesitation that the African Muslims were aware of the major events which were happening in their Muslim homeland, especially when many of the incoming Africans from the Bight of Benin were the physical evidence of those cataclysmic events. Among them was the conquering of Alkalawa the capital of the Gobir state by the armies of *Shehu* Uthman Dan Fuduye' in 1807-1808.²⁰⁴ It is highly probable that the Muslims involved with the revolt of 1807 were influenced by events in Hausaland. Another major event was the conquering of the capital of Yorubaland, Oyo, by Hausa, Fulani and Yoruba Muslims under the banner of the Sokoto Caliphate in 1816.²⁰⁵ This news could

¹⁹⁷ Howard Prince, 153-154.

¹⁹⁸ Joao J. Reis, 178.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 226.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 222-225.

²⁰² Ibid., 126.

²⁰³ Ibid., 300-301.

²⁰⁴ Murray Last, 39-40.

²⁰⁵ Mahdi Adams, 175-176.

have fueled the last Hausa dominated revolt of that same year in Bahia. And finally, in 1835 Muhammad Bello the ruler of Sokoto led an army that included the *Amir* of Kontogoro, the *Amir* of Gwandu, the *Amir* of Nupe and the *Amir* of Illorin deeper into the lands of the Yoruba and beyond the Benue River. This was a major military campaign and affected all the surrounding countries. There can be no doubt that slaves who were captured and sold as a result of these wars brought news into Bahia of the expansion of the Sokoto Caliphate into the southern regions of the Benue River. This news brought with it encouragement and confidence which seemed to be the general attitude of Muslims of Bahia during that time.



Fig: 6 -The Muslim women of Bahia.

The Muslim community of Bahiã had a very cohesive society in spite of their condition as slaves. What we know from the evidence is that the African Muslims, both slave and freedmen, met for the obligatory Friday prayer called *juma`a*. This is significant because according to classical texts of Islam the Friday prayer was the most important prayer of the week. There could be no excuse for a Muslim missing it except for sickness or death. For this reason *Shaykh* Sanim collected a monthly *sadaqa* (alms) of 320 *reis* from all the Muslims, slaves and freedmen. Some of these funds would be used to pay the daily sum owed to the masters by slaves who took off from work to pray the Friday prayer.²⁰⁶ This demonstrates that the Muslims took their Islamic customs quite serious and they were not nominal Muslims as some scholars have suggested.²⁰⁷

The Muslims often met every day to perform the obligatory prayers, learn the fundamentals of Islam and to memorize the Qur'an. After the rebellion, the police seized more than one hundred writings boards called *allo* in Hausa or *wala* in Yoruba.²⁰⁸ This no doubt was taken from the Arabic word *al-lawh* which was a flat wooden board about 10 inches by 2 feet. It was used by Muslims to write down those lessons they were to memorize. This instrument was used all over the Sudan for instructions and memorization and is still used today throughout Muslim Africa.

²⁰⁶ Joao J. Reis, 175-176.

²⁰⁷ Raymond K. Kent made a pretentious study of the Brazilian revolt relying heavily upon the biased opinions of Nina Rodrigues and Etienne, but underestimated the role of Islam in the revolt of 1835 and pushed the argument of denying the obvious Islamic characteristics of these movements to an extreme. See Kent, Raymond K. "African Revolt in Bahia: 24-25 January 1835", *Journal of African History*, 3, 4 (Summer 1970): 334-356.

²⁰⁸ Joao J. Reis, 153.

There were more than twenty mosque in Salvador where Muslims would congregate and worship. Sometimes these mosques only amounted to one room or two rooms inside of a house.²⁰⁹ Women were conspicuously absent from these meetings with the exception of *Imam Dandara's* wife who would often serve food and give rings to new Muslims.²¹⁰ There is no legal prohibition for women being in the mosque except during times of monthly menstruation. Therefore, I assume the absence of women in the mosque was only due to the size of the small rooms that could not accommodate women. To these mosques the African Muslim community would dress in their distinctive white *jalabiyas* (long shirts), white skull caps and white turbans. In Bahia these garments were called *abada*.²¹¹ This word is a corruption of the Arabic word *`ibaada* which means all forms of worship. These clothes were never worn in public, especially after the 1816 slave revolt. This was out of fear of persecution from the Bahian authorities. Thus, these clothes were only worn during the congregational prayers and the Islamic classes. It was not until the Salvador revolt, were these white garments seen on the streets of Salvador.²¹²

There were many customs that the Muslim community of Bahia kept alive in order to maintain their cohesiveness and unity. One of these customs was the carrying of the *tesseba*, which the Brazilians called "pagan's rosary".²¹³ As mentioned earlier these *tesseba* were used in meditation and liturgical practices where the names of Allah were repeated a number of times. Another custom that the Bahian Muslims innovated and adopted was the use of rings as a way of identifying one another. These rings functioned as "Male badges" as a symbol of belonging to the Muslim community of Bahia.²¹⁴

Another major custom which the Muslims of Bahia practiced which acted as an agent of socialization was the feeding of food. Every one of the twenty mosque of Salvador served food every day to its members. According to many witnesses the Muslims strictly observed food taboos and often met to eat together. Malam Bilal was reported to have, "frequently killed rams and organized meetings with his comrades in his room during the day".²¹⁵ This was a practice performed in all the mosque and meeting places of Bahia. The utility of this was the fact that the Muslims had no place to obtain food that was prepared in accordance with Islamic law. Another reason could have been purely religious, because apart of ones excellence Islam was the feeding of guest. It was reported that Prophet Muhammad was asked about the best Islam. He replied, "The best Islam is *to feed food to others*, and to give the greetings of peace to those whom you know and to those whom you do not know."²¹⁶

These customs united the Muslims and were evidences that there was the persistence of a historical conscience among the Muslims of Bahia. This historical conscience unified the disparate elements of the African Muslims and made them into a whole. It engendered in them qualities that made them distinguished from the population of Bahia. This distinction did not in any way alienate them from the non-Muslims of African descent, but worked to attract other Africans of various ethnic origins who might have lose their sense of historical conscience as a result of the system of slavery. This was the cause of many of the Yoruba accepting Islam and some of the non-Muslim Africans joining the revolt of 1835. The religion of Islam acted as the cultural weapon that cemented the Africans into an effective force against the cultural aggression and repression of Bahia. The effectiveness of this force was seen in the final but most organized slave revolt to take place in the history of Bahia.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 151.

²¹⁰ Ibid., 154.

²¹¹ Ibid., 150.

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ Ibid., 154.

²¹⁴ Ibid., 151.

²¹⁵ Ibid., 155.

²¹⁶ Uthman Dan Fufuye', *'Umdat al-'Ulama*, trans. Muhammad Shareef, (Sankore' Institute, Pittsburgh), 1993, 52.

The conspiratorial centers of the revolt were only four of the twenty mosques, which were situated in certain homes or rooms in Bahia. These centers were the mosque of Manuel Calafate, the house of Belchior da Silva Cunha, the mosque in the tobacco shop of Dandara and the mosque of Victoria Street.²¹⁷ It seems that the mosque on Victoria Street stood at the forefront of the revolutionary organization. This was because the Imam of this mosque was none other than the chief Imam Malam Bubakar Ahuna, the leader of all the Muslims of Brazil. The members of this mosque consisted of several free African Muslims and slaves owned by English residents in the city. One of the main assistance to Malam Bubakar was the fiery and zealous slave named Thomas. He assisted the Malam in teaching the members the prayers, Arabic and how to recite the Qur'an. According to trial testimony,

"The straw house was built by the partners Jamie and Diogo, for the purpose of uniting all their countrymen, where they often had dinner and conversed,...and where there gathered all Yoruba slaves of Englishmen, and boatmen who came from the City, and other slaves of Brazilians...including Sule, Pedro, Carlos, Joao, Nelson, Antonio, Mama, Burema, Cornelio, Martinho, Ricardo, Thomas, Tomp, Luiz...On the afternoon of the 24th of January some of members...advised him that they would all gather that night for the purpose of killing all the whites, *pardos*, and creoles."²¹⁸

Along with the various mosques, the most active organizers of the revolt were the African Muslim boatmen who worked in the harbor. They passed the news of the revolt by word of mouth. And it was perhaps by them that ships would be commandeered, if needed, to return back to Africa. The first stage of the revolt was the conversion of as many Africans as possible to the faith of Islam.²¹⁹ This explains the accelerated pace at which Africans came into the religion just prior to the revolt in 1835. They were very secretive with regard the exact date of the revolt. This no doubt was a result of the failure of the previous slave revolts. Some of the rebels were veterans of these revolts, like Imam Dandara, who fought in the revolt of 1816.

There are many factors, which could have motivated the Muslims to consider that there was a possibility for victory against the Bahian authorities. The first of them could have been the news of the successes of the Islamic armies throughout the Central Sudan back in Africa. As mentioned earlier there were African Muslims traveling back and forth between Bahia and the Bight of Benin. Therefore, it is highly probable that the news of the successes of the Muslim armies did reach Bahia. Another factor which could have contributed to the confidence of the Muslim of Bahia was the fact of the solidarity created by the fasting of the Islamic months of Rajab, Shaban and Ramadan. It has been reported that Muslims increased their fasting of these months in order to mobilize the courage for the impending revolt.

