

Also by Hisham D. Aidi

Black Routes to Islam

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REBEL MUSIC

Race, Empire, and the
New Muslim Youth Culture

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Sugar's Secrets

In the autumn of 1865, two steamships sailed into the harbor of Rio de Janeiro. The vessels had set off from Constantinople in September, and were heading to Basra, in modern-day Iraq, but powerful winds pushed them away from the African coast and toward South America. The Brazilian emperor, Dom Pedro II, long fascinated by the Orient, a student of Arabic and Sanskrit, welcomed the Ottoman navy ships with elaborate protocol, including military parades and firing cannons on the streets of Rio. When the navy officers went ashore to sightsee the next day, they were accompanied by a religious scholar, Abdulrahman al-Baghdadi, a man born in Baghdad and appointed by the Ottoman sultan to lead prayers for the sailors.

As al-Baghdadi strolled through Rio, marveling at the city's beautiful "gardens and promenades," he was approached by a black Brazilian, who said, "*As-salamu 'alaykum.*" He specifically addressed this greeting to me because I was wearing official attire with a turban, showing my status as a scholar," al-Baghdadi would observe. "I did not answer his greeting thinking that he had learned it just to mock."

The Brazilian persisted, but the language barrier prevented any further communication. Later that day, various Brazilians came aboard the ship to welcome the Ottoman visitors, including some "Sudani" people, and they too gave the Muslim greeting. When afternoon prayer time came around, writes al-Baghdadi, "We stood to pray and all of them stood with us . . . We became convinced that

they were Muslims and that they believed in the unity of God. We were greatly enchanted but also astonished. We welcomed them and showered them with our best attentions."

Through his translator—a Moroccan Jew who had settled in Rio—al-Baghdadi would learn about the situation of "Blacks in America." He learns that more than fifty million Africans were brought from West Africa in "Frankish ships" to North and South America; that slavery had caused a war between the northern and southern United States that had liberated America's slaves; that most of the slaves in Brazil were free, but others remained in bondage. He is also told that the Muslims in Rio—an estimated five thousand—are forgetting their traditions, and desperately want to learn from him. Al-Baghdadi visits their homes, and is dismayed to see that, indeed, these Muslims who came to Brazil when they were very young are not praying correctly and are drinking wine regularly.

Al-Baghdadi decides that it's his duty to reacquaint the Brazilians with the basics of their faith. The commander of his ship, fearing a diplomatic crisis between the Ottoman and Brazilian Empires, disagrees. "You must know that the protocol between states makes it clear that each country controls the religion in its land, between its regions and valleys," says the commander, telling al-Baghdadi that the Muslims of Brazil "unwillingly hide their Islamic beliefs, and fear the Frankish communities very much because the latter know them publicly as Christians." He cautions the scholar, "If I tell you to go to these people and the leaders of this Christian group catch you, I will not escape from the blame of the Ottoman authorities."

Al-Baghdadi decides to stay anyway. He learns some Portuguese and for the next six months the imam travels across Brazil, visiting different Muslim communities, and jotting down his observations. The manuscript that al-Baghdadi wrote in 1871, following his sojourn, titled *The Amusement of the Foreigner*—recently discovered at the Berlin State Library and translated—is a gem of a document, offering a rare view of Latin America through the eyes of a nineteenth century Arab traveler, who is enthralled by Brazil's architecture, the steam train, the landscape, the "fifty species of fruits, which do not exist in the Orient," the cuisine (the *farinha* that Brazilians eat reminds him

of the *asida* porridge he grew up with), and the ways of the Native Americans. The text also offers a rich vignette of Muslim life in Brazil following the slave revolt of 1835 and in the wake of the American Civil War, as Pedro II ponders abolition.

A significant number of the slaves—7 to 8 percent by some estimates—brought to the New World were Muslim. In the last two decades, historians have uncovered texts written by Muslim slaves in Arabic, English, and Portuguese, shedding light on a far-flung population of Muslim Africans enslaved across the Americas. Many of these individuals were literate in Arabic and struggled to maintain their faith, fasting Ramadan, writing out the Quran from memory, sometimes even launching jihads against their overlords. Since the late 1980s, most of the scholarly writing on Muslim slaves has centered on North America; but in the last decade, scholars of Latin America—partly inspired by American academic debates—are revisiting their region's early colonial period. Historians point out that in North America and the English-speaking Caribbean, Muslim slaves were often given relatively privileged positions on the plantation, whereas in Latin America, the lives of Muslim slaves were characterized by "severe political repression." The Iberian colonists, as mentioned, saw Moorish slaves as particularly intractable and would shift to importing West African slaves. Yet even the latter were persecuted when suspected of being Muslim. The French and English settlers, on the other hand, viewed African Muslims positively; their encounter with Islam in the Americas was new, and not a continuation of the Reconquista.

