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African Intelligence in 19th Century Brazil: Literacy and Solidarities among Hausa Slaves

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I. Introduction

This chapter is a central part of the PhD dissertation I completed, over the years 2005 to 2009, in the Graduate Program in History at Fluminense Federal University (Universidade Federal Fluminense), in Niterói, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; I gratefully acknowledge the guidance and support of my advisor, Dr. Mariza de Carvalho Soares. The larger study attempts to shine new light on both the particular reading and writing practices, and more generally on the lettered world, of Islamic African slaves in 19th century Bahia, in northeastern Brazil. This atmosphere of literacy was fostered in madrassas in Salvador, the state's coastal capital, as well as in the interior Recôncavo region.

Throughout the chapter, I have focused on the diverse expressions of ethnicity production used to describe the Malês (as African Muslims were called at the time), whether they were thought to be of Nagô or Hausa "nations," in the corpus of Bahian studies. In researching the subject I undertook a critical reading of the Arabic Manuscripts of the Public Archive of Bahia (APEB), analyzing what the documents suggest about levels or forms of literacy, an important and strong instrument of solidarity among muslim slaves in Bahia.

My concern was to develop a nuanced understanding of the intellectual underpinnings of the 1835 Malê uprising, when hundreds of Africans (both slave and freed) occupied the streets of Salvador in the most notorious slave rebellion of Imperial Brazil. My overall argument is that the participation of Hausa intellectuals was of crucial importance to the uprising's intelligentsia, a fact long overlooked by the historiography in Brazil. My hypothesis is that hausas created slaves streams of solidarities in several moments and rebellions before this, occurred by 1835, which created the knowledge and the experience necessary for these events.

I – In Search of an African "Literature"

"Hearsay tells us that 'at the world's beginning, there was an old, old woman, so ancient that it seemed death had forgotten her. She was nearly blind and could not walk, but tremble; she could but barely hear. No one wished to be near her, not even approach her abode in a hole on a mountainside. She was the Mother of the Gold.

There was nearby a beautiful girl. One day Death appeared, and carried away her father and mother. She saw that she was without food and support, and decided to set off for the mountainside. The Old Woman met her halfway and accompanied her back to her cavern.

The people in surrounding villages thought it was ridiculous—such a beautiful girl, holed up with an old woman who seemed to have been born before God and who had turned supremely ugly.

The girl, however, had discovered happiness. In the hole on the mountainside, she discovered, everything was made of silver: the walls, the ceiling, the floor, the pillars, even the moss. Abundance and peace were the nature of life."

And how ends this story, brought from Africa to Brazil by hearsay? "After the Mother of the Gold transformed herself into the Sacred Serpent, rains of gold fell across the African continent. But the Moors killer her, and this wickedness brought grim consequences for the earth. The lands suffered drought as the rainwater stopped, just as the gold had ceased. People grew hungry and destitute, forests became deserts as vermin and pests multiplied. War broke out everywhere, dividing kingdoms and clearing the way for territorial conquests by the Europeans. Some of the gold that had once fallen as rain was held by the soil, and it is this gold that men pry from rock, in pockets and veins, or sift in baskets, at the cost of great labor: fine strands of hair from the head of the young woman that the Mother of the Gold sheltered in her cave, and who would admire her own beauty

reflected in the silver-filigreed grotto. The Mother of the Gold would take the young woman to bathe in the very lake that later, when the Mother of the Gold had become the Sacred Serpent and had rained her gold in glittering showers, became her graveyard at the hand of the Moors."

This tale, attributed to the Hausa people, was included in the book Os Mitos Africanos no Brasil [African Myths in Brazil] [1]published in 1937 by Antonio Joaquim de Souza Carneiro (1882-1942), father of famed scholar Edson Carneiro. Souza Carneiro collected it in the Bahian Recôncavo, at some moment around the turn of the 20th century—perhaps directly from a "daughter of the Malês," as we will see below in Souza Carneiro's descriptive classification. Certainly, the story's imaginative depth and rich symbolism offer ample opportunity for archetypal interpretation. The feminine, here represented in the opposition (or complementary encounter) of the women at different stages of life and physical attractiveness, is also open to psychoanalytic analysis. The old woman's protecting and bathing of the younger, as well as the extensive rains, are both elements common to myths regarding nature's life-nourishing powers. Notable too are the use of a mirror to "see" oneself, and the girl's fearless decision to climb the mountain—a high and threatening place associated with limits that her contemporaries did not dare approach; the highs and lows in the story might well represent the conscious and subconscious. The implied presence of a male observer, hidden and spying on the feminine (often portrayed as a hunter in other tales), is also suggestive.

Ancestral stories like this one are present in all cultures. They have inspired fascinating interpretive work by Jungian scholars such as Clarissa Pinkola Estés, who attained best-seller status with the book Mulheres que Correm com Lobos [Women Who Run with the Wolves]. [2]Although the Hausa tale is clearly amenable to such lines of inquiry, such an endeavor does not form part of the current study (and I am not qualified to address them thoroughly). Still, it bears underscoring the point that these mythical narratives are global; they represent a wealth of symbolic material that is universally accessible. Estés dedicated twenty years of research to the collection of fairy tales, folklore, legends and myths of the Nordic peoples. Through them she sought to delineate what she called the woman's wild soul: a soul of instinctive nature, always watchful, waiting to be rediscovered in a world given over to the exigencies of modern capitalism.

The myth of the Mother of the Gold was heard and transcribed by Souza Carneiro at some point (perhaps even years) before 1937, when it was still possible to interview Africans, or the last generation of ex-slaves and their direct descendants, in Brazil. He stated: "It was more or less forty years ago that we resolved to register folkloric material and the phrases of Popular Language, such as might often be described as diversions or curiosities," [3] which strengthens the proposition that he was in the Recôncavo sometime just prior to or after the turn of the century. His catalog entry for the Hausa narrative (#180 in the book) was remarkable for several reasons; the description is as follows:

1,2, Bahia – 3, Recôncavo – 4, Capital – 5, MOTHER OF THE GOLD – 6, Tale – 7, Mother of the World e Mother of the Gold – 8, Hunter, Metamorphoses – 9, African / black forms – 12, Origin of gold deposits -- 22, Gold – 23, Daughter of the Malês – 25, Souza Carneiro.[4]

These descriptors provide additional context for understanding some of the tale's dramatic turns, not least the murder of the Mother of the Gold by the Moors and the onset of "the territorial conquests by the Europeans." They identify provocative new "signs" about the Hausa history and worldview, both in Africa and in Brazil.[5]

Viewing the story as a form of social oral history, we are reminded that the Hausa ethnic group was already Islamic when, in 1804, it was conquered by Usman Dan Fodio and his jihadist troops who were then advancing through western Africa. The Hausa were enslaved by believers said to be purer (the Fulas or Fulanis), because they supposedly did not follow or even understand the Koran precisely, and engaged in fetishistic rites. The story also acknowledges the growing European presence in the region, a transformative event that, coincidentally or not, brought strangers greedy for gold to the Hausa at about the same time that a drought had

[1] Carneiro, Antonio Joaquim de Souza. Os Mitos Africanos no Brasil. (Rio de Janeiro: Companhia Editora Nacional, 1937).

[2] Estés, Clarissa Pinkola. Mulheres que Correm com Lobos: Mitos e Histórias do Arquétipo da Mulher Selvagem. (12d ed. Rio de Janeiro: Rocco, 1999)

[3] Carneiro, Os Mitos Africanos no Brasil, p. 15.

[4] Carneiro, Os Mitos Africanos no Brasil, p. 346.

[5] Signs are understood here according to Carlo Ginzburg's concepts in Mitos, Emblemas e Sinais.. São Paulo: Cia das Letras, 1998.

desiccated the landscape around them. All this reverberated in the memory of the Hausas, who told and retold this myth in Imperial Brazil. Dislocation and slavery represented the tragic end to a past of wealth and liberty, which the myth sketches in vivid color:

After the Mother of the Gold transformed herself into the Sacred Serpent, rains of gold fel l across the African continent. But the Moors killer her, and this wickedness brought grim consequences for the earth. The lands suffered drought as the rainwater stopped, just as the gold had ceased. People grew hungry and destitute, forests became deserts as vermin and pests multiplied. War broke out everywhere…

These lines—which present a situation exceedingly distinct from the "abundance and peace" described previously—are worth repeating, since they were repeated countless times over the generations until they arrived to us, on the other side of the Atlantic. Arthur Ramos has noted that this type of "hearsay" is particularly appealing to Brazilians, being that "it is very rare, among our people, for a simple description not to be accompanied by grand explanatory gestures that 'embellish' the narrative."[6] Referring to the novels of José Lins do Rego, Ramos evokes the daily adventures of "old narrators of stories, that wandered from plantation to plantation with their rucksacks of tales the children loved and quarreled over" during northeastern Brazil's era of sugar.[7] Gilberto Freyre, too, according to Ramos, made a similar connection.[8] For his part, Ramos suggested that he personally recalled encountering this narrative style as part of African oral literature in Brazil:

I remember well, from my infancy, these old slave women who told stories. And today I perceive the explanation for those expansive gestures, the whole-body expression, the musical inflections of the voice that sometimes arrived at singing, accompanying the narration. The storyteller in the Northeast would never be satisfied, for example, to say: 'once upon a time a very old man, bent, and with an unsteady gait.' Just like the African akpalos,[9] the storyteller relates and acts. 'Once upon a time there was a very old man, as old as F. (adducing the name of someone living in the locale), and who walked like this (the 'like this' always introducing a corporeal auxiliary of the spoken narrative, as in this case the speaker begins to trudge in a shaky and hunched manner).[10]

Paul Zumthor (1915-1995), an historian of medieval literature, grappled with the question of hearsay and developed the "index of orality" to assess it. According to Zumthor, this phrase addresses everything within a text that informs us about the interventions of the human voice in its publication; that is, about the change(s) occurring in the text from its earlier stages to the present. For Zumthor, who focused particularly on the orality of medieval texts, especially those of the troubadours, "To admit that a text, at some point in its existence, had been oral is to become conscious of a historical fact that cannot be confused with the situation in which written marks on paper are created… Thus it falls to us to try to see the other face in this mirror-text, by scraping off a bit of the tin."[11]

No substantive clues remain to explain how this Hausa myth (as well as the others compiled by Souza Carneiro) departed Africa, crossed the Atlantic, and arrived in the Americas. If we had the sources, this chapter

[6] Ramos, Arthur. O Folclore Negro do Brasil. (2d ed. Rio De Janeiro: Livraria-Editora da Casa do Estudante do Brasil, 1935), p. 155.