The Muslims sent out commissioners throughout the Brazilian Reconcavo in order to expand the Muslim community. These commissioners were those African Muslims who were freedmen who had the freedom of movement and who would not be suspect for the coming to and fro in Bahia. They were *Imam Dandara*, and *Imam Manuel Calafate*. These businessmen were both Islamic teachers who mixed business with religious proselytizing.²²⁰ It must be noted that this was a common feature for the spread of Islam throughout Africa. And it was still persistent among the Africans of Bahia. Enslaved Africans like *Malam Bubakar Ahuna* used to work between Santo Amaro and Salvador. This allowed him to travel back and forth to organize and teach the Muslims the fundamentals of the faith. Because he was the *almamy* of the entire Muslim community of Brazil, there is no doubt that the revolt revolved around his words and activities. Other centers for the revolt or *casebres* included the churchyard of Pelourinho, the cemetery of Campos Cantos and later the jail of Ajuda where *Malam Bilal Licutan* had been jailed. In these *casebres* were stored all the weapons which were purchased

²¹⁷ Joao J. Reis, 158.

²¹⁸ Howard Prince, 154.

²¹⁹ Joao J. Reis, 158.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 160.

by *Malam Sanim* using the funds collected from the *sadaqa*. Some of these weapons were supplied by the African gunsmith Antonio Bomcaminho.²²¹

The date of the revolt was chosen to be during Ramadan while the Muslims were fasting and gathering spiritual strength. The exact date was January 25, 1835, which corresponded with the 27th of *Ramadan*.²²² This date is usually considered as the time of the *Lailat'l-Qadr*, one of the most auspicious nights for Muslims, because in this night the Qur'an was revealed and the Muslims can gain strong support from Allah and his Angels. This date also corresponded with the Bahian holiday *Nossa Senhora da Guia*. During this time the majority of the white population would be attending mass at the church of Bomfim, and large numbers of Bahian soldiers had been withdrawn from Salvador in order to suppress a separatist movement in Rio Grande do Sul.²²³ Again like all the Muslim revolts of the past, the revolt would begin after the dawn prayer called *fajr*.

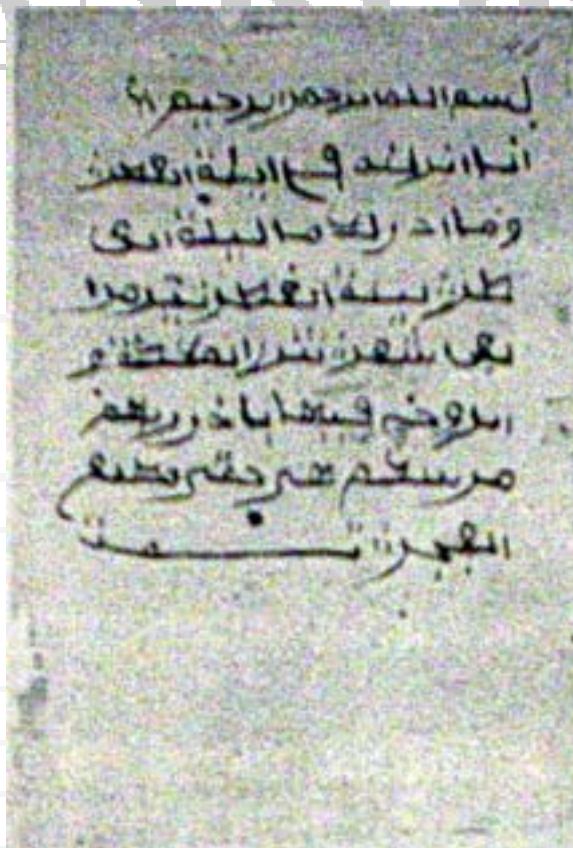


Fig: 7 - A copy of an Arabic manuscript belonging to Aman Felicia an *escravo* Muslim slave. It is a copy of the *Surat al-Qadr*, and it highlights the significance that the 'night of power' had to the success of the revolt.

A word should be said about the relationship between the Muslim prayer and military activity. In the Islamic history of Black Africa, prayer has often played a decisive role in preparation for war and victory. The Muslim prayer or *salat* consists of the five daily prayers - morning (*fajr*), noon (*dhuhr*), afternoon (*asr*), sunset (*maghrib*), and night (*'isha*). Added to these was the weekly congregational prayer on Friday called *Juma`a*, and the prayers on the two great festivals, that marking the end of Ramadan and the end of Pilgrimage. All the above prayers are obligations upon every Muslim, but beyond these there are the prayers conducted for special occasions. They include the rain prayer (*salat'l-istisqa*), the fear prayer (*salat'l-khawf*), the eclipse prayers (*salat'l-khusuf*) and the prayer for guidance (*salat'l-istikhara*). Prayer had three major functions: instrumental, ceremonial and disciplinary.²²⁴ In

²²¹ Ibid., 159.

²²² Ibid., 164.

²²³ Howard Prince, 156.

²²⁴ Humphrey J. Fisher, "Prayer and Military Activity in the History of Muslim Africa South of the Sahara", *Journal of African History*, XII, 3 (1971), 393-394.

Bahia the prayer served and instrumental purpose when the Muslims gathered to ask Allah to give them victory over the disbelievers of Bahia. It served a ceremonial purpose when in Bahia the Muslims were brought together in a form that distinguished them from the other Africans of Bahia, with their distinctive dress. The disciplinary character of prayer served to marshal the African Muslims of Bahia and to train them in strict obedience to set forms. For military purposes it was the instrumental and disciplinary function of prayer that was of importance. It was for this reason that the Muslims of Bahia would always initiate their revolts just after the dawn prayer. It was a way of disciplining the Muslims and uniting them behind a single leadership, and it was effective in catching the enemies asleep and off-guard. The instrumental function was the belief in the effectiveness of the dawn prayer in assistance in attaining one's goals. The Qur'an says, "*And recite the Qur'an in prayer during the dawn, for verily the recitation of Qur'an during the dawn is surely witnessed by Allah.*"²²⁵



The revolt of 1835 was well planned and kept secret for more than a year. However, certain events occurred that caused the revolt to be betrayed before it could get off the ground. Howard Prince correctly points out, "Considering the numbers involved, it is somewhat surprising that the entire affair did not reveal itself long before the ultimate expose' occurred."²²⁶ The first incident which brought attention to the organization of the Muslims was the episode which occurred at the Victoria street mosque about two months before the revolt. This incident revolved around the celebration of Prophet Muhammad's ascent to the heavens, called *Lailat'l-Miraj*. The celebration occurred on the 26th of *Rajab*, which fell during the final weeks of November 29, 1834. The Muslims gathered at the Victoria street mosque to pray and eat. There were a large number of Muslims from all over Salvador, including all

²²⁵ Uthman Dan Fuduye', *'Umdat al-'Ulama*, 37.

²²⁶ Howard Prince, 156.

the Imams of the city who met under the leadership of *Malam* Bubakar Ahuna. This no doubt attracted the attention of the block inspector Antonia Marques, who promptly broke up the gathering.²²⁷ The mosque was then torn down and later Malam Bubakar Ahuna was put in handcuffs by his master and sent to Santo Amaro.²²⁸ Another important figure who was present at this gathering was *Malam* Bilal Licutan. He too was arrested under trumped up charges by the Catholic monks that same week and placed in the jail of Ajuda.²²⁹ Both *Malam* Bubakar and *Malam* Bilal were the two leading figures of the revolt, thus with their arrest and the destruction of the central mosque on Victoria street, the Muslims felt they had good reason to revolt. In spite of *Malam* Bubakar's exile, he was able to organize the Muslims in Santo Amaro for the revolt for more than two months. *Malam* Bilal organized and coordinated the revolt from his cell in the Ajuda prison for two months.

With the occurrence of these three events there is no wonder that news of the revolt began to slip out to outsiders. On January 24, 1835, one day before the revolt, a Yoruba freedman named Domingos Fortunato, reported that he overheard some of the Muslim boatmen in the harbor comment on the arrival in Salvador of enslaved Muslim from Santo Amaro, who had come to join their leader *Malam* Bubakar in a revolt to occur the following morning.²³⁰ Another incident occurred when a Yoruba freedwoman named Sabina da Cruz and her companion Guilhermina went to a white neighbor named Jose' Pinto da Silveira and told him that they overheard some of the Muslims say that "at dawn, when the slaves came to the public fountains to take water, they would incite them to rebel with the help of people who had come from Santo Amaro".²³¹ This white man then went and informed the justice of the peace Jose' Mendes da Costa Coelho. He along with the commander of the municipal police, Colonel Manoel Coelho de Almeida Sande went to the President's palace and informed the President of Bahia, Francisco de Souza Martins.²³² This occurred at 10:30 p.m. January 24th about seven hours before the revolt was scheduled to take place. The President took immediate steps to meet the crisis. He first warned the Chief of Police, Francisco Goncalves Martins to double the patrols in all the districts of the city. He also notified the naval officers of the frigate *Bahiana* to stand ready to seize any slaves attempting to escape by sea.²³³

At about 11:00 p.m. the Chief of Police was ordered to make a search of all the homes of the Africans living in Salvador and to arrest any suspicious person found in the streets.²³⁴ Sabina had informed the authorities where the main headquarters of the revolt was. So at about 1 a.m. the Justice of the Peace along with his police arrived at a two story building on Ladeira da Praca street. The white owner of the building informed them that suspicious blacks had gathered in the basement that had been rented by two free African Muslims, *Malam* Manuel Calafate and Aprigio. Inside the mosque the last preparations were being made for the uprising and food and drink was being served to many African Muslims who had gathered there. One of the captive Muslims named Pompeu, recounted the events of that early morning,

" who was told to go in, and he went down to a big basement and there he found many blacks who were armed with swords and spears and they gave him food and drink and told him what to do at dawn. He was eating and drinking when the soldiers arrived and then the other blacks told him: 'there is no other way, we have to rise now!' "²³⁵

The Muslims intended to set fires at various points in the city in order to confuse and divert the police. They expected then to attract other non-Muslim slaves to the revolt. They

²²⁷ Joao J. Reis, 156.