The fascination with the African Muslims in the antebellum American South was due to the latter's literacy in Arabic. Bilali Muhammad, a slave on Sapelo Island, off the coast of Georgia, made a lasting mark on the American cultural imagination. Due to his literacy and leadership qualities, he would be appointed the manager of his master's plantation, overseeing approximately five hundred slaves; he gained notoriety after the War of 1812, during which he and eighty slaves successfully fought and prevented the British from invading Sapelo. He is also remembered for an Arabic text that he

wrote about Islamic law, which he had placed in his coffin along with his Quran and his prayer rug. Bilali's literacy was always a source of fascination; he would become the subject of children's books, praised in contemporaries' memoirs, but his learnedness also posed a challenge to the ideology underpinning the system of bondage that saw Africans as incapable of reason.

Antebellum writers and plantation owners would expend a great deal of energy in coming up with a nonthreatening—"Oriental"—genealogy for Muslim slaves. Bilali of Sapelo Island would be described as "an Arab—man of the desert—slave hunter." Omar ibn Said—a Muslim slave in North Carolina, who wrote a fascinating autobiographical essay in 1831—would be similarly "Orientalized": "He is an Arab by birth of royal blood," who had been enslaved by Africans, "whom he had always hated," explained the *Providence Journal* in 1846. Muslim slaves—most of whom were of Wolof or Fula ancestry—were thus separated from other Africans, not only physically, in the work and positions that they were given, but also ideologically and epistemologically. In North America, writes Sylviane Diouf in her now classic *Servants of Allah*, "African Muslims were seen as owing their perceived superiority not to their own 'genes,' not even to their culture or proximity to the Arab world, but to foreign 'blood.'"

The experience of Muslim slaves in Latin America was radically different. There was no popular fascination with the writings of Muslim slaves; they were not co-opted upward. "The Spaniard was accustomed to the threatening presence of Islam," writes the Colombian historian Jaime Borja, describing the persecution of African Muslims in the country's northern coast. "But Islam and blackness were truly a dangerous combination." Repression, in the name of Catholic purity, however, only fueled defiance.

In the wee hours of January 25, 1835, the last day of Ramadan, Muslim slaves wearing *abadas* (gowns), skullcaps, and silver rings gathered in the basement of a two-story house in Salvador in northeast Brazil. They were making last-minute preparations for an uprising set to start in a few hours. Discontent had simmered among Bahia's Muslims for

years, and events had brought matters to a boil: the Brazilian police had two months earlier disrupted a Muslim gathering to celebrate Lailat al-Miraj, the night when the Prophet ascended to heaven; then they publicly destroyed the community's makeshift Vitória mosque, and arrested two respected community leaders. A revolt was planned for the day after the "Night of Power" at the end of Ramadan, when the Quran was revealed. The Brazilian authorities, however, were alerted to the conspiracy ahead of time, and they broke into the lodge, attacking the insurgents. Violence erupted all over the city of Salvador, leaving seventy people dead, among them fifty slaves, and scores wounded.

Bahia in northeast Brazil, like the American South, was the primary destination for slaves transported from Africa. During the 1800s, thousands of Muslims, mostly Hausas, captives of the wars then raging in northern Nigeria, were imported from the Bight of Benin to Bahia. As their numbers increased, the Muslims (*imales*, as they were called), imbued with a religious fervor from the wars in Hausaland, grew restive. Insurrections erupted frequently, culminating in the rebellion of 1835. The Malê Revolt, as it came to be known, failed, but its Muslim character captured the attention of American and European publications, like the *Times* of London. The court trials and hearings that took place in Salvador afterward would reveal the complexity of Muslim communal life in nineteenth-century Bahia. Objects confiscated—amulets, documents, dozens of wooden writing boards—showed that the Muslims had mosques and schools, where students studied under community elders called *alufás*. Bahian Muslims celebrated the end of Ramadan by sacrificing sheep and, like their counterparts in North America, exchanging rice cakes, called *saka*. As historian Michael Gomez has observed, the material collected after the Malê rebellion revealed the similarities in cultural practice between Muslims in Brazil and their co-religionists elsewhere in the New World, showing that "Muslim dress and diet in Bahia were also distinctive, as they were in coastal Georgia and South Carolina."

The decades following the Malê Revolt were difficult. Many Muslims fled Salvador for Rio; others were exiled to Lagos, Nigeria. It was during this period that al-Baghdadi arrived in Brazil. The Ottoman

scholar saw that Muslims were baptizing their children while secretly practicing their faith. The Muslim men pleaded with the Ottoman "priest" not to dress in Oriental attire when with them, so as not to attract attention. Al-Baghdadi, in turn, was struck by the way their wives dressed. "They do whatever they want just like Christian women who spend their time sleeping," he wrote. "They go to the markets without covering themselves; they drink what is forbidden." The Brazilian women would reject the changes in inheritance practice that al-Baghdadi wanted to introduce.

