

**Panel 15: Faith and Spiritual Nourishment**

**Moderator: Joycelyn K. Moody**

**Zeinab McHeimech, Western U [[mcheimech@gmail.com](mailto:mcheimech@gmail.com)]**

**Talismans and Fragments of Enslaved African Muslim Women in the Americas**

Between 1809 and 1835 approximately twenty slave revolts took place in Bahia, Brazil; the most substantial uprising was known as the Malê revolt of 1835, or the Muslim revolt, where as many as 500 rebels were involved (Gomez 103). Although women were involved in the rebellion, their role remains largely indiscernible in historical documents since, as historian João José Reis contends, “[w]omen were conspicuously absent from Malê rituals” (1993, 107). Despite the underrepresentation of the black female Muslim slave in the archives, her presence can still be illuminated through traces and fragments. This paper takes as its site of inquiry a few of those fragments found in runaway slave notices (compiled by Lathan A. Windley) and transcripts of the trials of Conceição da Praia, Brazil (cited in Reis’s *Slave Rebellion in Brazil*). I will focus on the complex and fraught roles of black female Muslims in the Americas during the transatlantic slave trade and in the wider Islamic community. Indeed, in the face of violence, exploitation, dispersal, and separation, enslaved African Muslim women turned to their faith to contest the risk of erasure. More specifically, I suggest that these remarkable women deployed an Islamic epistemology—evident in their dress and distribution of Islamic talismans—to retain a sense of identity and to counter a system that negated their personhood.

Gomez, Michael A. *Black crescent: the experience and legacy of African Muslims in the Americas*, Cambridge, N.Y. 2005.

Reis, João. *Slave rebellion in Brazil: the Muslim uprising of 1835 in Bahia*, Baltimore, London 1993.

Windley, Lathan (compiler). *Runaway slave advertisements: a documentary history from the 1730s to 1790, Vol. 3*, South Carolina 1983.

**Talismãs e fragmentos de africanas muçulmanas escravizadas nas Américas**

Entre 1809 e 1835, aproximadamente 20 revoltas de escravos ocorreram no estado da Bahia, no Brasil, sendo a mais significativa a Revolta dos Malês de 1835, na qual aproximadamente 500 rebeldes estavam envolvidos (Gomez 103). Embora as mulheres estivessem envolvidas na rebelião, seus papéis ainda permanecem amplamente indiscerníveis em documentos históricos já que, como o historiador João José Reis afirma, "mulheres eram claramente ausentes dos rituais malês" (1993, 107). Apesar da pequena representatividade das escravas negras muçulmanas nos arquivos, sua presença

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ainda pode ser iluminada através de traços e fragmentos. Este artigo toma como campo de investigação um pouco dos fragmentos encontrados em anúncios de escravos fugidos (compilados por Lathan A. Windley) e transcritos dos julgamentos de Conceição da Praia, no Brasil (citado em *Slave Rebellion in Brazil* de Reis). Eu focarei nos complexos e tensos papéis de negras muçulmanas nas Américas durante o comércio de escravos transatlântico e na comunidade islâmica. Certamente, diante da violência, exploração, dispersão e separação, muçulmanas escravizadas recorreram a sua fé para contestar o risco de supressão. Mais especificamente, eu sugiro que essas notáveis mulheres instalaram uma epistemologia islâmica — evidente em sua vestimenta e distribuição de talismãs islâmicos — para conservar um senso de identidade e combater um sistema que negou sua individualidade.

[Traduzido por Vitor de Aguiar Soares - [vitoraguiarsoares@gmail.com](mailto:vitoraguiarsoares@gmail.com)]

Zeinab is a PhD candidate in the English department at Western University. In her dissertation, *Low Mutterings at High Tide*, she traces the figure of the Muslim slave in America and within the broader context of transatlantic passages. Her research focuses on autobiography and Arabic writings.