

► **BBC SOMALI**

BBC 04:00

BBC 11:00

BBC 14:00

BBC 18:00

Radio Daljir

Radio VOA

► **SEARCH**

QZ: A

► **SOMALI LINKS**

Allpuntland
Allcayn
Aminarts.com
Allmudugnews
Alcarab
Awdalnews
Allidamaale
Allwariye
Allsanaag
Agabso.com
Aflax
Allwadani
AllSomali.com
Awrboogays
Balkeena
Baydhabo Online
Bari Media
Bosaso Media
Biyokulule
Bulsho
Buruc News
Buruc Baxaya
Calanka
Ceegaag
CeegaagMedia
Cibaado
Current Analyst
Dalweyn
DissidentNation
Dowled.com
Dayniile
Dhahar.com
Dhanbaal
Doollo
GalgalaNews
Gedonet.com
Godeynews.com
Golxhatumo.com
Hadaaftimo
Halgan.net
Halganews
Hiraan.com
HornAfrik
HorseedMedia
Jamhuuriya
Jamhuriyah
libka.com
Maanhadal
Mareeronews
Markacadeey.com

To Be Black in Iraq

By Karlos Zurutuza

Inter Press Service

October 13, 2011



To Be Black in Iraq BASRA, Oct 13, 2011 (IPS) - "Before being deployed to Iraq I never thought I'd come across people who physically resemble my friends and family back in Buffalo," says U.S. marines sergeant William Collins on a rare patrol around Basra's Zubeir district. Credit: Karlos Zurutuza/IPS

BASRA, Oct. 13, 2011 (IPS/GIN) - "Before being deployed to Iraq I never thought I'd come across people who physically resemble my friends and family back in Buffalo," says U.S. marines sergeant William Collins on a rare patrol around Basra's Zubeir district.

The American marine arrived four months ago in Iraq's second largest city. Collins admits that nobody in his battalion knew of the existence of an Afro-Arab community in Iraq, not even the Afro-Americans like him.

"If I dressed the local Arab garb, I would be able to walk across these streets and nobody would take me as a foreigner," says Collins. He adds that he'd probably feel safer that way than with the bulletproof jacket and the helmet he's wearing.

There are many black people in Basra and especially in Zubeir district - an area of crumbling mud-brick buildings that is home to 300,000. Most black people in Zubeir claim to be descendants of slaves brought to the Gulf from Africa at least since the ninth century. And some old habits seem to have survived for a whole millennium.

"The Arabs still call us "abd" ("slave" in Arabic), says 46-year-old Zubeir resident Amin Tarik. "Luckily enough, there are not aggressions against us, but we face discrimination in almost every aspect of life," adds Tarik, speaking in the courtyard of his humble mud house.

Iraqi blacks hardly speak any language but Arabic, and they are overwhelmingly Muslim, like the majority in the country. Slavery was abolished here in the 19th century but the colour of their skin literally closes many doors.

Twenty-five-year-old Jihad Hail knows that well. "I fell in love with a white woman and even managed to marry her against all odds. But we finally split as



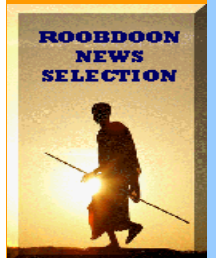
Sawirro Somaliya



Dastuurka DFS



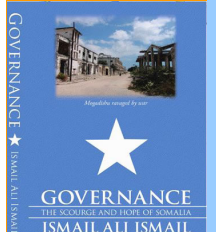
Dasturka D/GP/land



Roobdoon Forum



BenderKasim
Collegee
of Science and
Technology



GOVERNANCE
The Scourge and
Hope of Somalia
A New Book By
Ismail Ali Ismail



Somalia's New Tongue Twisting Names

By Roobdoon Forum



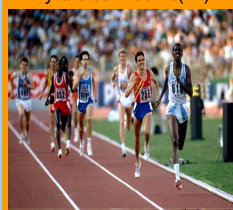
How to Start Your Own Xubin and Waax Country

By Roobdoon forum



Carrab Lo'aad Caws Looma Tiimaamo

By C/fataax Faamo(RF)



Running as a Nation Watches

Roobdoon Forum

she couldn't cope with the massive pressure her family was putting on her," recalls the young Afro-Arab, today in another relationship. "She's black, I've learnt the lesson well."