When al-Baghdadi travels north to Bahia, he remarks that there are more Muslims, that the men "shave their mustaches and leave their beards," and each Muslim "faction" has an imam with the title *alfa*. He is again taken aback by the sexual permissiveness, regretting that Muslim women in Salvador give alms to church and "do not veil themselves." He is particularly aghast at a custom whereby men can "try out" prospective wives by living with them before marriage, and states that he successfully put an end to that practice. From Salvador, the Ottoman scholar heads to Pernambuco, where he finds more Muslims, who, he notes, pray correctly and fast Ramadan. The Muslims of Brazil, who had hosted and benefited from his learning during his six-month stay, paid for his trip back to Constantinople.

Today, as the Orient beckons again, as Muslims from Africa and the Middle East migrate to Brazil, and as Afro-Brazilians mobilize politically, al-Baghdadi's manuscript and description of Muslim life is often cited. Islam would endure among Afro-Brazilians until the 1920s, and disappear just as Islamic and quasi-Islamic movements began emerging among African-Americans in the U.S. Today Islam is appearing again among Brazil's Afro-Brazilians, in movements that are building on the Malê's history of literacy.

Prophets of the City

"Allah says in the Quran that for every people there is a prophet who speaks their language. So who knows? A young black kid full of swag-

ger and rhymes could appear in the favelas?" says Valter Gomes, a sixty-two-year-old community elder in São Bernardo do Campo on the outskirts of São Paulo.

This *município* is home to almost two million people, of whom many are laborers in the Ford and Volkswagen plants nearby and live in thousands of redbrick houses that line the hills. Gomes, who works at a halal slaughterhouse, is understandably upbeat. A veteran activist in São Paulo's Afro-Brazilian politics, throughout the 1990s he urged bickering factions to come together into one Islamic movement, and now they have. Today he's part of a community of Afro-Brazilian Muslims that has drawn a lot of media attention. "Islam has fallen into the mouth of the *periferia*," he says, referring to the urban periphery, "and we don't know what will follow."

The São Bernardo community is centered around the Abu Bakr Assidik Islamic Center, founded by Ahmad Ali Saifi, a Lebanese-Brazilian philanthropist and close friend of President Lula, who built his fortune exporting Brazilian halal beef to the Middle East. Attached to the Islamic center is Posse Hausa, an arts collective founded in the mid-1990s, just as São Paulo was becoming the capital of Brazilian hip-hop. Members note casually that it was through American hip-hop—particularly the Afrocentrist rap of the early 1990s—that they discovered Islam and Brazil's Muslim past.

"I got my political education through rap," says Honorê Al Amin Oaqd, the founder of the organization. "Through the music I discovered Malcolm X, and then the history of the Malês. I saw that Muslim slaves were at another level. They were learned, didn't drink, didn't smoke, knew how to write. I became Muslim and made hajj when I was twenty-one. I do believe had the Malês taken over Bahia on that 25th of January in 1835, they'd have had this country in their hands—and Brazil would be an Islamic state."

Posse Hausa's center is decorated with paintings of nineteenth-century Bahia—women in white head wraps, a man wearing a fez kneeling in prayer—and murals celebrating the uprising. The organization provides social services, but it's also trying to create a new identity for black Brazilians. Honorê thinks Islam can create solidar-

ity, "The Hausas who led the revolt were on different sides of the wars in Nigeria—but they came together in Bahia." Activists at the center learn Arabic and hold workshops on the history of Bahia, teaching neighborhood youth how in 1807, a group of Malês tried to commandeered a fleet of ships and sail back to West Africa; how the 1835 revolt was inspired by the Haitian revolution of 1799–1804; and how history can dignify and empower. They're aware of how their narrative challenges the discourse of "racial democracy." "We're not promoting a racist discourse," explains Ali Jamal Shabazz, a recording artist who moved from eastern Brazil to join the group in São Paulo. "But we have countless Trayvon Martins killed every day in this country, black youth killed by police violence, by gang violence—and no one talks about it. We have problems that go all the way back to the plantation. And honestly those who die young in Brazil are those who never knew their history."

Sugar has a bittersweet meaning in this community. In the Freyreian narrative, sugar epitomizes the Oriental sensuality of the Brazilian plantation. For these young converts, sugar is linked to the Orient, but in a different way: *açúcar* was the essence of plantation slavery, but it's also what connects them to history and the wider world. They speak excitedly about how sugar was the handmaiden of Islam; that it was Muslim conquerors in Persia who brought the crop to the western Mediterranean and Iberia. (In his classic *Sweetness and Power*, historian Sidney Mintz writes, "And wherever they went, the Arabs brought with them sugar, the product and the technology of its production; sugar, we are told, followed the Koran.") Talking to these young men, I recalled the words of Orestes Fonseca, the imam of Havana, who tells his congregation, "Every time we hear Cubans proudly say 'I'm as Cuban as the sugar cane, *tan Cubano como la caña*,' we Muslims should smile, because sugar cane is not Cuban, it's Arab, it came from the Middle East to Andalusia to the Caribbean." Posse Hausa members echo this thinking: *sukar* is a Moorish legacy, brought by the conquistadors to the Americas, where it was cultivated by machete-wielding African Muslims. Sugar in the narrative of Afro-Brazilian Muslims—and Afro-Latino "reverts" in general—is

thus not a byword for interracial intimacy, but a reminder of a history of oppression and a lost Muslim identity, where a retrieval of the latter can redress the effects of the former.