²²⁸ Ibid., 179.

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Ibid., 127.

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² Howard Prince, 159.

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ Joao J. Reis, 128.

²³⁵ Ibid., 130.

also intended to free *Malam* Bilal Lucutan from the jail at Ajuda and seize one of the military barracks. From there they would take the whole city.²³⁶ Unfortunately, these plans were disrupted by the police invasion of the mosque of *Malam* Manuel Calafate. After initial questioning, the police decided to break down the door to the mosque, when suddenly, a series of gunshots were fired from the back room. This caused the death of one soldier, Francisco Joaquim de Castro. After that, about sixty African Muslims, armed with pistols, swords, knives and spears, forced their way into the street. They were dressed in white tunics tied at the waist by a red sash and some had on white turbans and others blue or red skullcaps. The soldiers and officials being considerably outnumbered fled for safety.²³⁷ After this initial encounter, one soldier was killed and two wounded, while one rebel was killed. One of the eye-witnesses to this encounter said,

"I heard shootings and loud voices and ran to the window to see where they were coming from and saw a group of black Africans with white barrets and big shirts over their pants, who, armed with swords, were coming in the direction of the Palace Square and just behind this group came another, also armed with swords..."²³⁸

This incident forced the revolt to start ahead of schedule and the rebels had to abandon their original plans and attempt to carry on the revolt without the help of the other Muslims situated in other parts of the town. The other comrades-in-arms were stationed at the mosque of *Malam* Dandara on Conceicao da Praia Street, the destroyed mosque on Victoria street, and the mosque of *Malam* Bilal Licutan on Pilar street. They still expected the revolt to began at dawn as scheduled and was thus unawares of the events that was occurring at *Malam* Manuel's mosque.

Once the soldiers had escaped, the rebels recovered the rifles which the fleeing soldiers dropped. These rebels then regrouped and proceeded to the Ajuda jail in order to free *Malam* Bilal and other companions.²³⁹ When the revolutionaries reached the jail, they stormed its gates killing two of the prison guards, but failed to force an entrance into the jail. This having failed the rebels then headed in the direction of the mosque on Victoria Street where *Malam* Bubakar and his forces were stationed. On the way there the Muslims encountered some soldiers stationed in front of the public theatre. Charging the small force the insurgents attacked five soldiers and injured them, while three of the soldiers escaped.²⁴⁰ One of the rebels, Joaquim the assistant to *Malam* Bilal was injured in this encounter.²⁴¹ From there the revolutionaries proceeded to the police station on Sao Pedro Street in order to obtain more arms and killed two mulattoes on the way. The time was 2:00 a.m. in the morning.²⁴²

The police fort at Sao Pedro was well defended by many police inside, but they lost one police, Sargeant Toti Joaquim da Silva and three more were wounded.²⁴³ One of the rebels was killed named Pedro. Having failed to take the police fort, the insurgents again directed themselves towards the Victoria street mosque. By this time the rebels numbered about three hundred and controlled the streets of Salvador. They also expected more reinforcements by dawn from rebels settled elsewhere. From the Sao Pedro police fort the revolutionaries moved back towards the center of the city. They then circled behind the jail of Ajuda, where they encountered about twenty soldiers. The troops under the command of Sargeant Francisco Ignacio dos Santos, opened fires upon the rebels, killing one and

²³⁶ Howard Prince, 160.

²³⁷ Ibid., 162.

²³⁸ Joao J. Reis, 131-132.

²³⁹ Howard Prince, 162.

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 163.

²⁴¹ Joao J. Reis, 133.

²⁴² Ibid., 134.

²⁴³ Howard Prince, 164.

wounding several others. The revolutionaries also killed one soldier and wounded another. Again the Muslims were unable to free their leader *Malam Bilal Licutan*.²⁴⁴

During this same time a large contingent of soldiers led by Francisco Goncalves Martins headed for the artillery barracks in the lower city called Aguas de Meninos. Unknowingly, the rebels left the Ajuda jail and headed straight for Aguas de Meninos for an encounter with Francisco and his men. This was at 3:00 a.m. The battle that followed was the bloodiest battle in the history of all the Bahian slave revolts. There were several hundred African Muslims with a few non-Muslim Yoruba confronting an equal number of government soldiers, militia and police. The revolutionaries initiated the attack by charging the artillery barracks and seriously wounding Captain Francisco and two other soldiers. More rebels led by the freedman Malam Dandara soon joined these revolutionaries.²⁴⁵ These two groups then made a fierce attack upon the artillery, driving the Colonel and the remainder of his forces into the walls of the artillery.

The soldiers were able to hold off the rebels for about 45 minutes before cavalry reinforcement came and charged the African freedom fighters. Many of the Africans, lacking artillery, fled into the bushes and hills. Many escaped by swimming, but some were either captured or shot by the naval unit on the *Bahiana* frigate.²⁴⁶ Later one of the Africans who had swum from Agua de Meninos to Pilar declared that the majority of those swimming had escaped. At dawn around twenty Africans dressed in their white garments burned some homes on the street of Pilar and then moved towards Aguas de Meninos to join their comrades. Not realizing that they were too late, they encountered many soldiers who overcame them and shot them. At about 7:00 a.m. another group from the mosque on Conceicao da Praia Street emerged dressed in full battle attire. They were spotted by soldiers and were arrested at once.²⁴⁷ More than 100 African Muslims and non-Muslims became martyrs during this revolt and they were able to kill no more than fourteen soldiers and wounded a dozen.²⁴⁸ The Africans only numbered about 300 and the soldiers, militia, police and many civilians both white, Creole and mulatto numbered about 1500. When you count the superior arms of the Bahian forces and the difficulty which they had in suppressing the revolt, attests to the bravery of the Africans on the battlefield.

The aftermath of the revolt of 1835 proved to detrimental to Africans. The Bahian people were horror-stricken by the insurrection of January 24-25, 1835. The whole province had an atmosphere of fear and anxiety. The whites did not in anyway think that the enslaved African population of Bahia had a right to rebel. A local newspaper Diario da Bahia on February 1, 1835 stated,

"This province counts, among the other evils which burden it, an unlimited number of enslaved elements, which poses an overwhelming disadvantage for the free population, who daily finds its security and existence threatened. What are the horrors and atrocities not conceived by such unruly and furious slaves, who breathe only to plot more barbarous and bloodthirsty vengeance upon their owners?"²⁴⁹

The first sign of white repression of African people in Bahia was the order to make a general search of all the African homes. Any homes in which was found 'signs' of complicity in the revolt, its inhabitants were arrested and locked up with the rest of the captives. Africans were arrested on the slightest suspicion. Some were arrested as a result of local citizens. Some were arrested for having blood or mud on their clothing. Some were arrested because they possessed weapons, religious objects, or papers or documents written in "strange

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 166.

²⁴⁵ Joao J. Reis, 138.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ Howard Prince, 168.

²⁴⁸ Joao J. Reis, 139.

²⁴⁹ Howard Prince, 172.

characters".²⁵⁰ The atmosphere in Bahia at that time was that of a witch-hunt. Many police demonstrated lack of discipline and abused their authority by beating and killing innocent Africans who were performing duties for their owners.²⁵¹

The Justice of the Peace gave orders for inspectors, police registrars, national guards and soldiers to take to the streets and storm into African homes during the week of January 25-31 and thereafter. These search parties included at least seven people who would carefully search house by house and question tenants. Any African home in which were found religious or suspicious objects, like Islamic amulets, *tessebas*, or Arabic documents, its inhabitants were arrested. A barber shop was broken into by the inspectors and they found a vast quantity of Islamic literature, Muslim clothing, and four knives.²⁵² This led to the arrest of everyone connected to the barber shop. Even the slave masters cooperated in the mass arrest. The English merchant, Mellors Russel, handed over to the police a large box full of Muslim papers, Qur'ans, writing tablets, amulets, clothes, skull caps, and *tassebes*.

The general Bahian population also assisted in the persecution of the Africans by denouncing freedmen and slaves who organized mosque and prayer meetings in their homes and pointed out others who taught Arabic and distributed Muslim literature.²⁵³ It was reported that more than 200 witnesses, white, Creole and mulatto testified in court against the Africans.²⁵⁴ This led to the arrest and detainment of hundreds of Africans. Of the 326 persons arrested by the Bahian police, 32 individuals were presumed innocent and subsequently released. Of the remaining prisoners, more than 126 were freedmen. The total defendants were about 296. Of these, 194 were Yoruba, 25 were Hausas, 9 were Ewes, 7 were Minas, 6 Nupes, 5 Kanuris, 5 Congos, 4 Grumans, 4 Cabindas, 3 Calabars, 2 Jabus, 1 Camarao, 1 Mondubi, 1 Angola, 1 Benguela, 1 Creole, 1 Pardo, 1 Cabra. This demonstrates that the African Muslims were able to mobilize a diverse group of supporters, many of whom were new Muslims.²⁵⁵ Of all the defendants 52 were domestic workers, 37 were porters, 7 were merchants and store clerks, 2 attended horses, 1 washed clothes, 1 rolled tobacco, 1 lit street lamps, 4 were tailors, 3 were tanners, 2 were brick masons, 2 barbers, 2 bakers, 2 shoemakers, 1 butcher, 1 blacksmith, 1 carpenter, 1 fisherman, and 1 gunsmith.²⁵⁶ These statistics showed that the revolt embraced many classes of people and many different ethnic groups.