It's almost impossible to spot mixed couples on the streets of Basra. Women who marry a black man – it's never the other way round – have to walk under the eyes of Iraqi tribal society.

"I know a mixed couple," says Doha Abdulreda, a 20-year-old black hostess at Basra's trade fair. "She'll always hide under her Niqab (the Muslim covering over the face) when she walks next to her husband. Her family rejected her, that's not uncommon here."

While many call the Afro-Arabs "abd", they still call the local Arabs "free men".

Among the latter, there are all sorts of views on discrimination. "The black people have always been fully integrated in our community," says resident Said Al Mehdi. "Even my grandfather's fourth wife was a black woman. I'd always kiss her hand with great devotion," recalls this 72-year-old man, hair covered with a green scarf to suggest he's a direct descendant of Prophet Muhammad.

Not everybody would agree. "These people have been facing discrimination since the very day their ancestors were brought from Africa to build canals and to turn marshlands into fields for cotton and other crops," says Saad Salloum, editor of Masarat, a magazine focused on the minorities issue in Iraq.

"Unlike the Christians, the Bahai or other religious minorities, the Iraqi blacks haven't suffered prosecution because of their faith. On the other hand, they don't enjoy recognition as an Iraqi minority as that is still based on religious grounds."

But they have found a political voice to speak for them. "We celebrated Obama's victory in the streets as ours in 2009, and it really encouraged us to fight for our rights," says Salah Ruhais Salman, vice-president of the Iraqi Freedom Movement, a political party established to defend the rights of Iraqis of African descent.

Salman says Iraqi blacks have been forced to keep a low profile since the invasion of the country in 2003. But now they are asking for recognition as a national minority, something that would grant them a seat quota in Parliament.

But the unpaved road ahead seems to be endless, going by the eloquent figures provided by the 50-year-old activist.

"There are around 1.5 million of us in Iraq but none of us occupies any position in the Iraqi administration. I ran for the local elections back in 2009 with seven other colleagues. Despite Basra hosting Iraq's most significant black community, none of us was elected. Can you believe that?" Salman has no doubts that the vote was "blatantly rigged".

In a cable leaked by Wikileaks last September, Ramon Negron - director of the U.S. regional embassy in Basra - reported that "the black community suffers disproportionately under the government's patronage-based political system", adding that "they would easily have enough votes to win at least one seat in Basra's Provincial Council."

Many Iraqi blacks make a living as musicians. A wedding in Basra is never complete without drummers called in from Zubeir district.

Wafa Majid volunteers there as director of the women affairs section at the community meeting centre. The place was established at the beginning of this year and today it hosts computing and sewing workshops, as well as a reading and writing centre in order to tackle the high illiteracy rate – well over 90 percent among the local black women, according to local NGOs.

"It's not easy to be black and a female in Iraq but we cannot just sit down and watch our husbands play bongos," says Majid. Behind her, a group of 20 women sitting in front of a set of computers prepare for the massive challenges ahead.



Which Way to the Sea, Please?

By Nuraddin Farah



Piratestan Dhulkii Burcad- Badeedda



Warbixin Hoyga Burcad Badeedka



Budhcad Badeed Weli Qiil ma Leeyahay?



SYL LETTERS By A S Faamo



Sultaan Mohamood Alshire

A Touching Glimpse of
History and the Reunion
of a Somali Royalty



Bosaso Contemporary History.