"Since I became Muslim, I don't drink, or smoke, my children have a father and mother, education, and a regulated life [*vida regrada*]," says Abdullah Malik Shabazz, who heads the Center for the Development of Brazilian Islam (NDIB), also in São Bernardo. "Islam gives us the instruments to combat social problems that afflict those of us who are the majority, but have less than everyone else."

The growth of Islam in Brazil has been noticeable. "In 2000, there were 32 mosques in Brazil; now there are 150 mosques in the country," says Paulo Pinto, an anthropologist at the Fluminense Federal University in Rio. "The War on Terror, the war in Iraq, the soap operas, with positive Muslim characters—all sparked an interest in Islam. It came to be seen as a form of resistance to globalization, to empire. And many people decided to convert—especially people who historically vote left—Trotskyites, socialists—they saw Islam as a new Third Worldism. Today, in Rio, for example, the majority of Muslims are converts."

But this view of Islam as a "new left" was rare in the nation's favelas, where for the last thirty years it has been evangelical movements that have made inroads. Yet in January 2009, *Época* magazine ran a cover story with the headline "Islam Is Growing in the Periphery of Brazil's Cities," and asking, "Young blacks are becoming Muslim activists in response to racial inequality. What do they think and what do they want—the Muslims of the ghetto?" The American embassy in Brasília would similarly report that "conversions to Islam are rising among non-Arab citizens." The irony here is that it is partly American cultural flows—hip-hop and Spike Lee's film on Malcolm X—that sparked an interest in Islam among favela youth.

"It's not surprising that you're seeing Islam in São Paulo's favelas," says Honorê, smiling. "This is the birthplace of Brazilian hip-hop—and in this country, hip-hop has a moral advantage over funk."

With Brazil's transition to democracy in the late 1980s, hip-hop and funk emerged as the sound of the favelas, challenging the hegemony of samba. Rap took root in São Paulo, while "funk carioca"

developed in Rio; both genres would mock the performance of democracy represented by Carnival. Funk musicians, in particular, laced their lyrics with references to poverty, gang violence, and vigilantism. Brazilian funk grew out of two American musical genres: a type of rap called Miami bass (also known as "booty bass" for its sexually explicit lyrics) and an electronic dance pop known as Latin freestyle, also born in south Florida. In the mid-1990s, Rio-based DJs would fly up to Miami to pick up the latest rap mixtapes, and they created a musical crossbreed different from the original George Clinton-style funk of the 1970s. The *funkeiros* began throwing open-air parties in Rio's favelas, drawing youth from far away and inspiring clever new dances. In 2001, the "train dance" (*trenzinho*) became popular: young men and women would line up, crouching, and bounce forward, cheering, barking, thrusting their pelvises to the beat. In 2008, *creu* became the craze: an MC would rhyme while one or two female dancers in tiny shorts would show how rapidly they could thrust, "*Creu, creu, creu!*"

These dance steps—often accompanied by barking and spanking—are a far cry from samba's more subdued eroticism. As middle-class youth began doing the train dance, and songs like "My Little Mare" and "A Little Slap Doesn't Hurt" got more radio play, a backlash started. Funk would be blamed for civil unrest and social breakdown. "I Got Pregnant in the Train Dance," read a headline in the conservative magazine *Veja*. "Funk with a Police Record," read another. It didn't help that drug gangs were sponsoring weekly funk parties and mixtapes to attract young recruits; and DJs gave shout-outs to gangs like the Red Command. The police began raiding favela parties. And in 2007, a law—later repealed—was passed that made it all but impossible to hold open-air funk parties in the favelas.

Hip-hop and funk exposed rifts in Brazilian society and brought a note of discord into the national harmony that samba was supposed to broadcast. Hip-hop artists were more political, though, building organizations and working with party officials. The Posse Hausa activists genuinely believe that through an Islam-inflected hip-hop—and with support from the Workers' Party, which has supported rap organizations—they can draw attention to racial inequality, "convert the *funkeiro* tribe," and even challenge the evangelicals in the fave-

las and prisons. Honorê and his posse hold workshops on Malê history in prisons nationwide; they send books, gowns, and skull caps to inmates who have converted; they set up prayer rooms (*musallas*) in various favelas; they are currently lobbying local government to recognize "Black August" as a month to celebrate Afro-Brazilian history.