[7] Ramos, O Folclore Negro do Brasil, p. 155.

[8] Ramos, O Folclore Negro do Brasil, p.155, ref Gilberto Freyre, Casa Grande e Senzala. p. 371.

[9] I will not enter here into an analysis of the importance of the "telling of stories," which is not exclusively an African custom. My analysis draws from the ideas of Leonardo Arroyo, Literatura Infantil: Ensaio de Preliminares para a sua História e suas Fontes (São Paulo: Editora Melhoramentos, 1968, p. 51), found in Rosângela Trajano, "Efeitos Educacionais e Terapêuticos da Contação de Histórias," available at www.geocities.com/rosangarn.contacaohistorias.pdf (accessed 13 February 2008). About the akpalôs, Arroyo states, "Old black men and women, the akpalôs, the arokin and the dialis did not limit themselves to the narrative process in prose. They turned to poetry as well to lend, naturally, a more dramatic tone to their stories. Their lullabies, sweet songs to soothe young Portuguese, were modified by this black influence that altered words and adapted plots to regional conditions, and to their own beliefs as well as to those of Indians." Unfortunately it was not possible to determine which African language Arroyo is referring to.

[10] Ramos, O Folclore Negro do Brasil, p. 155.

[11] Zumthor, Paul. A Letra e a Voz: A "Literatura" Medieval. (São Paulo: Cia das Letras, 1993). P. 35. The reader might well observe that, just as Zumthor dwells on the significance of literature, the present study takes the perspective of a haussa "literature"—another instance of fealty to one aspect of literary production.

might well have been devoted to a "history of reading" approach to the story of the Mother of the Gold. [12] How would the different narrators have recounted the tale, and how would their different gestures have enlivened the African saga? How was the story preserved, if not through memorization? Souza Carneiro did not offer many clues, noting only that he encountered it in the Recôncavo region of Bahia—which we do know was the scene of various uprisings by African Muslims between 1807 and 1835.[13] But he was convinced of its origins among the Hausa, "and not other Mohammedans, or Malês, quipós of Allah, or African Moors."[14] So why was one of his terms of classification for this tale "Daughter of the Malês"? Was this a simple inconsistency, overlooked in the editing? Was the tale perhaps not exclusively to be associated with the Hausa, but with other ethnic groups as well? Did he confuse the Malês with the Hausas? Souza Carneiro explained his categorization this way: "The Malês – (and here we refer only to the Hausas, and not to the other Muslims, or Malês)." If that is the case, the Mother of the Gold is a Hausa tale, and the daughter of the Malês who recounted it for him derived her lineage from the Hausas who had been a notable presence in the Recôncavo since the early decades of the nineteenth century.

The goal of this chapter is to pursue an intriguing hypothesis put forward by the historians Mariza de Carvalho Soares and Juliana Barreto de Farias,[15] which states that "the intelligence behind the [1835] uprising was Hausa." I suggest that we can verify this proposition by pursuing the various "levels" of textual production of the Hausas—whether oral or written—while still in Africa and in Brazil. Research in the Arabic Manuscripts of the Public Archive of Bahia was guided by this framework, particularly with respect to the three series of documents presented by historian João José Reis as clearly Nagô. At this stage, the aim of my research is less to transform historians' general interpretation of the uprising (by claiming that it was fully thought out and planned by Hausas) than to demonstrate how the revolt's leadership was influenced by a perspective that was distinctly both Muslim and Hausa.

To put this argument in the context of the dissertation in which it appears, let me add that in the first chapter of that work I engage João José Reis's maxim—appearing in the writings of Ambassador Alberto da Costa e Silva— that "If we want to expressly define the 1835 movement, we could say that the conspiracy was Malê and the rebellion, African."[16] In the following pages, for reasons that might already be clear, I have attempted to get beyond dichotomous versions of reality; the very expression "Malê uprising" to characterize the events of the night between 24 and 25 January 1835 obscures the numerous contributions of the Hausas. The Arabic Documents collected at APEB suggested that indeed, the rebellion's intellectual leadership came from Hausas. For example, hausas were responsible for financing madrassas in Salvador and some of them where teachers of Arabic language and Koran to others, probably recent arrived at Bahia from Africa. Also, hausas used to be owners of small stores that imported panos da costa and American cotton to produce clothes. We believe that they were directly responsible for manufacturing the abadas (long shirts) that were used by the insurgents during the rebellion.

It is helpful here to observe with Arthur Ramos that the popular African tales influencing Brazilian folklore had diverse origins, and could be categorized by theme. "One group spoke of heroic, mythical acts, often of destruction; typically these featured mythological hero-ancestor figures that would intervene with a civilizing influence. A second dealt with all types of totemic survivals… A third contains the other forms of

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[12] In an interview with the journal Acervo, Roger Chartier argues that a "history of reading" must deal with the production, circulation, and reception of the work in question. Rainho, Maria do Carmo T. (ed.). "Leituras e Leitores." Acervo: Revista do Arquivo Nacional (Rio de Janeiro), vol 8 #s1 / 2, Jan-Dec 1995.

[13] Nina Rodrigues, Brazilian anthropologist and physician, classified these revolts as either haussa or nagô. For Rodrigues, who founded the practice of criminal anthropology in Brazil, haussas were responsible for the revolts of 1807, 1809, and 1813, while nagôs fomented the unrest in 1826, 1827, 1828, 1830 and 1835. See Nina Rodrigues, Os Africanos no Brasil (Brasília: UnB, 2004, 8th ed), pp. 59-80.

[14] Carneiro, Os Mitos Africanos no Brasil, p. 347.

[15] Farias, Juliana Barreto, Soares, Mariza de Carvalho.. "Religious Tolerance: Black Muslims among White Christians in 19th and Early 20th Century Rio de Janeiro." Slavery, Islam and Diaspora. (Toronto, Canada: Harriet Tubman Resource Center on the African Diaspora, York University, October 2003).

[16] It was difficult to verify this line, from Costa e Silva, in Reis's work. It appears not in the first edition of 1986, but in the second edition, in 1987, on p. 151. Then, in the epilogue to a later edition in 2003, Reis writes of the rebellion: "With a base in African roots, they constructed a new culture of resistance, inside of which Islam would grow stronger." And this: "Religious identity and ethnic identity converged in the mobilization not only of slaves, but also of freed nagôs." Reis, João José. Rebelião Escrava no Brasil: a história do levante dos malês (i835). (São Paulo: Cia. das Letras, 2003) p. 545.

popular stories—historical reminiscence, morality tales.” [17] Of all these, stories involving animals, which Ramos grouped in the second category, had the greatest influence in Brazil. Many of the Hausa narratives compiled by Souza Carneiro seem to fit here: for instance, “The Flying Crab” (#181). “The Invincible Beast” (#182) features the mythical character of the leopard— “quipó, or kpó in the Hausa language.”[18]

Ramos draws a comparison between the African tales in which “the range of animals is immense” and European folklore, notable for its “repertoire of relatively fixed stories sharing a small set of creatures, such as the wolf and the fox.” [19] The African tales are further distinguished by a tendency to show animals “embodying human roles… [they display] human sentiments: cunning, kindness, a sense of humor.” [20] Ramos further attempted to map the African tales by region: in the central Sudan (source of most of the slaves that were trafficked to Bahia in the early nineteenth century, who are the subjects / objects of this study), the animal with place of privilege is the hare; in the Guinea Coast, the pygmy antelope; in the Lower Niger, the turtle and spider. [21] The animal present in the Mother of the Gold story is the snake, a sacred symbol of abundance vanquished by the greed and ineptness of the Moors.

If the political dimension of the Hausa submission to the Moors appears to be clearly translated into Afro-Brazilian oral folklore, a rich written literature was also produced in response to the encounter. Whatever else the Islamic conquests across West Africa achieved, in commerce or religion, they resulted in great writing, as literacy was promoted among many of the conquered peoples. Jack Goody has declared, “the first system of writing to make an impact in western Africa, south of the Sahara, was Arabic.” [22] To understand the prominence there of the language of the prophet Mohammed, that the peace of God may be with him, [23] it is necessary to recall the path of Islamic advance through the important Yoruba-speaking cities. The 1804 jihad, and the political disintegration of the Old Oyo Empire, deeply affected the Muslim community; one impact was to create an apparent divide between the Yoruba who were not, or not sufficiently, Islamicized, and “Islam.”[24] However, according to historian T.G.O. Gbadamosi, at the University of Lagos in Nigeria, despite the fallout from the collapse of the Oyo Empire the Muslim community persevered in its attempts to reorganize. Even before the turn of the century they had grown in number, status, and power. There was even discussion about introducing Islamic law, and creating an Islamic legal state. [25]

Still, asks Gbadamosi, how were the forces of Islamic consolidation able to contend with the real diversity in the apparent unity of Yoruba culture—peopled by subgroups distributed in cities such as Oyo, Egba, Egbado, Ijebu, Ekin Ondo, Akoko, and Ikale? The answer to this question helps us arrive at the development of Hausa oral / written literary production. For Gbadamosi there were five definitive characteristics of Yoruba identity. Initially, they should recognize the importance of Ifé as the cradle of this culture, above all competitors; as part of this, they believed that all Yoruba were omo Oduduwa, or descendants of Oduduwa of Ifé (which virtually guaranteed that Yoruba political leaders would emphasize their connections with this city). This belief imparted discursive homogeneity to the identity of a large group characterized by diverse ancestry. Beyond the idea of cultural heritage, the language helped unite people as well. [26] Of course there is wide debate surrounding the origin of Yoruba identity, with many scholars arguing that it appeared first in Sierra Leone, along with the

[17] Ramos, O Folclore Negro do Brasil, p. 157.
[18] Carneiro, Os Mitos Africanos no Brasil, p. 356.
[19] Ramos, O Folclore Negro do Brasil, p. 158.
[20] Ramos, O Folclore Negro do Brasil, p. 158.
[21] Ramos, O Folclore Negro do Brasil, p. 158.
[22] Goody, Jack.The Interface Between the Written and the Oral. (London: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 25.
[23] Among Muslims, translation of the name of the prophet is forbidden, and each utterance of his name should be accompanied by exhortations such as the one presented here (which was done in recognition of the tradition).
[24] Gbadamosi, T.G.O. The Growth of Islam among the Yoruba, 1841-1908. (London: Longman Group Limited, 1978), p. XIV.
[25] Gbadamosi, The Growth of Islam among the Yoruba, p. XV.
[26] Gbadamosi, The Growth of Islam among the Yoruba, p. 1.

freed African slaves brought to that area. Among others, the works of Toyin Falola [27] and Robin Law [28] have brought great insight to this argument.