**New Beginning
in Muslim World**



Islamist Vs Islamist

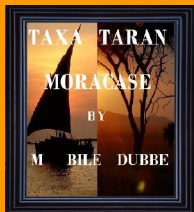


**Hammiga Waliid &
Hangoolka UNPOS
Roobdoon Forum**

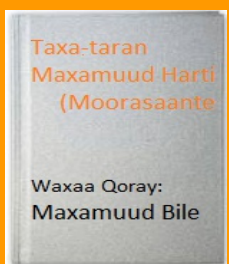


**Puntland: A Qisling
Scheme**

Roobdoon Forum



**Silsiladda Taxataran ee
Beesha Axmed Harti
By MB Dubbe**



**Silsiladda Taxataran ee
Beesha Maxamuud Harti
By MB Dubbe**

A Legacy Hidden in Plain Sight; Iraqis of African Descent Are a Largely Overlooked Link to Slavery

Theola Labbe
Washington Post
January 11, 2004



Washing cars is the only source of income for many African-Iraqi boys and men, they said, because no one will hire them.

Besides working on plantations, Abdullah said, some African slaves were soldiers, concubines or eunuchs. Arabs also enslaved Turks and other ethnic groups as high-ranking army officers and domestics.

The word was whispered and hurled at Thawra Youssef in school when she was 5 years old. Even back then, she sensed it was an insult.

Abd. Slave.

"The way they said it, smiling and shouting, I knew they used it to make fun of me," said Youssef, recounting the childhood story from her living room couch.

"I used to get upset and ask, 'Why do you call me abd? I don't serve you,' " Youssef said.

Unlike most Iraqis, whose faces come in shades from olive to a pale winter white, Youssef has skin the color of dark chocolate. She has African features and short, tightly curled hair that she straightens and wears in a soft bouffant. Growing up in Basra, the port city 260 miles southeast of Baghdad, she lived with her aunt while her mother worked as a cook and maid in the homes of one of the city's wealthiest light-skinned families.

In the United States, Youssef's dark skin would classify her as black or African American. In Iraq, where distinctions are based on family and tribe rather than race, she is simply an Iraqi.

The number of dark-skinned people like Youssef in Iraq today is unknown. Their origins, however, are better understood, if little-discussed: They are the legacy of slavery throughout the Middle East.

Historians say the slave trade began in the 9th century and lasted a millennium. Arab traders brought Africans across the Indian Ocean from present-day Kenya, Tanzania, Sudan, Ethiopia and elsewhere in East Africa to Iraq, Iran, Kuwait, Turkey and other parts of the Middle East.

"We were slaves. That's how we came here," Youssef said. "Our whole family used to talk about how our roots are from Africa."

Though centuries have passed since the first Africans, called Zanj, arrived in Iraq, some African traditions still persist here. Youssef, 43, a doctoral candidate in theater and acting at Baghdad University's College of Fine Arts,



**Warbixin Deg.
Waaciye**



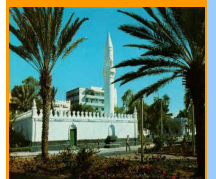
**Somalida iyo
Saladanadda**



**Exploration
Agreements**



The Great Game



**Muqdisho of
Yesteryears and
Today's Muuq-disho**



**Islamists Calm
Mogadishu**



The Charcoal Trade



A Flower Of Paradise



**PUNTLAND
Territories**

is writing her dissertation about healing ceremonies that are conducted exclusively by a community of dark-skinned Iraqis in Basra. Youssef said she considers the ceremonies -- which involve elaborate costumes, dancing, and words sung in Swahili and Arabic -- to be dramatic performances.

"I don't complain about being called an abd, but I think that's what provoked me to write this, perhaps some kind of complex," said Youssef, who began researching and writing about the practices of Afro-Iraqis in 1997, when she was studying for a master's degree. "Something inside me that wanted to tell others that the abd they mock is better than them."

A Long History

In the 9th century, as today, Basra was a major trading city on the Shatt al Arab waterway, which empties into the Persian Gulf. With date plantations in need of laborers, Arab leaders turned to East Africa -- Mombasa on the Kenyan coast, Sudan, Tanzania and Malawi, and Zanzibar, an island off the coast of Tanzania that gave the Zanj their name.