Brazil watchers will observe that middle-class Brazilian converts encounter Islam through Sufi organizations, whereas in the favelas it's African-American youth culture that sparks interest. American culture—religious and profane—plays an undeniable role in Brazilian religious life. The Pentecostal movement—which grew out of a storefront church in Los Angeles a century ago—has millions of followers in Brazil, and one of its star evangelists is the Grammy-winning gospel artist Aline Barros. It is rather ironic that American diplomats are worried about the rise of Islam among African-descended communities in Brazil and the Caribbean when it's American cultural exports that are triggering that interest. But such America-centered accounts of favela Islam ignore a critical domestic factor: President Lula's educational reforms and the political ferment in Bahia today.

Pelourinho, as Salvador's historic center is called, is dazzling in the summer twilight. A cluster of low colonial buildings overlooks the clear blue water of the Bay of Bahia. The cobblestone lanes are lit by hanging streetlamps; the pastel-colored stucco town houses and baroque church façades beam with history. As banners of African masks flutter in the wind, the sound of trombones and trumpets grows louder. Carnival in Salvador's old city is a quiet affair compared to Rio's or São Paulo's. The procession tries to replicate an earlier era: brass bands stroll through the alleyways; teenagers pound drums tied around their waists; young girls with white bandanas carry effigies of different *orishas*—African gods—"disguised" as Catholic saints. No floats or trucks are allowed into the historic area. Also absent is the near-naked samba queen. The female protagonist in this Carnival is the Bahian woman, with her distinctive head wrap and white hoopskirt. Whether walking with the procession; selling water, food, *baiana* dolls; or teaching tourists how to wrap their *rodilha* around

their heads, the *baiana* with the embroidered dress covering up her body is a ubiquitous presence in northeast Brazil.

Gilberto Freyre, not surprisingly, saw the *baiana* as an important symbol. The anthropologist, born soon after abolition in Pernambuco, just north of Bahia, was captivated by the Malês and their institutions. In the "dark of the slave huts," he wrote, they ran schools and cooperatives to purchase each other's freedom. The revolt of 1835 would shape his view of Brazilian identity. If antebellum North Americans gave African Muslim slaves an "Oriental" origin, Freyre thought, the Muslim presence in Bahia afforded the entire Brazilian nation an Oriental pedigree. The Malês, with their "Mohammedan fire," brought another injection of Moorish civilization into Brazil. And the African Muslim woman of Bahia would—like the "Moorish brown girl"—enchant the Portuguese man, and come to stand as a reminder of Islamic influence. Freyre extolled the *baianas*—"tall, heraldic-appearing, aristocratic in bearing"—with their long white shawls and "Mussulman turban on their heads." That turban—the *rodilha*—is making a cultural comeback in northeast Brazil.

The musical group Ilê Aiyê came together in Salvador in 1974. Their aim was to "re-Africanize" the city's Carnival, which had become tourist-and-samba-dominated, and so they set up floats celebrating different African countries and carried signs that read "Black Power." "We wanted to call our group Black Power," says Antônio Carlos Vovô, the school's seventy-year-old founder, "but the federal police and the military said no, they saw us as too radical, too American." Through their activism, Ilê Aiyê and other Afro-Brazilian *blocos* were able to revitalize Pelourinho—long neglected by the government—and prompt UNESCO to declare Salvador's center a World Heritage Site in 1985. Yet as pioneering and brazen as they are, it was only in 2002 that Ilê Aiyê decided to celebrate the Malê Revolt in Carnival. In February of that year, squadrons of school members, women in beige turbans and long print skirts flanked by young men in white robes, marched behind a float with red-white Moorish arches, chanting, "Night of glory perhaps . . . in the name of Allah." The song, composed for the occasion, imagined how the world would have "turned" had the revolt of 1835 not been betrayed. Ilê Aiyê set a prec-

edent. Their *enredo* received high marks from the festival's judges, and soon other *blocos afros*, like Olodum and Malê Debalê, began recounting the Muslim revolt. Brazil's post-9/11 interest in Islam thus manifests itself differently in Bahia than in the Carnivals of Rio and São Paulo. In 2012, leaders of Malê Debalê stood atop a float truck, leading thousands in chant, "We're Black, Muslims/Warriors and revolutionaries—*Somos negros, Muçulmanos/Guerreiros e revolucionários*." It's hard to imagine a similar war cry sounding at Rio's Carnival.