Among the other factors of Yoruba identity would be its deeply urban nature—one which, at the same time, permits a close relationship of exchange with rural areas; its well-organized political hierarchy, with the Obá or Bal at the apex; and the integration of numerous religious and semi-religious philosophies into its political and judicial structures. But belief systems and sacred objects constitute perhaps the most significant factor of the Yoruba culture. Faith in the supreme Olodumare, in the orixás and the ancestors, along with the interlinked practices of magic and medicine, can be considered the central element of Yoruba religious tradition. In fact, as Gbadamosi observes, the urban-rural model, common language, and strategies of political hierarchy would later serve as efficient facilitators of the growth of Islam in Yoruba territory.[29] Taking advantage of these elements, the Muslims—rooted in the Koran and Arabic language—confronted both religious plurality and the imposition of European values. It bears recalling that the understanding of what it meant to be a Muslim, at this point in the nineteenth century, depended largely on previous encounters with local groups. In Africa Remembered, Philip Curtin raises the subject of what we might call (in a simplified manner, but more in line with the sensitivities of a history of reading) "layers of culture"—paraphrasing the notion of "layers of reading" explored by Chartier, Darnton, Burke, and others.[30]

Gradually, the Islamic faith had made inroads in the regions above those of the Yoruba speakers (what Anglophone historians call Yorubaland), with the new precepts being adapted in distinct ways in each case. For example, Bornu was the haven of some Ummayyad Muslim refugees around the eleventh century, and the city over time became progressively Muslim. The Songhai Empire, reached by Islam at about the same era as Bornu, grew dramatically in power by the fifteenth century. Branching out from Bornu, Songhai, and Mali, the religion of the prophet Mohammed arrived in Hausa cities such as Kano in the fourteenth century—carried by the efforts of small businessmen and fortunetellers as well as marabouts (priests). It is not known with precision when Islam first appeared in Yorubaland, but there is no doubt that by the seventeenth century there were Muslims throughout the territory. There is also little argument over the fact that by the late eighteenth century, Islam was so pervasive that Yorubas were actively carrying the religion to locales as far-flung as Porto Novo and Dahomey. It is important to emphasize that these were Yoruba speakers in diverse geographical societies; that is, in the seventeenth century, few of the people speaking Yoruba considered themselves "Yoruba people." This was a language group, not a social group, but by 1840, Islam was a common feature in Owu, Ardra, Badagry, Igbo, Ijana, Ikoyi, Ogbomoso, Ketu and Lagos.[31] This period is significant, because in 1840 the group of Hausas who are the focus of the present study were already in Bahia, where they had helped lead a series of rebellions against colonial Brazilian authority.

The Oyo Empire, too, was deeply Islamicized. In the capital of the same name, according to Gbadamosi, Islam was first introduced by an Arab descendant—Afaa Yigi—probably during the reign of Alafin Ajagbo (in the mid-seventeenth century). [32] It is thought that Alafin asked Afaa to reside in the palace as a guest, and that Afaa had soon attracted around him a group of converts. Although initially small, this following was maintained and expanded by in particular other Arabs, as well as Hausa slaves. [33] But the growth was such that, until 1840, all the other important centers of Islam in the region took the Oyo Empire as a reference. That is all the more remarkable when we recall that the first Muslim communities were composed of believers who spoke different languages (Yoruba, Hausa, et cetera) and who had come from such cities as Dindi, Molowa, Molaba,

[27] See Marcelo Bittencourt and Roquinaldo Ferreira's interview with Falola, "A Trajetória Intelectual de um Africano," in Tempo #20. (Niterói, Rio de Janeiro: Eduff, Jan. 2006). Pages 177-86 provide important bibliographic references.

[28] See Law, Robin, "Etnias de Africanos na Diáspora: Novas Considerações sobre os Significados do termo 'Mina,'" Tempo #20, . (Niterói, Rio de Janeiro: Eduff, Jan. 2006) pp. 109-31.

[29] Gbadamosi, The Growth of Islam among the Yoruba, pp. 2-3.

[30] On this topic, see: Darnton, Robert, O Grande Massacre de Gatos (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Graal, 1986); Chartier, Roger, "As Prácticas da Escrita," in Ariés, P. e DUBY, Georges, ed., História da Vida Privada (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1991, p.113-61); Chartier, A Ordem dos Livros: Leitores, Autores e Bibliotecas na Europa entre os séculos XIV e XVIII (Brasília: Editora da Universidade de Brasília, 1994); Burke, Peter. A Arte da Conversação (São Paulo: Unesp, 1995).

[31] Gbadamosi, The Growth of Islam among the Yoruba, p. 4.

[32] Gbadamosi, in The Growth of Islam among the Yoruba, indicates in a footnote that he derived this information from interviews with leaders of a Muslim community, Ise Yin, in 1965.

[33] Gbadamosi, in The Growth of Islam among the Yoruba, p. 5.

Hausa, Bornu, and Nupe. Within these diverse communities, many of the Hausas were in fact slaves, obtained by war or commerce; their labors were matched to their perceived abilities, e.g. barbers, herders, or horsemen.

However, the most significant role that Hausas played was one associated with their capacity for oral and written literary production. Gbadamosi found that those Hausa slaves who were both Muslim and fluent in Arabic were held in high regard in this society—whether for their learning, devotion, or skill in fashioning powerful amulets. These individuals were critical to the religious life of the community through their assigned work in both instruction and ritual leadership. Despite their actual social position as slaves, they enjoyed high status, with some even being considered mallams or elite teachers of the Koran. Such slaves commanded respect in public and might even defy political leaders.

During the reign of Alafin Ajiboyede, the last Alafin of Igboho, a certain Muslim mu'allim from Nupe initiated a protest against him, in reaction to his cruel assassinations of nobles and leaders deemed hypocritical: "These actions are a sin against God, who took the life of his own son." [34]

In a general sense, it is clear that literacy—the ability to read, and to learn from reading—always confers a sort of power on those who have it. But the passage above implies something beyond literacy. Did the attitude of the mu'allim reflect a sense of ethics, cloaked in an apparent political dispute? Whatever the case, other questions arise: what did these individuals read? How did they read, and why? We know that written language developed in upper North Africa, in the Nile Valley, in the third millennium before Christ. Later, written alphabets were carried by Phoenicians, Jews, and Christians across the rest of North Africa to Ethiopia. But it was the advent of Islam in Niger, around 1000 AD, that sparked a new and specific form of literacy in West Africa. The term "specific" is used here in the sense described by anthropologist Jack Goody, which emphasizes the significance of a text-based religion (such as the Koran for Islam) in the process.[35]

In the early period of Islamic influence in West Africa "the ability to read, write, and comprehend Arabic was quite limited, even in Hausa territories. Nonetheless, the dimensions of an Islamic-derived literacy were experimented with through a range of activities far greater than it might at first appear." [36] But the first stages of training typically involved parrot-like repetition; evidence of this can be found among the Arabic-language documents left by slaves who participated in the 1835 Malê uprising in Salvador. In Document #2, Domingos, a Hausa slave belonging to João Pinto Leite, included forty meticulous rewrites of "The Quraysh," Sura 106 from the Koran. [37] This section may been translated, adapting the work of Koran scholar Samir El Hayek, as "In the name of Allah, the gracious, the merciful. (1) This should be cherished by the Quraysh (2) Just as they cherish the journeys of the winter and the summer (3) They should worship the Master of this House (4) That he will prevent them from starving and protect them from fear and danger!"[38]

Reichert [39]provides a literal translation of Domingos's version of Sura 106, which is suggestive for the present analysis of literacy among the intellectual leaders of the 1835 rebellion: "(1) in the name of

[34] Gbadamosi, in The Growth of Islam among the Yoruba, p. 6.
[35] Goody, The Interface Between the Written and the Oral, pp. 125-26.
[36] Goody, The Interface Between the Written and the Oral, p. 126.
[37] "Quraysh" is a typical English-language transliteration of this Arabic word, which in Portuguese appears as "Coraixitas."
[38] This is a suitable moment to acknowledge that, if translating a text from one language to another involves a host of complexities and best guesses, the present paper occasionally ups the ante by hazarding English translations of Portuguese translations of Arabic words and phrases. This version of Sura 106 is such an invention. According to El Hayek, "the Quraysh constituted the most noble tribe of all Arabia, and the Prophet was one of them. They were custodians of Caaba, the most important reliquary of Arabia, and the possession of Mecca gave them a triple advantage: they held a position of dominance and influence over other tribes; their central location brought numerous commercial benefits; and since Mecca was, by Arabic custom, never to be violated by warring, their stature was secure." He also notes that "the commercial caravans of the Quraysh made them splendidly wealthy, and attracted people from distant regions who were interested in both spiritual and material enrichment." See The Koran, translated by Professor Samir El Hayek (São Paulo: Marsa Editora Jornalística Ltda, 2004), p. 751.
[39] The Arabic Documents of the Public Archive of the State of Bahia were edited, transcribed, translated, and annotated by Rolf Reichert, in collaboration with Ahmend-Bioud Abdelghani, curator of the Paris National Library. I used the texts and images of these documents appearing in the journal Afro-Ásia, published by the Center of AfroAsian Studies of the Federal University of Bahia, Salvador.

compassionate, merciful god… because of the agreement of the quarysh agreement with the caravans of winter and summer… to worship the master of this temple that nourishes them (2) saving them from hunger and soothing their fears. (The text is repeated 39 times, without the Bismillah)." [40] The two texts are similar, both in broad outline and in many nuances. Reichert surmised that the Document #2 in Bahia's Public Archive was the work of a "student," since the abundant repetition would provide training in both handwriting and memorization. That may be true, and yet how can we reconcile this with the apparent fact that Domingos was also the original author of Documents #5 and 6?

For now, let us retake the wider topic of the forms of learning and modes of texts produced by West African Muslims, in order to identify the presence of Hausa intellectuals in Bahia at around the same time or later. My goal here is to sketch (and only lightly sketch) the forms of literacy that are observable on both sides of the Atlantic, in order to suggest parallels and hypotheses—verification of which may be impossible, given the nature of available sources.