"By the 9th century, when Baghdad was the capital of the Islamic world, we do have evidence of a large importation of African slaves -- how large is anyone's guess," said Thabit Abdullah, a history professor at York University in Toronto.

Besides working on plantations, Abdullah said, some African slaves were soldiers, concubines or eunuchs. Arabs also enslaved Turks and other ethnic groups as high-ranking army officers and domestics.

Unlike in the United States, slaves in the Middle East could own land, and their children could not be born into slavery. In addition, conversion to Islam could preclude further servitude because, according to Islamic law, Muslims could not enslave other Muslims.

Even though Islam teaches that all people are equal before God, Abdullah said that medieval Arab slave owners made distinctions based on skin color. White slaves, known as mamluks, which means "owned," were more expensive than black slaves, or abds.

To protest their treatment, Zanj slaves working in the fields around Basra staged a revolt against Baghdad's rulers that lasted 15 years and created a rival capital called **Moktara**, believed to have been located in the marshlands of southern Iraq. By 883 the Baghdad army had finally put down the revolt. "This slave rebellion is so important to the history of slavery in Iraq because after that, no one wanted to take a risk by trying plantation-style slavery again," Abdullah said. Slavery continued until the 19th century, but dark-skinned Iraqis never again organized as a group to make political demands.

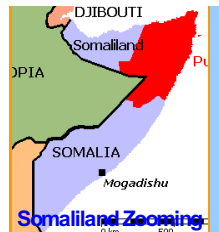
In a country that revolves around religion rather than race, the term "abd" may be used by light-skinned Iraqis in a matter-of-fact way to describe someone's dark complexion. Dark-skinned Iraqis say the word may or may not be considered an insult, depending on how it is used and the intent of the speaker.

"We use the word abd in the black community," said Salah Jaleel, 50, one of Youssef's cousins. "Sometimes I call my friend 'abd.' Of course he knows that I don't insult him, because I'm black also, so it's a joke. We accept it between us, but it is a real insult if it is said by a white man."

In many ways, the low visibility of dark-skinned Iraqis has been a blessing. During his 35 years in power, Saddam Hussein and his Baath Party government killed and tortured thousands of people based on ethnic and religious affiliations. Ethnic Kurds in the northern reaches of the country, and Shiite Muslims -- particularly the so-called Marsh Arabs -- living in the south all suffered. The dark-skinned Iraqis were spared Hussein's wrath.

' Proud of This Color '

Awatif Sabty, 47, is ambivalent on the subject of skin color. A secretary at Basra Agricultural College, she is more apt to talk about Hussein's wrongdoing than about her own caramel-colored skin or her marriage to a lighter-skinned man, Salah Mousa, 47.



Somaliland Zooming



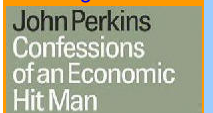
A Milestone Gesture



Cape of Less



Summary of Joint-Planning Committee



John Perkins



Confessions of an Economic Hit Man



Taariikhda Xijiga

Her mother was disappointed in her choice. Her husband's mother objected to the union. Sabty said Mousa's family even tried to intimidate her with threatening phone calls. Now she shakes her head and dismisses it all as long-ago history.

"Objections and barriers exist, but in the end it's all solved," she said in her soft voice, smiling.

Her middle-class home in Basra's Abbasiya district has painted concrete walls and two televisions and is immaculate. Sitting on a couch draped in white protective cloth, Sabty explained that intermarriages like hers are common in Iraq: "We don't have a problem with color, and we don't deal with someone based on color."

For instance, she said, her older sister married a light-skinned Iraqi and has a daughter with blond hair. Her brother married a dark-skinned woman and their child is dark-skinned. Sabty's two young children have olive complexions and straight, shiny hair, showing no trace of Sabty's caramel coloring.