The growing references to Bahia's Islamic past are also due to Lula's reforms. In 2003, the Brazilian congress passed Law 10/639, requiring public and private schools to teach "the black struggle in Brazil, black Brazilian culture and the role of blacks in social, economic and political aspects of the history of Brazil." The law mandated that schools celebrate a "National Day of Black Consciousness." This initiative sparked a wave of research and advocacy to bring Afro-Brazilian figures into history textbooks. Activists are now trying to find out more about the lives of individuals like Luísa Mahin, a Muslim *baiana* who fought in the revolt of 1835. The memory of this "Queen of Brazil" has been preserved in song and chants: she was, according to local lore, a vendor by day, an Arabic scribe by night, who participated in the rebellion but then disappeared, possibly deported to Angola. The political ferment in Bahia has spread to other cities as well. Today in Brazil, as in the U.S., there is a keen interest in the Islam of the plantation: Afro-Brazilians and the children of Muslim immigrants are studying the writings of slaves and the rituals of Afro-Brazilian religion, looking for "Muslim retentions." Is the white cloth that is laid down in the middle of the room during a Candomblé ceremony a Muslim legacy? Does the chant "*É barika é barika*" derive from the Arabic *baraka*, meaning "grace"? Is the holding of Umbanda ceremonies on Friday a Muslim remnant? Is the Afro-Brazilian distrust of Catholicism—and attraction to Protestantism—a Muslim holdover, as Freyre suggested?

The Brazilian government has made Bahia's past central to its cultural diplomacy. When addressing Muslim audiences, Lula celebrates the history of the northeast: "Muslims who came to Brazil as slaves

laid the foundation of the country." In November 2009, he received the Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas in Bahia, the latter praising Brazil as an example of *convivência* that the world could learn from. Bahia is also pivotal to Brazil's new Africa policy. Lula—and his successor, Dilma Rousseff—opened more embassies in Africa, expanded trade ties, and built a symbolic fiber-optic cable running from Bahia to West Africa. Lula's and Rousseff's overtures to Africa and the Middle East are intended to show how far Brazil has come toward achieving "racial democracy," but also to integrate the Islam of upwardly mobile migration—represented in Rio and São Paulo's Carnivals—with the protest Islam seen in Salvador's street processions.

As in the U.S., where there are now tours of Georgia's Sea Islands, for people who want to meet the descendants of Bilali Muhammad and witness Muslim traces in local Baptist traditions, Bahia is drawing a curious kind of "Muslim roots" tourism. It's not unusual these days to see Dutch or French Muslims inside the Church of Our Lady of the Conception of Lapinha, in downtown Salvador, looking up in awe at the church's mosquelike interior: the bright-colored Moorish tilework and floral patterns; figures of a crucified Christ and statuettes of Mary placed inside engraved arches; hues of blue, orange, and beige. Just above one corner arch, a black-and-white Arabic inscription unfolds counterclockwise around the edge of the ceiling: "Behold, This is the Miracle of God and This is the Door of Heaven." The church brochure says this house of worship was founded in 1771; the church's tour guide tells visitors the edifice served as a shelter for fleeing Muslim slaves after 1835; other sources say the church was designed and built in the 1860s by a Muslim (*inmale*) named Manoel Friandes. And that is all we know: Is the Arabic inscription a Muslim adage that Friandes buried in the Morisco patterns, or a biblical verse translated into the language of the Quran? And is the church facing east toward Mecca, the direction of Muslim prayer, or toward West Africa?

The Moorish Atlantic

The cultural memory of Islamic Spain—and the question of Moorish influence in the Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking worlds—has long divided Latin American intellectuals and leaders. The Mexican novelist Carlos Fuentes rejoiced in the cultural *mélange* that Spain poured into Latin America, and the “river of voices” heard in the *cante jondo* song, which absorbed centuries of influence, “from the Arab call to prayer to the latest tropical rumba.” But his compatriot the Nobel laureate Octavio Paz saw Moorish influence—specifically the “Hispano-Arab idea” of caudillo—as the root of the militarism that plagued Latin America during the 1970s. In Brazil, the conservative economist and diplomat Roberto Campos never bought Freyre’s theories, and lamented the vestiges of Arab despotism on Brazilian society. Throughout the past century, particularly during the Cold War, Latin American leaders from Cuba’s Fidel Castro to Argentina’s Juan Perón would call for Muslim-Latin solidarity in the face of imperial domination, highlighting historic ties to the Orient, while their political opponents would call for a distancing from Africa and the Middle East. When the nationalist left is ascendant in Latin America, as it was after the Cuban Revolution, there is talk of solidarity with the Orient, and the Moor (or Mooress) invariably makes an appearance.

The *mulata* has been central to Cuban nationalism since the colonial era. As in Brazil, there was an association between sugar, sensuality, and darker skin. To woo foreign customers, exporters in the nineteenth century would place pictures of *mulatas* on cigar and sugar packages, referring to light *mulatas* as “first-rate” sugar or “second-rate white.” As Cuban nationalists began agitating against Spanish rule, the *mulata* became a symbol of colonial exploitation, but also a source of pride; she represented the miscegenation that distinguished the island from its Spanish oppressor. The Cuban nationalists expressed solidarity with the Muslims then also struggling against colonial rule. In 1893, as the Berbers of northern Morocco rose up in revolt against

Spanish rule, the poet José Martí would declare, “*Seamos moros!* Let us be Moors . . . we [Cubans] who will probably die by the hand of Spain.” The Spanish overlords withdrew in 1898, but the U.S. gained control of the island’s sugar economy. Havana became a tourism destination, playground for American artists and mobsters. In 1926, the novelist Waldo Frank would wax poetic about the *mulata*: “The hips and the high heels are jazz; the arms and breasts swath her in Andalusian softness; under the blare of her rouge Africa mumbles.” The miscegenated woman would again become a reminder of the island’s sexual and economic exploitation.