The work of Jack Goody reminds us that in Africa, as elsewhere, written language would have been adapted to local idioms, even if those charged with instruction may not have encouraged the tendency.[41] He suggests that this was an important characteristic of Hausa cultural life in northern Nigeria by the eighteenth century, but traces of similar processes can also be seen in the Arabic documents captured in Bahia during the inquiry into the 1835 revolt. Consider, for example, Document #30 of the so-called "Third Series" of the documents currently housed at APEB. 42 Consider, for example, Document #30 of the so-called "Third Series" of the documents currently housed at APEB. [42]

For Reichert and his collaborator Abdelghani, this document "occupies a special place among its equals. It is the only one that is absolutely undecipherable."[43] The specialists were stumped: "While it is written in Arabic letters, it does not form a coherent text at all in that idiom, except for the first line (the Bismillah), a few isolated words in lines 9 and 10 (allah / God, 'ala / about), and the ending 'praise God, Lord of the Worlds' (verse 2 of the first Sura)." [44] Still, undaunted, they showed the document to "scholars of various Sudanese languages (Hausa, Yoruba, Peul [Fula]); members of the National School of Oriental Languages, in Paris." These experts all affirmed that "the text was not written in any of the aforementioned idioms."[45]

Keeping in mind the possible similarities between processes occurring in Africa and the Americas, we may note references to various amulets and "strong prayers" in the thirty Arabic texts collected after the 1835 uprising; and Goody highlighted "the use of written material with magical intentions" throughout West Africa. Reichert, studying the Bahian documents, learned about and grew interested in Arabic geomancy. [46] In most cases, a "strong prayer" was accompanied by multiple designs; one of these includes the specific requests to Allah, typically within a drawing of Solomon's cross. As described by Document #18, from the 3rd Series:

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[40] Reichert, Rolf.. "Os Documentos Árabes do Arquivo Público da Bahia: Textos Corânicos, 1a série." Textos Corânicos.Afro-Ásia 2-3, 1966, pp. 169-76.

[41] In chapter 3 of this dissertation I attempt to show that this hybrid literature can be seen as a fruit of creolization, as Arabic production was absorbed by (and transformed) local literary traditions. But rather than calling it creole literature, I favor the linguistic term aljamiada, implying Arabic script but (from the Arabic aljamis, "the other"), the literature of the other or of those who are not of Arabic descent.

[42] Reichert, Rolf. "Os Documentos Árabes do Arquivo Público da Bahia: Textos Corânicos, 3a série. Amuletos, Exercícios de Escrita, etc." Afro-Ásia 6-7 n.d., pp. 127-32.

[43] Reichert, "Os Documentos Árabes do Arquivo Público da Bahia. 3a série," p. 131.

[44] Reichert, "Os Documentos Árabes do Arquivo Público da Bahia: 3a série," p. 131.

[45] Reichert, "Os Documentos Árabes do Arquivo Público da Bahia: 3a série," pp. 131-32. There is no mention of the Nupe language, spoken by peoples referred to in Bahia (where they were numerous) as Tapas. Other African languages may well have been spoken in Bahia at the time.

[46] Although a full study of these subjects is beyond the confines of the present research, available sources on the contemporary practices of malê candomblé suggest provocative continuities with earlier forms—e.g., the "reading" of numbered squares. Scholars of these candomblés, notably Maria Helena Farelli, have observed the existence of written words and phrases in "magic squares" in the terreiros of Salvador and Rio de Janeiro. Farelli's work Malês, Os Negros Bruxos: Os Candomblés de Origem Islâmica, seus Magos e seus Feitiços (São Paulo: Madras Editora, 1998) includes an image of the "Magic Square that Attracts Improvements," strikingly similar to the design on Arabic Document #24 (appearing on p. 17 of this chapter).

Inside the circle are four groupings of letters, repeated one time: a-h-m, a-'d, h-l'. With the exception of the groups s'-d, meaning "felicity, fortune," none form a word or root.The letters b'-s, in the lower part of the circle mean "injury, detriment, badness." Around the circle are individual letters; beneath it reads "There is no power or force, save for God the highest and the Strongest," a formula favored by Muslims in any difficult or dangerous situation. All the letters, alone or in groups, can have a numeric value, as many examples of magic Figures reveals.[47]

It is impossible not to notice the parallels in stylistic innovation between the literary strategies in West Africa and Bahia—notably the use of Arabic script to write in other idioms, and the belief in magical powers of words, whether incorporated in amulets or strong prayers. (The latter practice can also be observed in the Iberian Peninsula.) But there is a difference in the social context of literacy: in Bahia, Malê slaves who could read and write at all enjoyed a higher status among their fellow slaves, whereas in West Africa, according to Goody, although literacy and illiteracy were acknowledged social categories, they did not automatically dictate hierarchical levels of prestige.[48] Although considering the forms of learning involved in "textual" production (broadly understood) in West Africa, I believe it advisable to emphasize the practices discernible in Hausa territories, as well as the other kingdoms where Muslims came from, rather than attempting to characterize the entire region (unless in those cases where we can demonstrate that a practice was widely shared). The scope of analysis can also be narrowed somewhat by focusing on the areas that we know were in contact with Brazil. We know that the African Muslims in Brazil engaged in hearsay, and—although Souza Carneiro made no mention of hearing or seeing Arabic during his fieldwork in Bahia—that many of them worked diligently to read and write in Arabic. What might explain this effort, which was complicated by distance from the Islamic references in Africa as well as the difficult existence all Africans in Brazil endured? Perhaps one answer is the magical power attributed to the production of texts, as illustrated by several of the documents described as "strong prayers" in the Bahian archive.

Included in the third series of documents Reichert compiled is an amulet that had been taken from Domingos, the Hausa slave of João Pinto Leite, during the official inquiry of the revolt. Labeling it Document #24, Reichert described it as "another magic design, rectangular, and reminiscent of the one on Document #21" in which "the squares were filled with references to the omnipotence of God." He refers the reader to the Jalad al-Din, which contains a similar drawing. A reproduction and translation (from Reichert and Abdelghani) of the piece that official investigators took from Domingos appears below.

Document #24, "The Magic Square"

(Translation and Comments, Reichert & Abdelghani)

Hearings: 1835. Slave insurrection. The Court.

(1) in the name of compassionate and merciful
God read the following in the eight squares:
1. let this be blessed
2. and the city of god
3. everything in…
4. (illegible)
5. we left to him of…
6. rebelled (?)
7. powerful man
8. (illegible)
(2) there is no power or force without god the highest and mighty
(3) the mighty

In the oral and written traditions of West Africa that we are discussing, "recourse to the 'magic of the book' was not the only benefit of writing, although it was the one most coveted by the pagan world." [49] Indeed, while governments employed the written word for various practical functions—historical accounts, political treaties, and so forth—it was writing's magical and religious aspects" that most impressed the general populace: "They were more preoccupied with writing as means of communicating with God and natural forces, than with it as a utilitarian instrument of personal or social ascension. In this sense, being illiterate was nothing to be

[47] Reichert, "Os Documentos Árabes do Arquivo Público da Bahia. 3a série," p. 128.
[48] Reichert, "Os Documentos Árabes do Arquivo Público da Bahia. 3a série," p. 127.
[49] Goody, The Interface Between the Written and the Oral, p. 132.

ashamed of." Precisely because of its magical dimension, Arabic writing underwent a flourishing of new forms and adherence in Brazil—which is not to say that the writing of other Western religions was unimportant, but relatively speaking, Arabic was more influential. For Goody, the space in which this influence "of Islam on non-Islamic and unlettered cultures is most immediately apparent is in the spheres of magic and religion."[50] Muslims taken from Africa to Brazil as slaves quickly became notorious not only for their production of magical texts, but for the diverse materials or "supports" they were applied to (including but not limited to parchment and wood).

The nature of Islamic expansion in West Africa, too, helped maintain the potential for magic through utilization of the Koran as a religious resource. Scholars have noted that orally transmitted religions in Africa are essentially eclectic in their approaches to the supernatural; there were no written codes determining which deities should be worshipped where. There was a flexible structure of concepts and beliefs that was often receptive to change in the way of new ideas, practices, and references.[51] To a certain degree, and in two basic ways, Islam entered in conflict with this reality.

Islam differed from the other "new cults" in that entering it required both participating in rituals and rites of passage, and committing to its requirements of study as a written religion. It was strongly suggested that adepts should reject any other forms of religious approximation to God; but in reality even many Muslim leaders coexisted with other beliefs on a personal level, since not all were willing to totally renounce the faiths they held previously. [52] In that way, the contours of the writing's magical content continued to transform as Islam took root across different African kingdoms. In the "pagan" Ashanti kingdom, for instance, ninety percent of the collection of Arabic manuscripts which date from the beginning of the nineteenth century refer to magic in one form or another. [53]Of the thirty Arabic documents Reichert analyzed that were captured after the 1835 rebellion in Bahia, eleven were expressly classified as "strong prayers," "magical writings" (he usually used this term to describe script inserted into designs) or "amulets." That is about 37% of the total—significant, but small in comparison to the Ashanti documents.

Of course, different observers reached these judgments, and they are likely not completely compatible. Reichert's analysis was both rigorous and elegant, yet one might suggest that even the documents consisting of unremarkable reproductions of passages from the Koran might have an undertone of magic, since all were created just prior to the 1835 rebellion with the objective to guarantee victory and "manter o corpo fechado" (a phrase still common in contemporary Afro-Brazilian culture meaning "to keep the body closed" and thus protected from dangers, especially including trickery or witchcraft). The approach of Reichert and his collaborator Abdelghani was guided by the analytic model of the Book of Mercy for Medicine and Knowledge, published in Cairo under the title Jalal ad-Din asSuyuti, Kitab a-rahma fi t-tibb wa l-hikma. Years of publication are unknown.

A wider context for understanding the Arabic documents captured in Bahia after the revolt might be provided by the gris-gris or talismans catalogued by Nina Rodrigues in his seminal book Os Africanos no Brasil (The Africans in Brazil). These number at least thirty-five. But more to the concerns of this chapter, we can also use interpret Rodrigues to get at the nature of language study and instruction among African Muslims in Brazil in the nineteenth century. Starting with a survey of the judicial proceedings included in Annals 50, 53, and 54 of the Inquiry into the Rebellion of 1835, he arrives at an insightful conclusion about the production of magical texts.