Suddenly she paused. "In the coming generations we will have fewer dark-skinned children, and this pains us," she said. "We are proud of this color because people of this color are a minority in Iraq. Maybe DNA will bring us the color again."

Hashim Faihan Jimaa, 78, is more concerned with survival than color. He has no income and lives with his ailing wife, Dawla Shamayan, 68, who recently had gall bladder surgery.

Jimaa says he believes in the African-inspired healing ceremonies. He used to participate many years ago when they were more frequent; the number of ceremonies has decreased since the start of the U.S. occupation because of fear of performing outside.

"These came from Africa and they are very important to us, the abds," he said. Just as he used the Arabic word for slave to refer to himself, Jimaa sometimes referred to light-skinned Iraqis using the term for a free person.

His wife, sitting across from him with about a dozen of their children and grandchildren, gingerly suggested that perhaps his grandfather or another relative had been slaves from Africa.

Jimaa glanced down at the back of his dark-brown hand. "You can't depend on someone's color, because maybe a black man married a free woman and the children will come out lighter than me," he said. To seal his argument, he pointed to his caramel-colored daughter and then his granddaughter, who was darker than her mother.

Jimaa's wife and others continued to probe Jimaa's answers. He grew exasperated. "I have nothing to do with Africa, I don't know where it is or even what it is," Jimaa said. "But I know that my roots are from Africa because I am dark-skinned."

Few local government leaders in Basra, some of whom were selected by the U.S.-led occupation authority, are dark-skinned. In Hakaka -- a poor neighborhood of 600 families, about 100 of them dark-skinned -- town council members elected last August vowed to make changes. All of the eight council members are light-skinned.

"People applied to be members, and no one black applied," said council President Abdullah Mohammed Hasan, 54, in the narrow sandwich and snack shop that serves as the council's headquarters. Hasan has two wives, one of them dark-skinned.

"They have good manners and are very easy to deal with," Hasan said of dark-skinned Iraqis. "It would be better if they were members."

Youssef, the doctoral candidate, grew up in Hakaka. When she was a child her family did not have much money, but the modest neighborhood was clean. Now it lacks a septic system and reeks of waste because there is no garbage pickup.

Youssef goes back at least once a month to see her 74-year-old father, who

sometimes needs her help because of his failing eyesight. She also visits with her brother, Sabeeh Youssef, and his family.

Sabeeh Youssef, 47, dropped out of school early to help support the family. He works fixing broken lighters since losing his job at an oil company in 1989. But he is a self-taught carpenter, capable of carving elaborate antique cars and miniature ships. He proudly showed the objects lining the walls of his modest home, which lacks running water.

He would love to have his own shop, "but I don't have the materials and I don't have the money to buy them," he said, as his daughter Duaa Sabeeh, 5, grew restless in his lap.

"I'm very happy and proud of my sister," he added. "She did the things that I couldn't do, or that my father couldn't do. She did it."

A Link to Africa

Each time Thawra Youssef returns to Hakaka, well-dressed in pressed clothes and a loosely draped black head scarf, she looks like a queen visiting for a day among the poor families in house clothes, who hover at their doorways and call out to Youssef by name.

"I don't feel like a stranger here," she said one day, stepping carefully to avoid the sewage as eager children followed her. "I have something deep inside of me that is connected to the local Basra ceremonies. I can't abandon them."

The practices, she said, came from "the motherland where we came from: Africa."

In her dissertation, Youssef mentioned seven open fields in and around Basra where ceremonies take place. The field in the Hakaka section is a dusty, hard-packed courtyard with houses clustered around it. Drums, tambourines and other instruments are stored in a closet. Youssef said that only a local leader named Najim had a key. Youssef had to seek his permission to write about the ceremonies.

Najim declined to talk about them.

In her dissertation Youssef describes a song called "[Dawa Dawa](#)." The title and words are a mix of Arabic and Swahili. The song, which is about curing people, is used in what Youssef calls the [shtanga ceremony](#), for physical health. Another ceremony, nouba, takes its name from the Nubian region in the Sudan. There are also ceremonies for the sick, to remember the dead and for happy occasions such as weddings.