When Castro came to power in 1959, he shut down Havana’s glitzy, mob-operated casinos and promised to provide sex workers with legal jobs. But the music of 1950s Havana—*danzóns* like Eliseo Grenet’s “La Mora,” which spoke of Moorish beauties and enchanting eyes—had already spread around the world. In Cairo, the Sudanese crooner Sayed Khalifa shook his maracas and band members in bow ties banged on congas as he sang “Al Mambo Sudani”; this chirpy Latin tune became a hit as Castro and Che Guevara’s revolutionary fervor reached the Arab world. Castro made a philo-Muslim pan-Africanism central to his regime’s ideology and policy initiatives. In his famous 1959 speech on race, the *jefe maximo*, echoing Freyre, underlined Cuba’s Moorish origins: “We all have lighter or darker skin. Lighter skin implies descent from Spaniards who themselves were colonized by the Moors who came from Africa. Those who are more or less dark-skinned came directly from Africa. Moreover, nobody can consider himself as being of pure, much less superior, race.”

Almost a half century after the Cuban Revolution, a new mix of tropicalism and Orientalism would surface. In 2002, a group called Hanine y Son Cubano appeared on the international music scene. Their debut album, a collection of classic Arab compositions set to the rhythms of *guajira* and *son montuno*—evoking belle époque Cuba and pre-civil war Beirut—climbed the Arab pop charts. Produced by the eccentric Lebanese politico and club promoter, Michel Elefteriades, who was exiled in Havana during the late 1990s—and friendly with Che Guevara’s daughter, Aleida—the group appeared just as the Cuban regime began restoring pre-revolution casinos to draw tourists,

and a new discourse of Arab-Latin solidarity was emerging. Hanine y Son Cubano's performances made creative use of Cuban lore: The vocalist, Hanine Abou Chakra, plays the role of an Arabic-speaking *morisca*, in one video ambling languidly through a colonial-style mansion, singing of exile and homeland. Afro-Cubans dressed in white call on Shango, the god of thunder, and convert into trumpeters in white suits and fedoras. As they kick and twirl around her, the *morisca* raises her arms above her head, swaying her torso.

When he returned to Lebanon, Elefteriades, known for his anarchist views—he likes to be called “the Emperor of Nowheristan”—opened a Cuban casino in Beirut called Amor y Libertad, whose theme is revolution: the walls are decorated with quotes from Castro and Che; cigars and flyers on the injustice of the embargo against Cuba are passed out to clients. The post-9/11 tropicalism-Orientalism wave would take different manifestations, but it was the cultural effect of Latin America's response to the War on Terror.

September 11—like 1492—has a two-edged meaning in Latin America. It was on September 11, 1973, that a CIA-backed coup by General Augusto Pinochet led to the death of Chile's Marxist president Salvador Allende. Pinochet would put in place Operation Condor, a joint effort that authorized the intelligence services of Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay, and Chile to hunt down leftists across Latin America; for the next decade, the campaign would lead to the torture or disappearance of tens of thousands. When the Cold War ended, Latin American democracies began the arduous task of dismantling the secret prisons and setting up truth commissions. Thus, when Donald Rumsfeld flew to Santiago, Chile, in November 2002, to persuade Latin American defense ministers of the merits of a coordinated security policy—to integrate “various specialized capabilities into larger capabilities”—he received a cool response. A handful of military officials liked the idea of fusing the War on Drugs with the War on Terror, but left-leaning leaders—many of them former political prisoners—were wary of a continent-wide war on “narco-terrorism.” In early 2003, Lula took office in Brazil, and Néstor Kirchner was voted president of Argentina; and over the next few

years Ecuador, Bolivia, Paraguay, and Uruguay elected leftist leaders who decided to pass on Rumsfeld's offer.