The 1835 revolt was united by two major elements Islam and Afrocentricity. Because more than a third of the rebels were freedmen, it is difficult to call it a 'slave revolt'. Because the revolt embraced wealthy Africans like Malam Dandara, Malam Manuel Calafate, Jose' Francisco Goncalves, and Gaspar da Silva Cunha, attest that the revolt was not a class revolt. These wealthy African freedmen owed their allegiance to two individuals who were slaves, namely; Malam Bubakar Ahuna and Malam Bilal Licutan. Why would men of such a well-to-do status risk their lives to follow people who were economically destitute and who were engaged in the lowest stratum of society? We mentioned earlier the role that Islam played in allowing individuals whose status was that of a slave to move upward in Muslim society. We cited examples where slaves or ex-slaves were obeyed for the sole reason of their high status as scholars in Islamic sciences only. Islam was the criteria for leadership in the revolt of 1835, and this criteria was determined by the extent of ones learning in the religion, not ones social status or class. It is for this reason that slave and freedmen, wealthy and destitute alike looked to the two slaves for leadership and guidance. The fact that both were Yoruba is also significant, because the Hausa were considered to be more Islamic oriented than the Yoruba. However, because *Malam Ahuna* and *Malam Licutan* were more advanced in their erudition

²⁵⁰ Ibid., 174.

²⁵¹ Ibid., 174.

²⁵² Ibid., 268.

²⁵³ Ibid., 269.

²⁵⁴ Ibid., 270.

²⁵⁵ Ibid., 178.

²⁵⁶ Ibid., 179.

than any of the Hausa malams like Dandara the freedmen, they were accepted as the leaders par-excellent of the movement.

It must not go unnoticed that the whites of Bahia saw it as an Islamic movement also. Prince corroborates this by citing the opening statement of the prosecuting attorney, Augusto Moniz da Silva, which was repeated before each case arranged in court,

"It will be proved that for a long time a considerable number of slaves gathered at different places of this city and conspired to seize their liberty by force. It will be proved that in order to further the ends for which they worked, with such steadfastness and inviolable secrecy...the leaders of the insurrection indoctrinated their followers in the principles of the religion of their country, instructed them in the writing of Arabic characters, and distributed to them papers written in these characters, along with rings of a certain shape, as well as robes and hats...which in their belief would insure without risk a victory over the obstacles and forces opposed against them. It will be proved that they, thus prepared, and under the direction of African libertos, designed in their cliques the most horrible plans, which sought vengeful extinction of the white and *pardo* race, the properties, the profanation of our religion, the burning of our temples, and all the monuments of our splendor and glory."²⁵⁷

The court trials of the defendants were overcome with an atmosphere which prevailed in Bahia at that time; an atmosphere of hysteria, white racism, persecution and government sanctioned violence against the African community. As we stated earlier police broke discipline and began killing peaceful and innocent Africans at random. Even 'respectful citizens' joined the urban white populace in bringing terror to the Africans of Bahia, during the trials.²⁵⁸ Armed civilians on January 26 at 12:00 noon encountered passing Africans on the street and started shooting, killing at least two. This hysteria even affected the lawyers who were assigned to defend the Africans, who were threatened and harassed by mobs of whites and Creoles.²⁵⁹

The President ordered the chief of police to work quickly in bringing the leaders and those who were guilty to trial, so that an exemplary show of force would intimidate future peace breakers.²⁶⁰ Thus, on February 15 the trials began. These trials had been broken into two basic stages: the 'accusation jury' or First Council of Jurors, and the 'sentence jury' or Second Council of Jurors.²⁶¹ The first stage tested the accusations made against certain defendants. If the defendant proved not to be apart of the revolt, they were acquitted. And if they were found to be apart of the revolt, they would then be moved to the 'sentence jury' where they were put on trial properly.²⁶²

What is interesting about the trials that Howard Prince highlighted was the "ideological discourse" which surrounded the trials of the 1835 African revolutionaries. The police, militiamen and guards "described and defined" the Africans and the objects of his culture in the most humiliating terms.²⁶³ Their Qur'ans were defined as "exotic characters"; their amulets and *tassebes* as "strange objects"; and their prayers as "nonsense".²⁶⁴ The whole trial demonstrated how Bahian authority saw the Africans in general and the Muslims in particular. They were portrayed as foreign and barbarian, while the Bahian culture was represented as superior, being under attack by inferiors with a 'pagan' culture designed to do away with their most cherished customs and traditions. Any African who hoped to be acquitted had to prove their loyalty to Bahia, its culture and its people. This was in spite of the fact that they were not treated equal even when they were freedmen. The Bahian

²⁵⁷ Ibid., 181.

²⁵⁸ Joao J. Reis, 263.

²⁵⁹ Ibid., 264.

²⁶⁰ Ibid., 265.

²⁶¹ Ibid., 271.

²⁶² Ibid., 272.

²⁶³ Ibid., 278-279.

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

authorities went out of its way to demonstrate to the Africans that they were only wanted when they became "Brazilianized" into an inferior position expressed in "good behavior", which meant humility and obeisance to the whiteman and his civilization. During the trial there were so many examples of this 'ideological discourse'. The best example of this was the freedman Jose da Costa. According to Howard Prince,

"Da Costa tried hard to demonstrate his affection to the Brazilian way of life and to white people. In order to do that he had to deny his Africanness and appear completely acculturated into the whiteman's world. He argued in court that he was a 'quiet person' who belonged to the Ewe group, 'a nation entirely hostile to the Blacks who brought turmoil to this city.'...His innocence could be attested by the fact that nothing was found on him or in his house that indicated he was a 'revolutionary Black'...he defined himself as a good worker, 'known by everyone as a friend of the land that brought him happiness, obedient to all his superiors in color and authority and an observer of the law'. Besides he was a practitioner of the catholic religion...his only crime was to have had the 'misfortune of being born in Africa'."²⁶⁵

The above expressions of self-hatred are sad testimonies of the pressures exerted over Africans in Bahia. The entire trial symbolized in its demeanor, emblems and atmosphere "... implied the denigration of the African element and the validation of the Brazilian cause in 1835".²⁶⁶ What seems to emerge out of the trials 1835 was a desperate attempt to humiliate once and for all a proud, sophisticated and industrious Muslim people, who were aware of their long history of civilization and moral fortitude, and who had first hand contact with the barbarism which was 19th century Europe, and who in no way were convinced of Europe's innate 'superiority'.

As for the sentences that were executed against the Africans, they varied for leaders and rank-and-file. The leaders were given a maximum penalty of death, a medium penalty of life imprisonment or a minimum sentence of fifteen years in the galleys. The rank-and-file were sentenced with unspecified number of whippings. What is clear is that all the freedmen were considered as leaders or instigators of the revolt that required that the least punishment they would receive would be imprisonment. This was necessary because they had to be withdrawn from circulation through the streets of Bahia and the remainder of Brazil. Many of the slaves were given whippings in order to assure the violability of the property of the slaveholders. Of the nine who were declared innocent, none were freedmen. Of the 19 who were absolved of any crimes, none were freedmen. Of the four death sentences, three were given to slaves and only one to a freedman. This alone is proof that the main organizers were slaves. As for those 16 that were given prison sentences, all of them were given to freedmen. Of the 44 whippings that were meted out, only two freedmen were given such punishment. As for the 34 sentences of deportation, all of them were given to freedmen. The African freedmen thus became a target of the judicial persecution and sentences were given out with an eye to an economy based upon slavery. It became imperative for the Portuguese Bahians to place African freedmen under every sought of political repression.

After trials the Bahian government passed laws that demonstrated a clear program of mass deportation of Africans. The only Africans exempt from these pogroms were those "who denounced slave plots, the poor invalids and those employed on farms or sugar plantations whose owners were willing to sign terms of responsibility for their behavior".²⁶⁷ All African freedmen were required to register with the Justice of the Peace. Failing to do this meant a punishment of imprisonment that varied from six days to an unspecified number of months. Africans were from that time on, not permitted to own real estate.

Another very interesting factor of the 'white Christian' bias against African culture, particularly Islam, was the decree levying a fine of 50,000 *reis* upon masters who neglected to

²⁶⁵ Ibid., 286-287.

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ Ibid., 312.

instruct their slaves "in the mysteries of the Christian Religion and baptize them".²⁶⁸ All of these laws that were passed during the years of 1835 to 1840, were aimed at regulating the organization of Africans on every level. On November 4, 1835 the Council of Justice of Salvador passed a law that: "prohibited that freed Africans to trade or resell basic necessities."²⁶⁹ The Bahians wanted to check the strength of Africans in Bahia and 'unblacken' the society through ethnic cleansing. One key point which defined succinctly the attitude of the Bahians to African presence was made by Howard Prince, when he said, "The white community was only interested in the Africans' presence as long as they served as slaves or, if freedmen, acted like one."²⁷⁰

The primary evidence that the authorities used to convict and indict the African revolutionaries were the captured papers and documents written in Arabic. These documents were found on the person of some of the rebels or they were found inside the homes which were forcibly searched by the Bahian authorities. The contents of these documents reveal the intent and aims of the movement. The Bahians were confused with these documents. Many thought that the documents were a kind of political manifesto. One of those who maintained this view was a priest named Abbe' Etienne Ignace Brasil, who claimed to be the first to have gained an understanding of the Arabic writings. He claimed that the documents revealed the objectives, the plans, and the inner secrets of the revolt.²⁷¹ Although Etienne's assertions were somewhat far fetched, there are indications within the documents which reveal the political and military objectives of the movement. Nina Rodrigues found the documents to be of a purely religious nature.²⁷² Prince points out that these documents were thought to be "Hebraic writing" or as "exotic letters" or even as "hieroglyphics."²⁷³