"The ceremonies are our strongest evidence of our African identity," she said.

[Youssef said she was raised to be a proud Iraqi and Muslim, but that her mother also stressed the family's roots in Kenya. Her grandfather and his relatives came from Africa through slavery, her mother said.](#)

"I knew that the word abd was used to refer to black people, and I know that it was something embarrassing that my mother was working in a white person's house," Youssef said. "I remember that if their son hit me, I couldn't even push him. So that hurt me, that stuck in my mind."

When she was 9, her mother sent her to stay with an aunt, Badriya Ubaid. She lived in a more upscale neighborhood and was the lead singer in the nationally acclaimed band Om Ali.

"My aunt, she was the first one pushing me to study," Youssef said. "She said, why do we let them say that black people can only do dance and music? Why don't we show them that they can be an important part of the community, that they can study? She wanted me to answer this question."

In college and graduate school, as she studied theater and dance, Youssef also sang with Om Ali. If someone said that the dark-skinned Iraqis were only good for entertainment, Youssef said, her aunt was quick to point out that her niece was in graduate school studying for an advanced degree. When Ubaid died, Youssef sang regularly in the band but quit in 1999 to pursue her

doctorate full time.

Youssef also danced with a local arts troupe. She found the moves reminiscent of the dances in the ceremonies. She wrote her master's research on body movement, and when it was time to pick a topic in 2000 for her dissertation, she decided to look at her community's healing ceremonies.

"It's not only going to give ideas about dark-skinned people, it will give an idea about our inherited ceremonies, which we have to protect," said Youssef. She wants to teach and to publish her work in a book.

"The most important thing is that I started it," said Youssef. "People will come after me, God willing."

Special correspondent Omar Fekeiki contributed to this report.

© Copyright 2004, The Washington Post Co. All Rights Reserved

Black Iraqis In Basra Face Racism

By Corey Flintoff

NPR

December 3, 2008



Jalal Diyaab is the leader of the Free Iraqi Movement, which is seeking to have Iraq's roughly 2 million black people recognized as a minority whose rights should be protected.

The election of Barack Obama to the U.S. presidency was celebrated with special fervor by Iraqis of African descent in the southern port city of Basra.

Although they have lived in Iraq for more than 1,000 years, the black Basrawis say they are still discriminated against because of the color of their skin, and they see Obama as a role model. Long relegated to menial jobs or work as musicians and dancers, some of them have recently formed a group to advance their civil rights.

Black people in Basra are most visible at joyous events. When there's a big wedding, Basrawis call in drummers from the district of Zubair. The Basrawi bride and groom are welcomed in traditional fashion by a row of musicians in Arab dress, long *dishdasha* gowns and red-checkered head scarves. The drummers sway in unison to the rhythms they slap out on broad, tambourinelike drums — and drive up excitement as the newlyweds cross the threshold of a Basra hotel.

The drummers are black men, descendants of the people who came here from East Africa as sailors or slaves over the course of centuries. And while they are welcome fixtures at joyous events all over the city, they say they are not as welcome in Basra's political, commercial or educational life.

Seen As Slaves

"People here see us as slaves," says Jalal Diyaab, a 43-year-old civil rights activist. "They even call us *abd*, which means slave."

Diyaab is the general secretary of the Free Iraqi movement. He sits with more than a dozen other men in a narrow, high-ceilinged room in a mud-brick building in Zubair, talking about a history of slavery and oppression that he says dates back to at least the ninth century.

"Black people worked on the plantations around Basra, doing the hard labor, until there was a slave uprising in the mid-800s," says Diyaab. Black people ruled Basra for about 15 years, until the caliph sent troops. Many of the black rebels were massacred, and others were sold to the Arab tribes.

Slavery was abolished here in the 19th century, but Diyaab says black people in modern-day Iraq still face discrimination.