"Just as fetishistic as the Catholic blacks, or the Yoruba cult-followers, the Malês in Bahia are able to fashion from the short verses of the Koran—and from bathwater, writing-desks, cabalistic words and prayers, et cetera— numerous other magic spells, endowed with miraculous virtues, as the Christianized blacks are able to do with the papers bearing Catholic prayers, ribbons, the measurements of the saints."[54]

Just as Reichert and Abdelghani would do, Rodrigues sent some of his documents to other specialists. Preferring not to "trust in the translation of Arabic writings performed by the Malê blacks in this city," even though the police and legal authorities in 1835 did just that, Rodrigues bundled them off to France.[55] Whatever the case, and we have only Rodrigues's transcriptions, there are clear thematic parallels between these talismans and the Arabic documents in Bahia: praises to Allah, to mercy, to compassion; designs, including a star;

[50] Goody, The Interface Between the Written and the Oral, p. 130.

[51] Goody, The Interface Between the Written and the Oral, pp. 130-1.

[52] Goody, The Interface Between the Written and the Oral, pp. 130-1.

[53] This documentation now resides, according to Goody, in Copenhagen's Real Library.

[54] Nina Rodrigues. Os Africanos no Brasil. (Brasília: Editora da UnB, 2004, 8th ed), p. 80.

[55] Nei Lopes refers to the nine pages of documents translated for the police by a "black of the Hausa nation," named Albino, in Bantos, Malês e Identidade Negra (Rio de Janeiro: Forense, n/d), pp. 66-67.

statements of loyalty to and trust in God; requests for protection and justice. There are also similarities in the format of the two sets of documents. Rodrigues's anonymous Piece #1, for instance, includes the following:

"In the name of Loving and Merciful God, spread the blessings of God over our master Mohammed, over his family and his friends, in the form of greeting."

Rodrigues's comment introduces the following part of the text:

The rest of the paper (both sides), except for the square in the middle, is covered by infinite repetitions of the following formula: 'I obey the order of the Merciful Lord.' The square in the middle is occupied by the invocation of names of the personages most sacred to Islam. Notably, one discerns 'Ali (son-in-law of the prophet), Gabriel, Mohammed, Joseph, Ishmael, Solomon, Moses, David, Jesus,' and others.[56]

The reference to a "square in the middle" of the document would appear to confirm the Malês' utilization of designs intended to be magical. But can these documents be associated with any particular ethnic or regional group, within the broad category of African Muslims? Rodrigues was not especially curious about distinguishing subgroups. Reichert, on the other hand, would pursue the subtlest clue to determine, if not the ethnicity, at least some geographical sense of (intellectual) provenance for the writer. For instance, Reichert parsed a particular section of Document #8 in the Arabic collection in Bahia: "the letters mim of the three words alhamdu, maliki and almaghdúbi are exaggeratedly large, to form three squares…. Within the second of these one reads twice faranththiku, which is undoubtedly a transcription of the Portuguese name 'Francisco'." He noticed that the whole text was repeated, in inverted form, on the lower half of the sheet. "This method of inverting the same text on one page is characteristic of magical practices in North Africa… it is thought that the tension created by the inversion adds to the efficiency of the written oration."[57]

Magical texts composed of figures containing phrases from the Koran can also be observed in Document #12 of APEB, [58] which is a document "used as a strong prayer" according to Reichert's classification. At the top, "to the right appears a well-known prayer, followed by the words "obligations of the request," but the object of this request—represented twice by the four letters MIM-LAM-KAF is unreadable. Beneath a line are incoherent letters, often repeated, in many horizontal rows and two vertical ones." Reichert speculated that the letters might have numeric value, or could even be letters of a "definite magical meaning," [59] and referred again to the book by Jalal ad-Din as-Suyuti, The Book of Mercy for Medicine and Knowledge, published in Cairo in 1500.

I did not have access to that book and cannot evaluate Reichert's conclusions with respect to it. However, I can offer a separate hypothesis, one perhaps more orthodox but not for that any less open to magical explanations. The second Surata of the Koran, entitled Al Bacará (The Cow), contains 286 verses that begin with the following letters after the greeting to Allah: ALEF, LAM, MIM. The letters from Document #12 are MIM-AYN-LAM-KAF. Perhaps the Malê slave in Brazil changed the order of MIM-LAM, substituted ALEF for KAF, and introduced AYN. Such a reordering would not be unprecedented, given the way other phrases have been changed somewhat, but remain clearly Koranic verses, in the Brazilian documents. This hypothesis is "orthodox" because it acknowledges that in all likelihood, the Malê[60] slave author had not been trained to write through studying a book of magic, but the Koran; so as a practical matter we should look there first for clues. It is not unreasonable to imagine that the slave might have committed the opening of Al Bacará to memory some time before, and either his memory altered the pattern or there was some other reason to alter it. The phrase on Document #12 has not yet been deciphered, and questions were often asked about it during the classes on Arabic and Islam I took through the Beneficent Society of Muslims in Rio de Janeiro.[61] The explanations typically drew from El Hayek's observations in his translated version of the Koran:

They are letters of the Arabic alphabet. Allah began this Surata with them to highlight the mystery of the Sacred Koran, formed of letters identical to those the Arabs use to make words, thus revealing the

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[56] Rodrigues, Os Africanos no Brasil, p. 81.

[57] Reichert, "Os Documentos Árabes do Arquivo Público da Bahia, 1a série," p. 175.

[58] Regrettably, this document is nearly unintelligible and was impossible to reproduce.

[59] Reichert, "Os Documentos Árabes do Arquivo Público da Bahia, 2a série," pp. 109-112, 109.

[60] The authorities did not record the ethnic group of the slave, so I use the general term Malê.

[61] The courses have long been offered on Saturdays at the mosque on Rua Gomes Freire in the center of the city.

incapacity of people to produce anything like the Koran. They serve also as a call to attention, to heed the recitation of the paragraphs.[62]

Of course, the incomprehensible ordering of these letters may indicate that the slaves involved in the 1835 uprising had been exposed to more reading material than the Koran—popular or fetishistic writings, such as those of Jalal-Al-Din. We do know that erudite influences became part of the lettered world the Hausas would create. But let us turn to other documents from APEB that Reichert considered strong prayers or amulets, such as Document #15, 18, 21, 22, 24, 26, and 29. Not all of them feature designs, or inverted writing. In one such case, a document written by the "Nagô Luis," a slave owned by Antônio da Rocha, the text has been analyzed as uncertain, error prone, and full of curious omissions—all of which suggests to Reichert that it was "probably a strong prayer, for protection against evil."[63] But it is the absence of figures or drawings that makes these stand out, and it recalls Nina Rodrigues's comments about a similar document he found, and the drops of blood it displayed.

Piece #2, Nina Rodrigues Collection

Certainly the text is in an Arab dialect, but it is an Arabic very incorrect, poorly written, and clumsily executed on the page. It appears truncated, and does not permit even a literal translation, although it appears that the author wished to celebrate the excellence of the Koran.

Verse: 'a star, in each brilliant ray the word of Mohammed.'

Chant: 'In the name of God, merciful and compassionate.'

The red drops (of blood) ornamenting the page announce that the author of the talisman was satisfied in his supplication or request. Such a piece is highly regarded by believers.[64]

Rodurigues claimed to have an unusually large possession of "gris-gris, mandingas, and amulets of Muslim Negroes. In the process of studying them, as mentioned, he did not want to accept translations from local Malês and so sent some documents to the Hoensfeld Office of Legal Translation, located (he said) in Paris. But others were sent to Pierre Andourard, a Maronite priest in Paris, who "had the courtesy" to translate this second set. Rodrigues stressed that all the documents were essentially equivalent: "verses of the Koran, and a few mystic words written in a symbolic or magical fashion." But in his book, Rodrigues included his own Portuguese translations of the French readings of his documents, made by an unidentified Arab employee of the Hoensfeld Office.[65]

Another intriguing Malê document has come to scholars' attention thanks to the efforts of a Russian Africanist, Nikolai Dubronravin, whose work explores how the (in particular Arabic) written tradition came to and took root in the New World from West Africa. The "Havre Manuscript from Bahia," as he calls it, was a 45-page document found in the pocket of an African who was killed during the 1835 rebellion. The manuscript opens with an exhortation to Allah (the Bismallah, or here "Basmalah"), and contains a seal inscribed with "Ya-Allah (Oh God)!" that Dubranravin says is "unique, when compared with any other Islamic document discovered so far in Bahia."[66]

The text of the document contains a few select verses from the Sura "A-lam nashrah (The Expansion)" which are "reproduced poetically; and a Kafiyya, or poem ending with the letter KAF, whose verses are followed by 'Ya Mohammed!'" Dubronravin believes the text is a dhirk, intended to be recited. What is significant for the present study is that parts of the text clearly refer to verse 46:11 of the Koran, which was also repeated in the production of Lúcio, the Nagô in Bahia whose document now resides in APEB. Where Reichert saw isolated letters, Dubronravin saw a transcription of a verse from the Koran. In total, the Havre Manuscript is similar to the APEB documents categorized as forms of exhortation. About one-third of the Manuscript is devoted to Koranic letters, and about a fourth of Lúcio's document. Perhaps a deeper relationship could be

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[62] El Hayek (tr), The Koran, p. 3.

[63] Reichert, "Os Documentos Árabes do Arquivo Público da Bahia, 2a série," p. 110.

[64] Nina Rodrigues, Os Africanos no Brasil, pp. 80-1.

[65] Rodrigues, The Africans in Brazil, p. 80. The information about these translations appears to have been cut in the final publication. What Rodrigues called Hensfelde, or Hoensfeld, is in Germany. It seems that the Maronite priest did his work in Paris, but the other documents were sent to an institution in Germany. They were never returned to Brazil, but were located in the course of researching this dissertation.