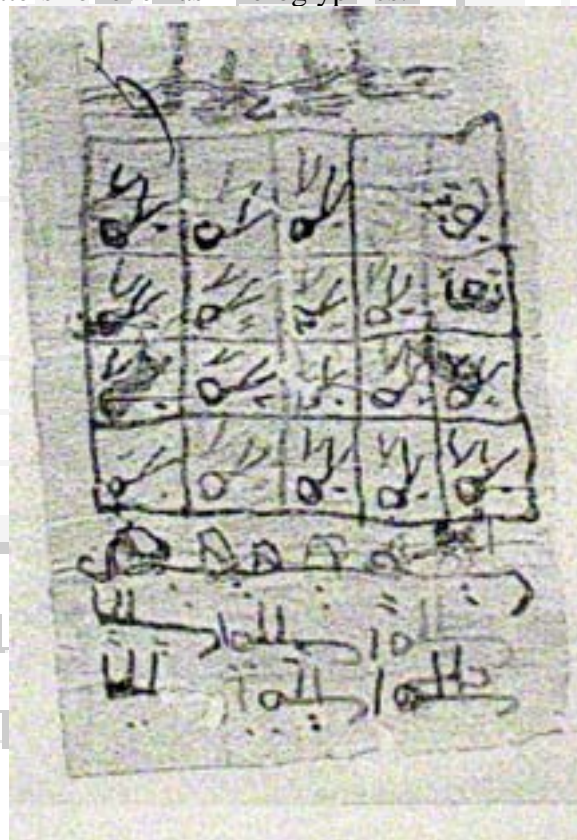


Fig: 8 - This is an Arabic manuscript that belonged to a Nagos *escravo* Muslim named Faustino. It is a sort of 'hatumere' or talisman which resembled what Howard Prince called 'hieroglyph'.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ Ibid., 315.

²⁷⁰ Ibid. 316.

²⁷¹ Raymond K. Kent, 352.

²⁷² Ibid.

²⁷³ Howard Prince, 195.

None of the African scholars who were captured would translate these documents, claiming ignorance of the language. However, a slave girl named Marcelina, said that these documents, "are the prayers and scriptures of the Males written by teachers of the Hausa nation,...as well as by the Yorubas, and some of the Nupes."²⁷⁴ According to Vincent Monteil and Rolf Reichert, some of the documents confiscated by the police were written by well-educated hands, while others were lessons painfully produced by Muslim students.²⁷⁵ One of the Hausa slaves belonging to Bernardo Jose' da Costa named Antonio described the contents of the documents as "religious orations and doctrines from his land."²⁷⁶ This implies that some of the documents could have been apart of the literature produced by the scholar warriors of Central and Western Sudan. It must be noted that during that same period in Hausaland, Massina, Hamdullahi there was an explosion of literary expression by hundreds if not thousands of Muslim scholars on every social, political, religious or military issue. And realizing that at least four of the more wealthy Muslims of Bahia had been traveling back and forth between Bahia and West Africa, it would not be inaccurate to conclude that perhaps these Africans brought back from the Bight of Benin some of the revolutionary Islamic literature which had flooded the whole of Central and Western Sudan.

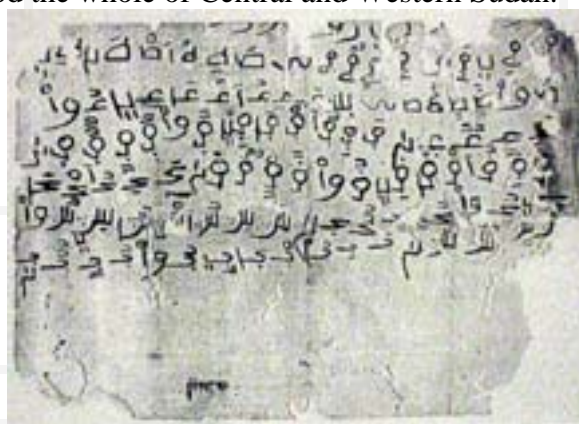


Fig: 9 - One of "the painfully produced Arabic lessons" written by an *escravo* Yoruba Muslim named Lucio

On February 7, 1835, a 'loyal' Hausa slave Albino was contracted by the Justice of the Peace to translate some of the documents found during the police raids. Some of these papers explained in detail the tactics and military maneuvers of the African rebels.²⁷⁷ One of the documents stated, "...after seizing the city the rebels should meet with some *engenho* slaves . . . as a first step to take the revolution into the Reconcavo."²⁷⁸ Another document further reiterates the meeting at Cabrito and added, "...everybody in the whiteman's land should be killed."²⁷⁹ One of the most important of these documents was the one written and signed by the leader of the revolt Malam Bubakar Ahuna, which exhorted the Muslims of Brazil to unite themselves under one single leadership and promising that no evil would befall those who rose up to revolt and establish the *jihad* against the whites, *pardos*, and Creoles of Brazil. It went further to instruct the Muslims of the Victoria Street mosque "...to pass by Aguas de Meninos and join with those coming from Cabrito and Itapagipe...to seize the land and kill all the whites."²⁸⁰ These overt political statements indicate that perhaps some of the documents that evince purely religious overtones could have concealed more political meanings after closer examination of the texts themselves. The documents vary in style of calligraphy and sophistication that indicate the writers were more than a few. This is true because there were

²⁷⁴ Ibid., 196.

²⁷⁵ Joao J. Reis, 153.

²⁷⁶ Howard Prince, 196.

²⁷⁷ Ibid., 197.

²⁷⁸ Joao J. Reis, 166.

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁸⁰ Howard Prince, 196-197.

more than eleven literate scholars among the Muslims of Bahia, which meant that anyone of these literates could have written them. As we mentioned earlier, novices wrote some of the documents. Some of the papers had simple Qur'anic statements as; "In the name of Allah the Beneficent the Merciful, we ask Allah for help; give refuge O Lord...from those who oppress us."²⁸¹ Howard Prince analyzed some of the documents and determined that they had millenarian overtones. One such document stated:

"In the name of Allah the Compassionate the Merciful. Sovereign of the Day of Judgement. We worship You and We seek your help...For those that value wealth and acquisition shall be exposed to the burning fire...redeem us O Lord of men, King of men, God of men."²⁸²

The above document is a conglomeration of different Qur'anic verses, particularly the first verses of the first Chapter of the Qur'an and the first verses of the last chapter of the Qur'an. Another document stated:

"In the name of Allah the Compassionate the Merciful...Peace and blessings of Allah be upon our master the Prophet O Allah! lead us to our imminent triumph. Victory is near. So give good news to the believers."²⁸³

This document quotes from an interesting chapter of the Qur'an called *as-Saff* (The Ranks). The verse it quotes is the 13th verse of the chapter which says, "*Yet another blessing that you will love; help from Allah in this life and a victory near at hand; so give good news to the believers.*" It is entirely impossible to know what these refer to except by knowing the verses that come before and after this verse. Further insight of the intention of these writings can be had by examining what the scholars understand from these verses. There was a legal, political, military and social reason that this verse was revealed to Prophet Muhammad. By examining these commentaries, then a deeper and profound significance should be taken from these verses. The complete verses are as follows:

"*Believe in Allah and His Messenger and struggle (tujaahidu) hard in the way of Allah, with your wealth and your lives. That is better for you, if you only knew. He will forgive you your faults and cause you to enter into Gardens, underneath which rivers flow, and excellent homes in the Eternal Paradise. For that is the mighty achievement. And yet there is another blessing that you will love: help from Allah in this life and a victory near at hand; so give the good news to the believers. O you who believe! Be helpers in the cause of Allah, as Jesus son of Mary said to his disciples: Who are my helpers in the cause of Allah? The disciples said: We are the helpers of Allah. Then a party of the children of Israel believed and another party disbelieved. Then We helped those who believed against their enemies and they became the uppermost.*"²⁸⁴

In 1808, the brother of Shaykh Uthman dan Fuduye', Abdullahi dan Fuduye' in his famous commentary upon the Qur'an called *Diya'l-Ta'weel*, he explained the spiritual, political and social implications of the above verses. We cite his commentary because it was his ideas that were diffused throughout the Islamic regions of Yorubaland, Nupe and other regions from which the Muslims of Bahia were taken. He says the above verses mean:

"You should be relentless in your faith in Allah and his Messenger and you should be relentless in executing the *jihad*. For strong belief and *jihad* are best for those who possess knowledge and this knowledge should lead you to expend your wealth and your lives in the *jihad* for Allah's sake. By doing so you will be forgiven and given what Allah has promised in the verse, which is the Supreme Triumph. This action of correcting one's belief and establishing the *jihad* will also result in Allah given you another blessing in this life that you will love. It is Allah's divine help and victory over your enemies and governance. Therefore inform the believers of the good news of a the Paradise, the help of Allah and a victory which is near at hand. Those of you who are strong in faith be a strong force for Allah and His Messenger, the way Jesus's disciples were and Allah will

²⁸¹ Ibid., 197-198.

²⁸² Ibid., 198.

²⁸³ *Qur'an*/ 61: 11-14.

²⁸⁴ Ibid.

make you uppermost with the sword and decisive proofs against your enemies in the same way he assisted the disciples of Jesus."²⁸⁵

Although Reis and Prince failed to recognize any political significance to the verses cited, this was only because of their lack of understanding of the Islamic sciences and culture. As the commentary clarifies above that not only does the verse cited in the document have political significance but it was a promise of victory and divine help in establishing governance and political hegemony over the non-Muslims of Bahia. And if this failed then there was the promise of the Supreme Triumph in the Gardens of Paradise.