The majority of South American states voted against the invasion of Iraq. Brazil led the opposition to American efforts to create a region-wide version of the Patriot Act and to the rendition system. In February 2013, the *Washington Post* published an astonishing map highlighting (in red) the fifty-four countries in the world that contributed to the U.S. program of “extraordinary rendition,” either by hosting CIA prisons or by allowing their airspace to be used for secret flights, and showed that the only region in the world that did not participate was Latin America. Even Colombia, the sole South American nation to vote for the Iraq War, and a staunch U.S. ally in the War on Terror, was untainted; the only speck of red in the region appeared on Cuba's eastern coast, at the Guantanamo Bay naval base, claimed “in perpetuity” by Teddy Roosevelt in 1903. Latin America's left turn revived the South-South discourse of the 1960s. In Bolivia, Evo Morales would set up a “Ministry of Decolonization.” Latin American leaders would reach out to Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, especially as it emerged that in Iraq, the U.S. was using methods of counterinsurgency developed in Central America (“the Salvador Option”), deploying paramilitary squads trained by Reagan-era veterans of the Central American “dirty wars.” In December 2010, Brasília would lead a number of Latin American states in recognizing Palestinian statehood at the UN. And speaking at the Security Council in September 2012, Dilma Rousseff lambasted Western states for their “Islamophobic prejudice.”

In truth, it was Venezuela's Hugo Chávez, elected in 1998, who was the first of this crop of leaders to adopt a discourse of Arab-Latin solidarity, urging his compatriots to “return to their Arab roots.” But his support for the repressive regimes of Iran, Libya, and Syria alienated many. Brazil had the soft power to charm and the hard power to rearrange regional alliances. Brazil's rise would pull a number of South American states out of the U.S.'s orbit, foiling Washington's security strategy; the second Bush administration in turn would pull back, solidifying its “security corridor” further north, running from Colom-

bia through Central America to Mexico. Colombia would emerge as the anchor of Washington's security policy in Latin America. It was also Colombia that would produce Shakira, the global cultural icon of the 9/11 decade, and the "enchanted Mooress" par excellence.

The Lebanese-Colombian singer brought Middle Eastern culture—albeit with a Latin rock pulse—to millions. Advised after 9/11 to drop the belly dancing and the Arabic riffs from her music because it could hurt sales, she refused, expressing horror at the hate of "everything that's Arab, or seems Arab." In dozens of venues around the world—concerts, sporting events, MTV—she shimmied blindfolded, crawled around inside a cage growling like a she-wolf, explained her "oral fixation" to fans, and famously humped a speaker onstage in front of three billion viewers at the 2010 World Cup final. In Europe, the United States, South America, and the Middle East, the chanteuse fostered a fashion for hip scarves with coins and tassels. In a random check of Cairo nightclubs in 2003, Egyptian government officials confiscated twenty-six Shakira outfits, weighing no more than 150 grams (five ounces), and deemed "scandalous."

In some ways, Shakira was catapulted by the post-9/11 interest in the Orient, and her performances often took an explicitly political tone; but she managed to transcend the political rows that touched other global divas. During the run-up to the Iraq War, her onstage dancers would wear masks of Tony Blair and George W. Bush. Backdrop screens would flash images of Bush and Saddam Hussein as two puppets playing a sinister game of chess, with the Grim Reaper as the puppeteer. Yet while Beyoncé and Mariah Carey were apologizing for performing private shows for Muammar Gaddafi (the former forced to cancel a tour in Malaysia due to protests), Shakira was strolling through the Pyramids crooning in Arabic. She took a highly publicized tour of the Middle East, visiting her father's ancestral village in the Bekaa Valley in eastern Lebanon. She was appointed a UN goodwill ambassador and invited to share the stage with Presidents Santos and Obama at the Summit of the Americas in 2012.

Public diplomacy notwithstanding, Shakira's greatest impact—like Jade's in the Brazilian telenovela—has been to popularize an aesthetic of Mideast-inflected miscegenation (*mestizaje*), personified by

the tanned, limber girl with a hip scarf and an upper-arm cuff; and to bring a pop tropicalist-Orientalist syncretism—long present in the gay underground—into the mainstream. After 2002, Arab-Latin fiestas and "1001 Valentino Nights" began popping up from Los Angeles to Beirut, a curious sideshow to the War on Terror.

Whether it's the "Brazilian example," the politics of solidarity, or the Muslim slave manuscripts that continue to appear in places like Panama, Trinidad, and Bahia, Latin America is viewed warmly by Muslims these days, as a progressive region, a place where Islam endured quietly after being suffocated in Iberia in 1492. Young Muslims looking for a place to be openly Muslim are idealizing Brazil, as that rare Western state that has no issue with Islam. Racial and ethnic tensions do abound in Brazil, but what the South American giant does illustrate, richly, is the extent to which Western states understand Islam through their own identity. In France, Islam is perceived as a threat to secularism; in Holland, it's a menace to multiculturalism; in Austria, people speak of the "gates of Vienna" and Ottoman reconquest. But in Brazil, a nation that views itself as hybrid and anti-imperial, the standard wisdom is that "mixing" with Islam will only make the country more mixed and voluptuous and anti-imperial. Visiting Brazil during the 9/11 decade, one is struck by the absence of organized hostility to Muslims and the absence of conflict around Islam and music as it has raged in Europe and the U.S. This state of affairs is contingent, the product of a political moment, and could shift with a change of government or an act of violence; then Brazil will turn her back on the East, and the Mooress will vanish again.