[66] The document is housed at the Municipal Library of Le Havre, under the number MS556. See Dobronravin, Nikolay, "Escritos Multilíngües em caracteres árabes: novas fontes de Trinidad e Brasil no século XIX". Afro-Ásia 31 (2004), pp. 297-326 (306).

established, since according to Dubronravin, the invocation "'Ya-Allah!' indicates that the compiler (or owner of the book) was a Qadiri, adept of the Sufi order Qadiriyya"—which we know was predominant among the African Muslims in Bahia.[67]

It will come as no surprise that the most common theme of the Arabic texts produced by African slaves was a request for aid in the struggle for freedom. But, significant as it is, this should not prevent us from noticing other subjects in these writings. Rodrigues's Piece #3 is a fragment of the Surata 106, "Coraix," exalting the riches conquered by the tribe of Mohammed. Just like APEB's Document #2, written by the Hausa Domingos, this text differs in form but not meaning from the Koranic version provided by El Hayek. Rodrigues describes it:

> One. The sophisticated intelligence of the Coraix. Two. The cleverness to send caravans in the winter and the summer. Three. They love the God of this temple, God that fed them against hunger and gave them confidence against fear. [68]

The presence of the same Surata in the APEB collection and in the gris-gris of Nina Rodrigues lends weight to the hypothesis that there is meaningful coherence in the Arabic writings produced by Malês in Bahia in the early nineteenth century. With respect to form and content, it would seen that the literacy of the Malês developed and was deployed in a circuit, rooted in key verses from the Koran. But explaining this phenomenon is not simple. After all, the number of Korans imported into Brazil during the first decades of the Empire was large enough to call the attention of French diplomat and racial theorist Arthur de Gobineau.[69]

Perhaps the answer lies in the fact that both commerce and literacy were critical aspects of the spread of Islam in Africa. Perhaps the Muslim slaves were asking for material wealth, as well as liberty; riches would be useful both to underwrite a successful rebellion, and to make a freed life that much more pleasurable. How much did it cost to stage a revolt? To organize, prepare amulets, and acquire weapons—not even guns, but the cheaper hand weapons, such as knives and clubs, that sources suggest slaves favored?[70] There were madrassas to be organized and Korans to acquire, and if slaves got a little money to make up for lost work they might be able to attend prayers. Literacy and rebellion can be linked, as we saw in the work on Africa by Goody and Gbdamosi; and the role of literacy in orienting the group effort of an uprising is especially impressive.

But we must still confront the differences between the Arabic texts produced by slaves—both in APEB and Nina Rodrigues's collection—and El Hayek's recent meticulous version of the Koran. I am reluctant to believe that the Hausa Domingos copied the Surata "incorrectly," since as El Hayek himself noted, discrepancies are not necessarily errors but another version of the essential message. On the other hand, if Domingos did not enjoy access to a Koran, hearsay might explain his discrepancies; and even the Korans that slaves often had were fourth or fifth generation copies, which introduces a potentially wide margin of divergence from an original (the same problem historians grapple with when interpreting handwritten transcriptions of official documents or proceedings).

If the literacy of Muslim slaves in the Brazilian Empire had both written and oral dimensions, we should not impose this dichotomy too strictly, and certainly not in the standard hierarchy in which oral=popular and written=erudite. Arabic texts, as well as "stories" such as the Mother of the Gold, rely on a mingled resource of memory, of hearsay in both Africa and Brazil, and of written manuscripts, including copies of copies. While the Koran is particularly significant in this context, other writings were in circulation. The following description of a gris-gris from Nina Rodrigues's translator implies a connection between Hausa texts in West Africa, the center of learning Timbuktu in Mali, and African Muslims in Brazil.

Piece #5, Nina Rodrigues Collection[71]

As much as the intact lines permit us to judge, this is clearly not Arabic language. It uses
Arabic letters, but in an African dialect from a region of Timbuktu. The Imams use Arabic characters to write in their dialects, which may have value in only a tribe, or village, or hamlet. The
author of this piece has some knowledge of Hebraic African languages, demonstrated in his
flourishes. It functioned to disfigure the Arabic style. Human sweat disfigured many of the words here,
but it still draws on the Koran… [On the page:] On top= 'In the name of Merciful and

67 Dobronravin, "Escritos Multilíngües em caracteres árabes," p. 311.

68 For comparison, see the preceding discussion of this verse on p. 15.

69 Raymond, Jean-François. Arthur de Gobineau et le Brésil: Correspondance diplomatique du Ministre de France à Rio de Janeiro (1869-1870). (Paris: Presses Universitaires de Grenoble, 1990).

70 João José Reis. Rebelião Escrava no Brasil: A História do Levante dos Malês em 1835. (Salvador: Companhia das Letras, 2003). A document by Etinne Ignace, the earliest on this theme to be produced in Brazil, also makes reference to such hand weapons.

71 Rodrigues, Os africanos no Brasil, p. 83.

Compassionate God'. Below= verses 129 and 130 from the 2nd Surata of the Koran, repeated 32 times, and four more times on the left margin.

Rodrigues included his own translation of those two verses:

> 129. A prophet came to us, a prophet taken among you. He weighs your iniquities, and ardently desires us all to become believers. He is full of goodness and mercy.
> 130. If they turn away (from your teachings), say to them: "God is enough for me. There is no other God but him. I place my trust in him; he possesses a great throne (that is, the throne of divine majesty."

This piece—as we saw through Jack Goody's work in Africa, Document #30 in Bahia, and other productions from African Muslims—demonstrates the recurring practice of using the Arabic alphabet to write in other African idioms. Significantly, Rodrigues states that imams, a high priestly class, engaged purposefully in perhaps the same sort of "discrepancies" that the slave Domingos was accused of. All this points to a certain parallel, if not homogeneity, in the production of form and content in the texts produced by Malês in the Brazilian Empire. It should be stressed that our focus is on the slaves of Salvador, on whom more information exists than on (for example) the African Muslims of Alagoas or Rio de Janeiro. Rodrigues also raises an intriguing connection between Timbuktu and the amulets. The experts at the Hoensfeld Office concluded that this very piece was not in the Arabic language, although written in Arabic letters; they associated this unknown language with Timbuktu. But Rodrigues himself believed that it was the Hausa language, composed in Arabic letters.[72]

The production of knowledge at Timbuktu was substantial, and it is certainly possible that African slaves in Bahia had been influenced by it. Timbuktu was, for centuries, a prosperous center of exchange on the trans-Saharan caravan routes; it became a center of culture and religion during the Songhai Empire. The Songhai, originally nomads based around the Niger River east of Mali, had by the late fourteenth century substituted the Mali Empire as the dominant power in West Africa. Islam was their official religion; the impressive madrassa combining a mosque and school, built around the same period in Sankore, symbolizes the political commitment to religious learning. From this school developed a renowned university, whose writers and professors soon attained prestige far beyond the borders of the Empire.[73]

An exhibit of "Ancient Manuscripts from the Desert Libraries of Timbuktu" at the Library of Congress (LOC) provided a fascinating glimpse of the literary, intellectual and artistic production deriving from this region. Three dozen documents were obtained from two major libraries, the Mama Haidara Commemorative Library and the Cheick Zayni Baye of Boujbeha. Several dealt with the exact sciences, such as the first document of the exhibit, called by the curator "Structure of the Heavens" (its full name is "The Important Stars within the Multitude of Skies"). The Library's guide to the exhibit describes the document this way:

> This text was written to train scholars in the field of astronomy, a science that Islamic tradition traces back to Adam and to the Prophet Idris. The author discusses how to use the movements of the stars to calculate the beginning of the seasons and how to cast horoscopes, among many other aspects of astronomy. [On the first page] is a diagram demonstrating the rotation of the heavens.[74]

Another scientific document, entitled "The Rise and Setting of Auspicious Stars," is based on a heritage of Greco-Roman astronomy enhanced by the discoveries of Muslim scholars. The text, while undated and anonymous, is presented in the form of a Platonic dialogue. Such intellectual sophistication is also clear in the

[72] Rodrigues, Os Africanos no Brasil, p. 82. The hypothesis of the translators should not be immediately discarded. In chapter 4 of this dissertation, I consider the impact of intellectual production in Timbuktu on the Islamic Africans in the diaspora. The translators' notion of a locale was both precise and ample, saying that the region of Timbuktu in question had a "radius of 300 kilometers."

[73] Ahmad Baba, one of the most illustrious teachers of the sixteenth century, taught there; chapter 5 of this dissertation will analyze his work. For more about the university, see Nicolle, David. Atlas Historique de L'Islam (Paris: Maxi-Livres, 2004), p. 160-61.

[74] The author of the document is Nasir al-Din abu al-Abbas ibn al-Hajj al-Amin al-Tawathi al-Ghalawi. http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/mali/mali-exhibit.html, accessed 04 September 2007.

documents dealing with quotidian issues, which recalls the fact that Islam views creed as conduct; it is through the application of Koranic principles in daily life that one feels the power and charisma of Mohammed. [75]Thus, a document explaining family rights (including those of orphans and married women) under Islamic law is presented in the form of a poem, to facilitate memorization. (Curiously, the two documents just mentioned are stored next to each other on the shelves of the Mama Haidara Commemorative Library in Mali, perhaps implying that in the Muslim system of classification they are related.) The LOC exhibit contains documents reflecting the scope of scientific, political, social, spiritual, and intellectual life for Muslims in period Timbuktu. There are laws of inheritance and commerce, discussions of the relation between the Songhai Empire and Islam, studies of Islamic mysticism and Sufism, philosophical and ethical texts, analyses of the Pillars of Faith, writings about how to assure peace, and counsel for ruling elites. The latter document was written by Uthman ibn Muhammed ibn Uthman ibn Fodio—leader of the 1804 jihad encouraging the Fula people to conquer those deemed "less pure" in Islam, including the Hausas. According to explanatory material provided by the LOC, the author "establishes the limits of authority of governments under Islamic law" while stressing the responsibilities of power, especially in the areas of social justice and the protection of private property of citizens.

There are many more documents in the Timbuktu libraries, although how many is unclear. Some fifty thousand have already been catalogued, and specialists estimate that an equal number remain unprocessed. Scholar Albert Hofheinz suggests that "in Timbuktu alone reside at least 32 private libraries of varying scale, while that largest of them, the Mama Haidara Memorial Library of Abdel Kader Haidara, holds around 5,000 manuscripts." Among public institutions, he highlights the collection of the Ahmad Baba Institute (formerly the Ahmad Baba Center), created in 1972, with an archive of 15,000.[76] In the United States, the W.E.B. Du Bois Institute for African and African-American Research at Harvard is presently digitizing some 50,000 documents collected from 15,000 families in Timbuktu.