The document written by Malam Bubakar was a clear call for *jihad* against the Bahian government as demonstrated by Prince. Therefore Nina Rodrigues was correct in his assessment of the 1835 revolt as a *jihad*. The evidence from the statements of witnesses and evidence from some of the Arabic documents testify to this. A word must be said about the amulets (*hijab* in Arabic, *tira* in Yoruba) that were found on the person of most of the rebels. Islamic amulets are not an essential element of the religion, though scholars have tried to place a great significance upon them. At best it is one of the superficial external symbols of Muslim culture. Amulets were and are still worn by Muslims and non-Muslim alike. They were reputed to possess magical protective qualities. Amulets were used for protection against the 'evil eye', slander, sickness, and knife or sword stabs. They were also utilized to procure wealth, love, and well-being. The custom was that those who had memorized the Qur'an were those responsible for writing amulets. They came in many forms and shapes, however, Reis describes those utilized in Bahia in the following manner:

"The *tira* in general was composed of a small leather bag sewn together containing passages of the Qur'an and Muslim prayers written on pieces of paper carefully folded. Some contained a powdered substance which the police reports variably mentioned as soil, dust or 'garbage particles'."²⁸⁶

The *tira* was used by almost all the Yoruba in Africa and in Bahia. And they saw no contradiction between their traditional beliefs and the use of Muslim amulets. In fact the Muslim amulets were seen as possessing stronger magical qualities than those of their traditional 'fetishes'. The *tira* allegedly protected the possessor from human agents of evil and helped the possessor control the world of spirits. A Hausa freedman named Silvestre Jose Antonio who was arrested for his involvement in the revolt had on his person about five amulets. When he was questioned about them, he said they were used, "to save him from any bad event in the business trips he made to the Reconcavo."²⁸⁷ Another freedman named Pedro said that the amulets "protect him from the mouth of the people."²⁸⁸ Another freedman named Labao Machado kept several amulets on his person and said he, "used them to protect him against the wind."²⁸⁹

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²⁸⁵ Abdullahi Dan Fuduye', *Diya at-Ta'weel fi Ma`ana 't-Tanzeel*

²⁸⁶ Joao J. Reis, 148.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 149.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*



Fig: 10 - This is an example of the *tira* or *hatumere*' utilized by the Muslims of Bahia. This particular *tira* was the property of an *escravo* Hausa Muslim named Domingo Nacao.

The Islamic amulets were made and sold by semi-clerics whose alleged mystical powers were source of income for them. Among the clerics of Bahia, there was only one scholar who traded in amulets as a profession. This scholar was the Hausa slave named Antonio, who made about four *patacas* a day.²⁹⁰ It is known that Antonio was not among the leading scholars and clerics of Bahia, although he did play a major role in the revolt. There were and are still a variety of views concerning the legal status of amulets in Islamic jurisprudence. One of the most prevalent views on amulets, Islamic or otherwise, was explained in 1806 in Hausaland by *Shehu* Uthman dan Fuduye' in his book *Siraj'l-Ikhwaan*. We cite his views here because it was his views that became the prevailing opinion in the Central and Western Sudan. In fact the *jihad* executed in Yorubaland 1817 by *Alfa* Salih Alimi and his son Abd's-Salaam was done in order to establish the rule and ideals of this prolific reformer and scholar. He said;

"Among the obligations of the ruler of the believers and his officials in his country is the changing of reprehensible deeds like those who allege that they can write down that which will bring benefits, like bringing abundant wealth and love and in order to throw off evil. Like conquering one's enemies in war and stopping iron from cutting the skin or from the strikes of arrows, or anything which magicians (*sihara*) claim with their deeds...every male or female magician should have his head placed under the sword, among those who claim that they can write talismans, amulets or the like which can bring wealth or by which he can conquer armies, or the like. Whoever repents from these deeds is to be left alone and whoever refuses to leave this should be killed."²⁹¹

Clearly *Shehu* Uthman Dan Fuduye' was against this custom, but the writing of amulets and talismans was so prevalent in Sudan that it continued to be practiced by scholars and Qur'an reciters, even up to the present day in Muslim Africa. We mentioned earlier that the Asante, Yoruba and Dahomey kings employed Muslim clerics to write amulets of protection for their armies. For this reason there is no wonder that some of the African

²⁹⁰ Ibid., 150.

²⁹¹ Uthman Dan Fuduye', *Siraj al-Ikhwaan*, trans. Muhammad Shareef, (Sankore', Pittsburgh), 1992 , 17.

revolutionaries, Muslim and non-Muslim, were captured with these Islamic amulets on their person. Amulets were never a pertinent element in the Islamization of people, nor in Islamic *jihads*. And I feel the use of amulets by some of the rebels in Bahia should not be given as much import as some scholars have given to them in the past. Clearly it was not the 'papers' the African revolutionaries believed in more so than their absolute trust in the scholars and clerics who presumably informed them of the alleged miraculous qualities of the papers. I am sure that the African Muslims felt that the spiritual power of the Qur'an was much more potent than the embellished crosses which the frightened 'Christians' clutched around their necks. This revolt was clearly a war between cultures, ideas and spiritual beliefs, or the least we can say is that these things were effectively used by both sides as cultural swords, shields of ideas and spiritual flags to rally under where each faction accused the other of paganism, barbarism and superstitious. The Africans fought for their freedom to exist as human beings and the Portuguese Brazilians fought to maintain the unholy hegemony over the destinies of African humanity.



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Summary and Conclusion

There have been many violent reactions to slavery in the Americas, but all of these slave insurrections can be summed up as either secondary resistance to slavery or primary resistance. Secondary resistance to slavery was those revolts that were executed using the ideals, culture and mores of the slave masters. The reason for this type of resistance was because the historical conscience, linguistic factor and psychological temperament had been successfully eradicated through the process of slavery, forcing the slave to revolt using the slave master's frame of reference. The Nat Turner rebellion in Virginia and the Santo Domingo revolutions were prime examples of this type of slave revolt. Primary resistance to slavery was defined as revolts which happened in the Americas where the African slaves rallied around its own culture, linguistic unity and psychological temperament. This cultural cohesiveness was most times unified under the banner of African religion. The slave revolts of Bahia from 1807 until 1835, exemplified this type of resistance. From 1807 until 1816, it was the ideology of Islam that united the Africans against their Bahian slave masters and gave them hope of victory. From 1817 until 1830 it was the *candomble* Yoruba/Ewe religious practice that unified Africans to revolt against their masters. Finally the revolt of 1835 was clearly an Islamic inspired revolution, which unified Africans of many diverse ethnic backgrounds. In every case, the unifying force for these revolts emerged out of the historical conscience of African people prior to their connection with their European exploiters.

The turmoil and political insecurity that existed in the Western and Central *Bilad as-Sudan* resulted in a large influx of Sudanese Muslim or nominal Muslim people into the Bahian Reconcavo. There were many factors that engendered this state of insecurity in that region. Among them were the Islamic *jihad* movements, which affected the whole of the Western and Central Sudan. The most salient of these Islamic reform movements was that of the *jihad* of *Shehu* Uthman Dan Fuduye' against the Habe' kingdoms of Hausaland. The wars and military encounters of this movement started in 1804 and continued for about 100 years to 1903 when the British made the Sokoto *Caliphate* a British Protectorate. Another factor, which led to the insecurity of the region, was the internal turmoil of the Yoruba kingdom and the collapse of its ancient capital at Oyo. In fact, most of the centralized kingdoms along the Bight of Benin were going through internal strife, including the Asante, Dahomey, Benin and Ewe kingdoms.²⁹² This state of overall political insecurity engendered the large number of Sudanese war captives that were eventually shipped off to the ports of Brazil. The international demand for sugar and the emergence of Brazil as the center for world sugar production, created the demand for African labor. The revolution of Santo Domingo and the revolts of Cuba caused a transmigration of sugar production to Brazil.²⁹³ All these factors were the main reasons that Brazil, and Bahia in particular, became a major disembarkment for the Sudanese Africans.

Islam played a major role in unifying the Africans of Bahia and became the only means by which a slave could become literate, since it was illegal in Brazil to give African slaves an education.²⁹⁴ Many of the Muslims who were brought into Bahia were learned or semi-literate according to West African Islamic standards. The fact that most of the major traditional African kingdoms employed Muslim clerics in their courts, demonstrates the appeal and awe that Islam commanded among non-Muslim Sudanese. This and along with the fact that these Muslims were involved with intense proselytization and *jihad* in Africa, emerged as two major social agents for slave revolt on the Bahian Reconcavo. Islam served to unite diverse ethnic groups and succeeded in traversing class differences as well. This is

²⁹² Robin Law, 256-257.

²⁹³ H.S. Klein, 2.

²⁹⁴ Charles Gardner, 64.

corroborated by the fact that more than 126 African freedmen, some very wealthy merchants, united under the leadership of an African Muslim slave.

The causes of the revolt included the above factors, but were also underscored by the economic and political turmoil that affected Brazilian society at the time. With the demand for Brazilian sugar meant an increase in labor output for the slave population; which could only mean that the slaves of Brazil were worked exceedingly hard. Another factor was the political instability that led to the wars of independence that plagued Brazil from 1798 until 1837.²⁹⁵ All of these factors set the atmosphere for revolution and slave revolt. Perhaps the most consequential element that engendered the slave revolts was the impoverishment that the slaves of Brazil endured. This impoverishment included illnesses and epidemics that were rampant in the urban regions of Bahia.²⁹⁶ The fact that the African and mixed race population was more than 80% of the total population, gave an advantage to the slaves over the whites. This perhaps was the main factor that allowed the Africans to conceive that there was a chance of victory.