If any factor contributed disproportionately to Timbuktu's importance in the history of Islamic literary culture, it was probably location. This includes climate, since an earlier (after 1200) center of Islamic teaching, Djenné, in the Niger Delta, was so humid that the manuscripts it produced rapidly disintegrated. By the fifteenth century, Timbuktu's prominence would eclipse Djenné. [77] But Timbuktu's location, on fertile delta terrain with strategic access to the desert, was also important for its economic and symbolic exchange. Caravans from the south and west passed through on their way north, toward Morocco, Libya, and Egypt, and on eastward to Arabia and Mecca. For Hofheinz, the apogee of Timbuktu was also that of the Songhai Empire, the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, when Mali dominated regional commerce. The city was so grand and brilliant that, upon approaching it, the traveler al-Hassan b. al-Wazzan (known as the African Lion) was convinced he had arrived at Gao, the capital of the Empire, some 370 kilometers away.[78]

Among the documents produced during this period was one in particular that has become the focus of much subsequent study. Written by Ahmad Baba (+/- 1556 -1627), "Miraj al-Suud ila nayl Majlub al-Sudan" responds to a series of questions posed by a Moroccan inquisitor about the nature of slavery in Islam. According to historians such as Paul Lovejoy, in Baba's argument that Muslims can only be enslaved following rigorous criteria established by the Koran lies the key to understand how slavery was understood not only in West Africa but in nineteenth-century Brazil. There are implications for our comprehension of the volume of the traffic of Muslim slaves across the Atlantic, the groups of people deemed appropriate for enslavement, ethnic continuities and ruptures, and the notions of both justice and the limits of slavery as they were perceived at the time.[79]

In that light, we might turn to Arabic documents from APEB to search for concordances between the ideas of the erudite class in madrassas of the Sonhai Empire, and those of Muslim slaves in Bahia. Torquato, Hausa slave and property of José Pinto Leite, is the author of Documents #1, 7, and 9. Of these, Document #1 contains reproductions of various Suras; #7, a copy of the first Sura, "The Opening;" and #9, 13 repetitions of verse 4 from "The Opening." The universe informing the literary production of this slave seems to be limited to the Koran. Domingos, a Hausa owned by the same master, wrote Document #2, containing 40 repetitions of Sura 106. The anonymous Document #3 is, in Reichert's words, a "vocalized text of Sura 13, 'The Dawn,' with the phrase 'and we ask for help for him' interjected between the Bismallah and the first verse." Reichert characterizes the manuscript as "beautiful in style" but containing "two errors."[80]

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[75] Bartholo, Roberto S., Campos, Arminda Eugenia. (eds). Islã: o credo é a conduta.(Rio de Janeiro: Imago Ed.: ISER, 1990).

[76] Hofheinz, Albrecht, "Goths in the Land of the Blacks: a preliminary survey of the Ka'ti Library in Timbuktu." In: Scott S. Reese (ed.) The Transmission of Learning in Islamic Africa. (Leiden: Brill, 2005), p. 5.

[77] Hofheinz, "Goths in the Land of the Blacks: a preliminary survey of the Ka'ti Library in Timbuktu," p. 6.

[78] Hofheinz, "Goths in the Land of the Blacks: a preliminary survey of the Ka'ti Library in Timbuktu," p. 6.

[79] 0Lovejoy, Paul., "The Context of Enslavement in West Africa: Ahmad Baba and the Ethics of Slavery" (unpublished), pp.1-28.

[80] Reichert, "Os Documentos Árabes do Arquivo Público da Bahia, 1a série," pp. 169-76.

What does this show us? Perhaps that a study of the documents in the libraries of Timbuktu is insufficient to allow us to identify or predict the movement of ideas on the other side of the Atlantic. The sources in Bahia do not suggest a direct, filial relationship with the production of Songhai madrassas. The Bahian texts are strongly, sometimes exclusively Koranic in content, and we have no way to assess the relationship between these writings and what was being taught at the principal Muslim school at Sankore, in the region that would facilitate the trafficking of the slaves we are discussing after the 1804 jihad. We can acknowledge that in general, the slaves that created documents in Bahia had a relatively rudimentary level of literacy; but that makes sense in the context of Usman dan Fodio's movement to remove the "impure" from Bilad al-Sudan.

At the same time, I argue that the Timbuktu legal and political writings were widely influential in terms of their principal message, which Ahmad Baba outlined: slavery among Muslims was acceptable under specific conditions, but should always be temporary. I would like to carefully close the circle of production-circulation-reception, as Roger Chartier maintains must be the primary condition for interpreting any history of reading. Yet this circuit is large, spanning the Atlantic, and non-linear; any attempt to write this history will be full of replete with gaps and speculation. But we can try to sketch an outline. Lovejoy has analyzed Ahmad Baba's compositions and distilled his fundamental, characteristic notion of Muslim slavery: the enslavement of Muslims by Muslims was condemned, however—and contradictorily—Baba accepted slavery as a legal activity for Muslims. These are Baba's words, according to Lovejoy:

"Whoever is captured in a condition of unbelieving can be legally possessed, whoever it is, but not those who have converted to Islam voluntarily from the beginning, to whatever nation they belong—Bornu, Kano, Songhai, Katsina, Gobir, Mali or Zakzak (Zazau). These are free Muslims, whose enslavement is utterly impermissible."[81]

The APEB manuscripts are full of references to the many injustices of perpetual slavery, practiced in the Americas. We find an example in Document #10, which, Reichert emphasizes, appears to have been composed by the Hausa slave Domingos.[82] The text seems disorganized, even improvised, to Reichert, but "even if it is rather jumbled, demonstrates all the characteristics of a Muslim prayer: the exaltations of God, of his omnipotence and compassion, and the enumeration of his attributes (lines 11- 12)." Oddly, the "supplicant," while he begs for "God's grace, does not make a specific request, which would be unimaginable for a Muslim… but in lines 2, 3 and 5 we are able to perceive his humiliating and wretched condition:"

"2) […] the fears and the Malês and that we hold firm against all the
3) defamations and rid ourselves of any and all shame and
4) that we rise to you with you the wisdom of the heights and that we rise
5) from all the shame and lift ourselves up and that we make ourselves reach
6) the extreme inclinations (?) of all the wealth of life and after
7) death bring us the benefits of all the worlds glorified by the wellbeing of the world
8) by the wellbeing of the world and by the ultimate grace… the wellbeing of the world
9) Mohammed (…) of (…) and of (…) the brothers elevated is the lord
10) like the master (…) around whom the peace is arranged and peace around
11) the ones who are sent oh (…) oh high oh rich oh omniscient oh rich
12) oh observer (?) and oh benefactor oh generous oh succor oh[83]

The composition reveals an author who dominates Arabic relatively well and who has practiced handwriting; a few words are unintelligible. Line 1 is the standard exultation of Allah. But as a whole, written in a free style, this manuscript embodies what I have been attempting to describe in the last few pages: the influence of Muslim authorities, who in their analysis of slavery, went beyond the strict interpretation of the Koran. If the Koran permits slavery, in numerous verses (which I will soon address), why should a Muslim set himself against the mandates of Allah? What circuit of reading and writing, or of hearsay, might have assured these slaves that their captivity was wrong and should be transitory? Lovejoy raises a potential answer. In 1615, Ahmad Baba returned to Timbuktu after a period of serving as a slave himself in Morocco. He quickly set about the task of writing a sort of handbook laying out who could and could not be enslaved, accompanied by a list of

[81] Baba, Ahmad apud. Paul Lovejoy, "The Muslim factor in the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade." In Lovejoy (ed.), The Muslim Factor in the Atlantic Slave Trade.(Princeton: Markus Wiener Publisher, 2002).

[82] Reichert, "Os Documentos Árabes do Arquivo Público da Bahia, 2a série," p. 108.

[83] 4 Reichert, "Os Documentos Árabes do Arquivo Público da Bahia, 2a série," p. 108.

measures that should be implemented to protect any Muslims who were unjustly enslaved. Baba strongly condemned the waging of war between Muslim states (such as the Moroccan invasion of Songhai territory that resulted in his own capture) and also indicted Muslim leaders who, sworn to practice and defend Islam, tolerated pagan beliefs under their watch. Lovejoy shows how this handbook circulated across West Africa in the seventeenth century, "becoming part of the standard Islamic curriculum on the subjects both of slavery and ethnic definition for generations to come."[84]

Recall Baba's list of groups of "free Muslims" whose enslavement was "utterly impermissible: Bornu, Kano, Songhai, Katsina, Gobir, Mali or Zakzak (Zazau)." Bornu, Kano and Katsina were precisely those cities that sent the majority of Muslim slaves to Bahia, which is shown in both Castelnau's interviews and in an account transcribed in the collection organized by Philip Curtin.[85] Notably, Kano and Katsina were Hausa cities. Lovejoy adds:

This legal tradition was clearly established within the molds of Muslim teaching and, thus, was profoundly relevant for the Atlantic world and for the peopling of the Americans with African slaves. The categorization shaped in West Africa around ethnicity and religion reflected a reality that seems to have in influenced the Atlantic traffic in numerous aspects.[86]

The relation between ethnicity and geographical derivation is a constant theme in the identification of African "nations" in the diaspora. In her development of the topic, Mariza Soares shows that Africans, when speaking of their past, generally made reference to the place whence they had come using such terms as "land / place [terra]" or "nation / country," according to the sensitivities of the people recording their statements or information. In this sense the author demonstrates a close relation between the "nation" an African might claim to belong to, and the "land" or place they said they came from. In the case of West Africa, which was highly urbanized at the time, these places were often cities (including the mingled urban-rural territory encircling the city and connected to it through a variety of exchanges).[87]

We know that Baba wrote in the seventeenth century, and the African Muslim slaves of special interest to this study were writing in Bahia, Brazil, in the early nineteenth century. Whether or not those slaves read Baba's work, or possessed the capacities to reproduce it according to their own literacy levels—answers to these questions are not, according to Lovejoy, the most important elements if we hope to determine whether Muslim slaves taken to Bahia were acquainted with the seminal legal studies from Timbuktu. He highlights two other factors: the critical role of the diasporic madrassas in disseminating the discourse about slavery, over the generations; and the fact that Baba's arguments about who should or should be enslaved not only imposed a compelling form and limit on the African trade but became the juridical reference for Muslim authorities increasingly anxious to condemn or justify the trade.

This is the most plausible response to the question posed earlier—what circuit of reading and writing, or of hearsay, might have assured these slaves that their captivity was wrong and should be transitory? Most likely their feeling of certainty was attributable to the longstanding diffusion of Baba's arguments in the schools, which facilitated an understanding of how the Atlantic slave trade was "supposed" to function (and instincts of personal survival as well as intellectual curiosity would have made this a pressing issue).

Lovejoy points out that the ethnic terminology employed by Baba was particularly important in tracing the influence of his ideas across the Atlantic. His expressions were typically formed of dichotomies: "between Central and Western Sudan; between the Muslims and non-Muslims; between the Fulbe and the Bambara; between the Bambara and the Mandingo / Malinke; and between the Fula and the Habe or Hausa in Central Sudan."[88] Within this list of examples are names that scholars have yet to identify. But others did arrive in the New World, according to period documents, which for Lovejoy "suggests a connection between the theoretical

[84] Lovejoy, Paul. "The Context of Enslavement in West Africa: Ahmad Baba and the Ethics of Slavery." In: Jane Landers (ed.), Slaves, Subjects and Subversives: Blacks in Colonial Latin America. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005), p.10-11.

[85] Curtin, Philip (ed.) Africa Remembered: Narratives by West Africans from the Era of the Slave Trade. Long Grove, Illinois: Waveland Press Inc. 1997).

[86] Lovejoy, "The Context of Enslavement in West Africa: Ahmad Baba and the Ethics of Slavery," p. 11.

[87] Soares, Mariza de Carvalho, "A 'nação' que se tem e a 'terra' de onde se vem: categorias de inserção social de africanos no Império português século XVIII." Estudos Afro-Asiáticos, 26 (2) 2004, pp. 303-330.

[88] Lovejoy, "The Context of Enslavement in West Africa: Ahmad Baba and the Ethics of Slavery," p. 15.

discussions in West Africa and the enslaved African populations in the Americas." The most common ethnic designations "include the 'Bambara,' 'Yoruba,' 'Mandinga,' 'Hausa,' and 'Fulbe/Fulani/Fula,' as well as others that were gradually adopted into the nomenclature of the Atlantic trade… this implies that African concepts were influencing European categories, a point that needs further research." [89] Lovejoy's work deserves attention for the new traces he reveals of African participation in the traffic to the Americas—not only as physical agents and objects, but also as creators of discourse that effectively shaped the logic of the trade itself. He has focused on the influence of Baba's writing, although I (in chapter 4 of this dissertation) analyze the impact of Timbuktu's literary production more generally on the five-hundred-year course of the Atlantic trade.

We have seen that the Koran acknowledges and permits slavery. Our overarching inquiry addresses the construction of a Malê literacy, or lettered world—their reading and writing levels, access to textual and other forms of literary material, content produced, and so on. They would have learned about slavery in many ways, notably from schools, from the Koran, from hearsay, and from the experience itself. But given the tendency of Malês in Bahia to base their writings on the Koran, what might the Koran have offered them in terms of references to slavery's limits? Researchers often resort to interpretations based on a prior view of Eastern slavery being more (or less) humane than Western. But the language of the Sacred Book is noncommittal, according to a study by Hunwick and Powell.

At no instance does the Koran advocate or justify slavery. But the text clearly admits that slavery is a fact of life, and while the text never unequivocally defends the abolition of slavery, many Koranic texts address the various ways in which slaves can be freed… [and] encourage an end to slavery, in the sense of making the act of freeing a slave an act of piety.[90]

Let us look briefly at some of the key passages. Here is Sura 2, verse 177 (all the following are from El Hayek's translation):

Righteousness does not consist of merely looking to the east, or the west. True virtue resides in those who believe in Allah, in the Day of Final Judgment, in the angels, in the Book and in the prophets; in those who distribute their beloved wealth to charity, among relatives, orphans, the needy, travelers, beggars, and for the purchase of captives' freedom. Those who are patient in misery and adversity, or during combat, are the truthful ones, the ones who fear Allah.

Also from Sura 2, verses 178 and 221 broach the topic of slavery in a manner suggesting, to El Hayek, that "Islam strongly mitigated the horrific customs of pre-Islamic Talion law. In order to satisfy the clamorous demands of Justice, equality is prescribed, along with a vehement recommendation for clemency and forgiveness."[91] Verse 178 applies the tempering of the "eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth" law to men, women, and slaves:

Oh faithful, to you is prescribed the Talion in the case of homicide: free for free, slave for slave, woman for woman. But, if the brother of the murdered should forgive the assassin, you must accept that spontaneously and voluntarily. This is a merciful alleviation from your Lord. But whoever should take vengeance, after such forgiveness, will suffer a lamentable torture.

The inclusion of slaves along with men and women in questions of justice and social behavior is remarkable for its consistency, but the acknowledgement of slaves goes further. Verse 221 of Sura 2 describes situations in which, under certain conditions, it would be better for a man / woman to marry a slave than a woman / man who was free but a disbeliever.

Do not engage or marry idolaters, until they have converted, because a devout slave is preferable to an idolater with a pleasing voice. Likewise never accept the matrimony of your daughters with idolaters, until they are converted, because a devout slave is preferable to an idolater with a pleasing voice. The nonbelievers will carry you to the Eternal Fire, and Allah, in his benevolence, invites us to Paradise and to forgiveness, and makes his message clear to humans so that they may always remember him.

[89] Lovejoy, "The Context of Enslavement in West Africa: Ahmad Baba and the Ethics of Slavery," p. 15.

[90] Hunswick, John, Powell, Eve T. The African Diaspora in the Mediterranean Lands of Islam (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2002), p. 2-9.

[91] The Koran, translated by Professor Samir El Hayek, p. 29, note 72.

While I do not wish to enter the ideological fray over which model of slavery might be more "humane" than the other, it should be admitted that—in the written tradition, if not the lived one—Islam permitted the social incorporation of slaves in ways that were unthinkable in the slave regimes of the Americas. Belie vers in Allah, whether or not they enjoyed a state of liberty, had place of privilege in the Islamic concept of marriage. This is clear in verse 25, from Sura 4:

And those among you who do not possess sufficient resources to marry a free pious person, you may select a partner from among your captive believers, because Allah is He who best understands and judges our faith. Go among yourselves, marry each other, with the permission of your masters, and give dowries when possible if they are of the lineage and without lovers. Above all, once you are married, if you fall into adultery, the captives will suffer only half of the punishment that free people will; this, for those of you who enter in sin. But being strong and patient is better for you; know that Allah is Indulgent and Merciful.

A similar recognition of slaves is made in verse 92 of Sura 4, which addresses how to resolve an accidental homicide. In such a case, the unintended assassin is expurgated through both paying money to the victim's family, and freeing a pious slave:

It is never appropriate for a believer to kill another believer, unless it occurs involuntarily;and whoever, by mistake, kills a believer should free one enslaved believer and pay compensation to the family of the dead, unless they are willing to forgive. If (the victim) was a believer, but from an adversarial people, the act of penitence is to free one believing slave; and if the victim was a believer from an allied people, pay an indemnification to the family and manumit a believing slave. However, those who do not have the capacity to do these things must fast for two consecutive months, as the penitence imposed by Allah, because He is Wise and Prudent.

Verses 25 and 36 of Sura 4 touch on the conditions of slavery under Islam. Surata 5 echoes the discussion of verse 89 above, exhorting the pious to—in the case of losing a legal hearing—feed "ten of the needy, in the manner in which your family is fed, or clothe them in the same way, or free one slave." Verse 71, Surata 16, states that "Allah favored with His mercy some, more than others; however, the fortunate do not share their wealth with their servants, because this would make them their equals." It then asks: "Do they not, by chance, vex the mercies of Allah?" A further example is in verses 11-16, Sura 90:

However, he did not try to overcome these vicissitudes. And what to do to make him understand what it is to overcome vicissitudes? Free a slave, or feed, in a day of privation, an orphan of his kin.

There are more Suras broaching slavery or servitude (including prisoners of war) [92] in the context of social relations, such as visits, marriage, and divorce. Manumission appears tangentially, except in Surata 58, verse 3. This brief survey has been undertaken to see how the Koran might have both informed the Muslims sent to Bahia about slavery and freedom, and provided them a sense of their own rights as slaves. Of course, the simple importation of Korans or related documents into the Americas does not represent a transplantation of the whole social context of Islamic West Africa across the Atlantic.We can, however, still conclude that even if these slaves had not read Baba's writing themselves—or what would have been more likely, arrived at his legal teachings through hearsay regarding "proper" Muslim slavery—the Malês in early nineteenth-century Bahia would have understood vividly how their present situation diverged from the concept of slavery in an Islamic regime.

For their part, the hadiths, or recorded sayings of the prophet, also touch on how slavery should be limited in Islam.[93] Number 693 affirms that Mohammed announced: "Any man that releases a Muslim slave

[92] These include, in order of Surata:verses, 23:1-6 (the relation masters should have with slaves); 24:32-33 (marriages with servants and slaves); 24:58 (mutual visits between servants / slaves and masters); 33-50 (marriage to prisoners of war); 33:32 (the wedding of the prophet to, El Hayek argues, a woman given to him by Maucaucas, an Egyptian Christian); 47:4 (prisoners of war); 58:3 (manumission of a slave as payment for divorce); and 70:28-30 (chastity and punishment).

[93] These sayings have endured multiple translations—Hunwick and Powell translated them from the original Arabic (in alJami al-sahih, by Al-Bakhari, which they noted is "generally considered the most authentic collection of the words of the Prophet") to English. I translated the English to Portuguese for the dissertation, and for the purposes of this essay they were translated from the Portuguese back into English! Let us hope the

from bondage, Allah will spare from Hell…" In the following number, a believer asks, "'That the blessings of God protect you and guarantee tranquility; which is the preferred slave [to be freed]?' He replied: 'The slave who is worth the most, and the one who is most precious to his master.'" The question of marriage with female captives reappears in hadith 720: "Whosoever is the owner of a female slave, and educates her, and is good for her, and frees her and marries her, should a compensation in double [from God]."

We have no proof that the Malês in Bahia had read the hadiths collected by Al-Bukhari. But it is not too much to speculate that they were familiar with them through hearsay, in their social groups and cities in Africa. From the unmappable frontier between the oral and the written comes a large part of both the literacy skills, and the literate production of the African slaves taken to Brazil in the early nineteenth century. This returns us to the question of the "literary" background of the Muslims trafficked to Bahia in the years following the 1804 jihad, especially those who fought in the 1835 uprising there, and whose documents remain at APEB.

More precisely, can we arrive at the principal texts that these Africans had come into contact with? This chapter has argued that, as compelling as the written texts are, the most likely answer is that the slaves were versed in the literature of hearsay—whether composed of profane or mythical stories, or sayings of the Prophet, or legal arguments from Timbuktu (these probably inflected with the erudition of Ahmad Baba); or of the Suratas of the Koran, carried first in memory and recitation to the northeastern coast of Brazil. With a base in these "texts," a literate culture within slave society developed, characterized by varying levels of literacy but capable, within the harsh limits imposed by a slave regime, of constructing its own unique lettered world. It should not surprise us that the slaves' literary production, while Islamic in general form, reflected a variety of influences. Most intensely, perhaps, it was rooted in the clear notions of liberty and the limits to slavery that these people had learned in West Africa—and it was this fairer conception or recollection of West Africa that, according to João José Reis, the Malês hoped to recreate in Salvador and the Recôncavo when they picked up their amulets, strong prayers, knives and clubs, and set out on the night of 24 January, 1835.

strength of their message persists. See Hunwick and Powell, The African Diaspora in the Mediterranean Lands of Islam, pp. 5-7.