However, in spite of the larger population of the Africans versus the whites, the unifying factor of Islam, and the classless nature of the majority of the revolts, they all suffered defeat. There were many reasons for this. Among them was that informers, which stole the one element that the revolts depended upon, the element of surprise, betrayed the revolts 1807, 1826, 1828, 1830, and 1835. Another reason was that the insurgents underestimated the unity of the whites, Creoles and mulattoes and the military power of the Bahian government.

What were the causes of the revolt? Both Nina Rodrigues and Padre Etienne defined the causes of the revolts as being both religious and ethnic; while Aderbal Jurema defined the causes as being the struggle of class.²⁹⁷ Another Brazilian scholar named Clovis Moura said that both racial hatred and class struggle caused the revolts. Raymond Kent disagreed with all of the above views, but puts forward no convincing reason for the revolts.²⁹⁸ But he did assert that the rural revolts should be studied separately from the urban revolts.²⁹⁹ Howard Prince defined the causes of the revolts as "any conscious and organized attempt on the part of a society's members to revive or perpetuate selected aspects of its culture"³⁰⁰. Here he was utilizing the term developed by Ralph Lincoln that he defined as "nativistic movements".³⁰¹ However, Prince adds that the revolts had "millenarian overtones".³⁰² His final conclusions concerning the revolts are quite interesting. He stated that the intent and objective of the revolts were,

“...an act of African cultural regeneration. Millenarian visions or beliefs in impending and imminent miracles are essential to movements of this sort, for they provide for the possibility of victory and salvation against insurmountable odds.”³⁰³

Joao Reis follows Rodrigues in defining the causes of the revolt as being "ethnic oriented", but adds that it was part class oriented as well, following the opinion of Jurema.³⁰⁴ He feels that religion (Islam more so than the *candomble*) was just a powerful force in overcoming ethnic and class divisions. He rejects Prince's ideas of millenarian overtones or nativistic movement, but does accept that the revolts were "an African cultural regeneration",

²⁹⁵ Howard, Prince, 22-26.

²⁹⁶ Ibid., 49.

²⁹⁷ Ibid., 160.

²⁹⁸ Ibid, 161.

²⁹⁹ Ibid., 177.

³⁰⁰ Ibid., 149.

³⁰¹ Ibid., 146-147.

³⁰² Ibid.

³⁰³ Ibid., 127.

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

which emerges out of a people dominated by foreigners which cause them to react in order not to be wiped out as an historical entity.³⁰⁵

Having allowed the "high priest" of academia to cast their objectification magic, it is appropriate here to examine these diverse views in correlation with how the Africans defined the causes of the revolt based on the empirical data of their own actions, words, and records. It is only intellectually just to view the African liberators as they viewed themselves and to cease imposing foreign, and particularly European, standards upon them. The God given right to define one's own reality and place in the world was the essential reason that these noble Sudanese people revolted in the first place. How they saw themselves and their enemy is what's important in analyzing the causes, objectives and impact of the African revolts of Bahia. The repression which the whites unleashed upon these African freedom fighters was mainly designed to kill their cultural identity, collective personality, and their right to define themselves and their enemies. There is no doubt that white Portuguese oppression of the African Muslims of Bahia was a paranoid reaction to a possible repeat of the glorious Moorish Muslim hegemony over Portugal and Spain in the 9th to 13th centuries.

It was this intellectual prejudiced which motivated the Jesuit scholar, Padre Etienne, to define the causes of the African revolts to be a revival of the "Islamic Holy Wars". He was mainly writing in defense of the Christian religion and society against what he called Islamic 'fanaticism'.³⁰⁶ Nino Rodrigues came to the same conclusions as father Etienne and added that 'ethnicity' also played a major role in the revolts. However, Rodrigues was also overcome by deep prejudiced. He was the product of his age when scientist as a result of the Industrial revolution, considered 'white civilization' as the most highly evolved of human civilization. Africans were seen in the eyes of Rodrigues as being innately inferior as defined by the then new imperialistic pseudo-science of "social evolution". Aderbal Jurema was a socialist and gave a Marxist interpretation of the revolts. He disagreed with both Rodrigues and Etienne in the revolts being the continuation of the *jihads* of the 19th century in Sudan, but said that the revolts were produced by "class exploitation under slavery rather than blind faith in Mohammed."³⁰⁷ This interpretation is all wrong because of the fact that half of the Africans arrested were freedmen with several among them being quite wealthy merchants. If it were a class struggle how then would these individuals participate in a revolt to overthrow their own class? It seems that Jurema was forcing his own biases upon the African revolt. Moura's analysis followed Jurema's but added that "racial hatred" fueled the revolts. I disagree with this because the whites, Creoles and mulattoes who were the targets of the revolt symbolized the system of slavery. Africans were exploited by these ethnic groups, who in addition, showed their disdain for African Islamic culture. The idea of the revolts being the result of class struggle was reiterated by Luis Luna, Carl Degler, Caio Junior and many others. However, as mentioned earlier the revolts superseded class because a substantial number of the rebels were freedmen and some were wealthy. All the facts of the phenomenon of Islam in Western and Central Sudan were present among the Muslims of Bahia. My contention is that the revolts of 1807 to 1816 and again 1835 were all without exception Islamic revolts. The Muslim slaves were taken from societies where *Jihad* and Islamic reform was commonplace. There was the general feeling throughout Western and Central Sudan of the desire to establish Islamic governance. For this reason, I believe that the evidence presented by Prince and Reis demonstrate conclusively that these revolts were a continuation and persistence of the *jihads* of 19th century Sudan. What of the several revolts which occurred between 1822 and 1830? Although these revolts were not Islamically inspired, nevertheless there was still the persistence of African spiritual and cultural ideology in these revolts. They were made up of predominantly Yoruba groups with a few Ewes and they were all united by their adherence to the *candomble* religious rites. The best analysis of the revolts in whole is

³⁰⁵ Howard Prince, 159..

³⁰⁶ Joao J. Reis, 128.

³⁰⁷ Ibid., 130.

what Chiekh Anta Diop in his classic *Civilization or Barbarism*. He demonstrates that the three elements of the cultural identity of a people: historical conscience, linguistic unity and extant psychological temperament are the primary agents which preserve a people during a time of cultural, political and economic aggression.³⁰⁸ " Perfect cultural identity corresponds to the full simultaneous presence of these factors in the individual."³⁰⁹ In the Bahian context, in the Islamic revolts of 1807 to 1816 and 1835 all the three factors of cultural identity were present. These Muslims had a complete awareness of who they were and what their place was in the scheme of things. They knew of the superior quality (at least in their own eyes) of Islamic civilization to other forms of civilizations. They were aware and utilized the historical precedents of Muhammad and his early community along side the historical precedents of the *jihads* and emerging governments of Western and Central Sudan. This only meant that the historical conscience of these African rebels was intact. This is the same for the revolts which occurred between 1822 and 1830. It was the historical conscience of the Yoruba and Ewe ancestral traditions, which unified the rebels against Bahian oppression. The linguistic unity of the revolts of 1807 to 1816 and 1835 was clearly Arabic language. It was this language, which became the tongue of learning for the Muslims who participated in the revolts. As we mentioned earlier there were more than 20 *madaris* in Salvadore alone, where Arabic was taught on a daily basis by the eleven Islamic *malams* who eventually led the revolts. There also existed Muslim schools in the Santo Amaro rural district and other areas where Arabic was taught and spoken fluently by the Muslims. As for the revolts of 1822 to 1830, the linguistic unity was defined by the use of Yoruba language. Therefore, in both cases, the linguistic factor was intact. The final factor which defines the cultural identity of a people was the psychological temperament. This factor was demonstrated by the spiritual dependence upon the both Islamic religious and *candomble* religious rites. These two African ideologies enabled the Africans to have the psychological spirit which first gave them a cultural and spiritual haven which they could return to for personal strength and it allowed them to conceive that there was the chance for a possible victory over the Bahian authorities. This psychological temperament contained within it some millenarian overtones, which bespoke of the eventual assistance of spiritual powers in the revolt against the Brazilians.

It was mentioned earlier that the *candomble* religious practices was a synthesis of African and catholic beliefs. This proves that purely Yoruba and animist African beliefs did yield partly to the religion of the dominant culture. Islam on the other hand emerged out of the climate of opposition. Opposition was and still remains the primary agent, which causes the thriving of Islam in any given environment. When the early history of Islam is examined, along with the emergence of Islam in Sudan, it becomes evident that the climate of opposition to Islam from the dominant culture was what gave the Islamic people their resilience and led to eventual military confrontation. The Bahian revolts demonstrate this same identical trend, which allows me to say that the revolts as a whole demonstrated the persistence of African culture in Brazil and that this African culture was the primary agent, which engendered the revolts. However, the revolts of 1807 to 1816 and the revolt of 1835 were Islamic revolts following the same trend of the Islamic *jihads* of Western and Central Sudan. These Islamic revolts transcended class and ethnic divisions and laid the foundation for revolts, which would have led to eventual governance, had the appropriate factors been present.

What is important to note here, is that African Muslims were determined to establish Islamic government in the western hemisphere. They were led by a learned class of jurist, who laid the foundations of social reform in much the same manner as the social reforms of the *Bilad as-Sudan* during the 16th to 19th centuries. The persistence of a cohesive identity construct that survived the disruption of slavery helped galvanize the African Muslims into unified *Jama`ats*. Diverse African ethnic groups were all unified under the banner of Islam and were solidified by the linguistic unity of the Divine Script of the *Quran*. These enslaved

³⁰⁸ Howard Prince, 160.

³⁰⁹ Ibid.

Muslims and freedmen set out to establish a just society in the western hemisphere where the light of Islamic civilization would shine forth. Although, their valiant strikes for freedom were crushed, nevertheless there brave examples gave birth to a tradition of freedom and justice that struck terror in the hearts of European tyrants and illuminated the aspirations of freedom loving people throughout the region. We ask Allah ta`ala to reward them with the best that He has rewarded those who truly struggle in His Way and that He allow us to inherit their *baraka* and traditions and that He permit us to complete what they started in these western lands. *Shaykh* Abdullahi Dan Fuduye' said it best in one of his eloquent poems:

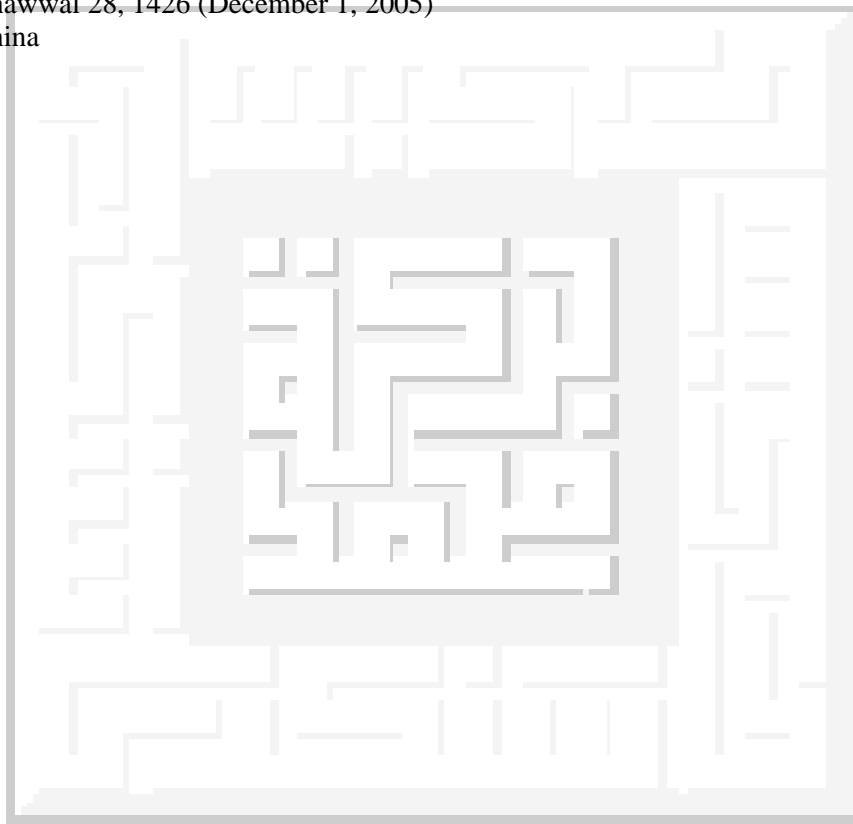
“None can destroy what the Hand of Allah has built
None can overthrow the Command of Allah when it comes!”

Muhammad Shareef

Salat al-`Asr

Thursday, Shawwal 28, 1426 (December 1, 2005)

YanQing, China



**Institute of Islamic-African
Studies International**

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Glossary

- `isha, 67:** Arabic, evening prayer; one of the five obligatory prayers of Islam.
- abada, 63:** Yoruba, termed used in Bahia for the long white Muslim dress.
- al-faqih, 14:** Arabic, Islamic jurist or lawyer.
- al-lawh, 62:** Arabic, a wooden board 10 inches by 24 inches, used to write Qur'anic lessons and the to memorize the fundamental teachings of Islam.
- alfa, 14:** Fulfulbe', term meaning great scholar, it is derived from the Arabic al-faqih.
- alfalu, 14:** Fulfulbe', verb meaning to devine or foretell.
- alim, 20:** Arabic, scholar or one knowledgable of the Islamic shari`a.
- allo, 62:** Hausa, a corrupted form of the Arabic al-lawh; see above.
- almamy, 55:** Yoruba corruption of the Arabic *imam*, the leader of the Muslim community.
- alufa, 14:** Yoruba, a corruption of the Fulfulbe *alfa*, Muslim cleric.
- aqiqah, 35:** Arabic, naming celebration done seven days after the birth of a baby.
- as-Saff, 84:** The Ranks, name given to the sixty-first chapter of the Qur'an.
- asr, 67:** Arabic, afternoon prayer; one of the five obligatory prayers in Islam.
- baraka, 55:** Arabic, a spiritual force which flows from blessed individuals or blessed objects.
- Batalhao dos Libertos, 44:** Portuguese, 'the Liberty Battalion', name given to the slaves who fought on the side of the Brazilians during the War of Independence in 1822.
- bozales, 7:** Portuguese, a name given to African slaves shipped directly from Africa to Brazil.
- candomble, 33:** Portuguese, Afro-Brazilian religion of the Ewe-Yoruba tradition.
- cantos de pretos, 29:** Portuguese, the street corners where African slaves met to be hired by potential employees, around which emerged small African markets.
- casebres, 37:** Portuguese, the name given to the secret meeting places, both urban and rural where Muslim slaves met to do their worship and to plan their revolts.
- Dajjal, 21:** Arabic, the name given to the Anti-Christ or any person who is a charlatan in religion.
- de ganho, 29:** Portuguese, a name given to slaves who lived seperately from their masters and who hired themselves out everyday and paid their masters a percentage of what they earned.
- dhuhr, 67:** Arabic, the noon prayer; one of the five obligatory prayers in Islam.
- eid, 55:** Arabic, One of two major celebrations which mark the end of fasting and pilgrimage in Islam.
- engenhos, 28:** Portuguese, sugar plantation.
- escravo, 29:** Portuguese, a name given to slaves who lived and worked with the slave master.
- fajr, 37:** Arabic, dawn prayer; one of the five obligatory prayers in Islam.
- Hajj, 55:** Pilgrimage to Mecca, an obligation to be performed a every Muslim at least once in a life-time.
- hijab, 86:** Arabic, protection, covering; amulet or talisman.
- hijra, 5:** Arabic, to emigrate or flee from disbelief or oppression.
- ibaada, 63:** Arabic, any act of worship.
- Illius qui, 6:** Latin, an edict passed by the Catholic church in 1442 guaranteeing spiritual salvation to all those who would assist in the raiding for slaves.
- Imale, 14:** Yoruba, the name given to those who follow the Muslim faith.
- imam, 35:** Arabic, leader of a Muslim community.
- jalabiyas, 63:** Arabic, distinctive long garments worn by Muslim men.
- Jama`at, 16:** Arabic, a community united around an Islamic ideology.
- jihad, 5:** Arabic, to struggle against temporeal or spiritual enemies.
- Juntas de Liberadade, 31:** Portuguese, an organization established by slaves and freedmen to manumit slaves.
- karamat, 20:** Arabic, miracles.
- ladinos, 7:** Portuguese, acculturated slave.
- lailat'l-mi`raj, 55:** Arabic, the night of the heavenly ascension of Muhammad from Mecca to Jerusalem to the seven heavens, where he recieved the obligations of prayer.
- lailat'l-qadr, 55:** Arabic, the night in which the Qur'an was revealed to Muhammad.
- madeira, 46:** Portuguese, religious objects used in the *candomble* rites.
- madrasas, 52:** Arabic, schools or colleges where the fundamentals of Islam are taught.
- maghrib, 67:** Arabic, sunset prayer; one of the five obligatory prayers in Islam.
- Mahdi, 21:** Arabic, the Awaited Reformer who renew the religion of Muhammad and act as forerunner to Jesus.
- malams, 20:** Hausa, Muslim cleric or teacher.
- marabout, 22:** Wolof corruption of the Arabic *muraabit*, a learned individual who has mastered the outward and inward aspect of Islam and protects the religion from harm.
- pardos, 65:** Portuguese, mulatto a person of mixed race.
- patacas, 87:** Portuguese, Brazilian currency equivalent to 320 *reis*.
- quilombo, 41:** Portuguese, a run-away slave community established in the bush.
- Ramadan, 55:** Arabic, the month of fasting in Islam.
- reis, 62:** Brazilian currency during the 19th century, equivalent to 39.2 pences.
- sadaqa, 62:** Arabic, voluntary alms or charity.
- salaat, 49:** Arabic, the name for prayer in Islam.
- salat'l-istikhara, 68:** Arabic, the prayer to seek aid and assistance.
- salat'l-istisqa, 68:** Arabic, the prayer for rain.
- salat'l-khawf, 68:** Arabic, the prayer of fear.
- salat'l-khusuf, 68:** Arabic, the prayer for the eclipse of the sun or moon.
- sibha, 53:** Arabic, stringed beads usually of wood which Muslims use to remember Allah.

sihara, 88: Arabic, magician.

Sunna, 23: Arabic, the words, deeds, actions, behavior and approval of Muhammad.

taqiyya, 51: Arabic, dissimulation.

taqwa, 19: Arabic, mindful of Allah.

tesseba, 63: Yoruba corruption of the Arabic *sibha*.

tira, 86: Yoruba, amulets and talismans.

ulama, : Arabic, plural for *alim*, scholar or one learned in Islamic jurisprudence.

wala, 62: Yoruba, corruption of the Arabic *al-lawh*, writing board.

wali, 20: Arabic, one befriended by Allah.

wazir, 36: Arabic, the second in charge after the *amir* or ruler.

zakat, 54: Arabic, obligatory alms on the wealth of the Muslim which they are obligated to pay.

SANKORE'



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