"[Arabs] here still look at us as being incapable of making decisions or even governing our lives. People here are 95 percent illiterate. They have terrible living conditions and very few jobs," he says.

Diyaab takes visitors across the street to a warren of mud-brick courtyards where dozens of people are packed into tiny rooms without running water or sewage. The narrow passageways reek of excrement. Many people sleep in the open yards when the weather is good, because there isn't enough space in the rooms.

"These houses are like caves. This house? This is it," says Diyaab, pointing at a single narrow room and the courtyard outside. He says 15 people, the family of a man called Abu Haidar, live here.

Lightning streaks the night sky as a thunderstorm rolls in from the Persian Gulf. Rain begins to speckle the hard-packed ground. The men gathered around say a heavy rain will flood these rooms ankle-deep with muck and sewage.

Diyaab says there are more than 2 million black people in Iraq. He says they want recognition as a minority, like the Christians, whose rights should be protected. He says his group's demands have been ignored by the Iraqi government, but they have found an ally in a Sunni political party — the National Dialogue Front.

Awath al-Abdan is the head of that party in Basra, and he says he thinks black Iraqis have a strong case for getting their minority status recognized.

"We expect this cause to become a political reality soon because it just started to get publicity. We are working hard to get these people's message heard," he says.

Preserving Their African Roots

For now, the message that most people in Basra hear from the black community is the joy its musicians help bring to weddings. But there's an entirely different feeling when they play for themselves.

The community has preserved many traditions from its African roots, including healing ceremonies that they say call up spirits from their ancient homeland.

On a bright Saturday in Zubair, young men hang bright flags and prepare an altar for a ceremony they say will summon a spirit from Africa. They work under the impatient direction of Baba Sa'eed al-Basri, a prominent local musician. He is the hereditary leader of this religious sect, which combines elements of Islam with African spirit traditions.

The flags, Baba Sa'eed says, represent the African countries associated with various spirits. At the center of the altar is a model of an Arab sailing dhow, the kind of ship that brought black people to this city.

"These rituals," he says, "are inherited self-expressions that were brought to us from Africa, through the ships that traded in this port."

The Baba cleanses the courtyard, by sprinkling it with water. He scents the hands of visitors with a cologne stick and offers tiny cups of bitter coffee. Then he takes his place by the altar, among the candles and incense burners, and tells the drummers to begin.

The ceremony begins with an Islamic invocation, as the drummers chant "there is no God, but God," but soon the rhythm changes. The song says another being is announcing his presence, "a stranger is calling, the sea is calling."

Baba Sa`eed, who has been dancing with his arms and his upper body as he sits by the altar, goes rigid and begins speaking in what he later says was an African dialect, punctuated by phrases in broken Arabic. His voice goes into a weird upper register. The "dialect" has an improvised sound to it, and even the drummers don't seem especially impressed by his spirit possession. He says this place has been blessed, before snapping out of it, with a dazed expression.

The ceremony ends with a song the Baba says will send the spirits back to their homes — retracing the journey that his ancestors made, back through the Gulf to Yemen and then on to the coast of East Africa. The candles and the incense are extinguished. The flags are taken down and the model ship is put away. The black musicians of Zubair pack up their drums and get ready to play another round of weddings.



African-Iraqi men sing after their group "Free Iraqi Movement" was approved as a political party to run in the coming local elections in Basra, 420 km (260 miles) southeast of Baghdad December 6, 2008. Inspired by Barack Obama's election in the United States, some black Iraqis plan to run in a forthcoming election, to end what they call centuries of discrimination because of their slave ancestry. Picture taken December 6, 2008.



Iraqi members of the "Movement of Free Iraqis", a political party formed by the black descendants of African slaves, listen to their secretary Jalal Dhiab, delivering a speech during a gathering in the southern Iraqi oil city of Basra to watch the inauguration of Barack Obama as the first black US president on January 20, 2009. "The blacks in Iraq are so happy they are overflowing with joy and tears as they watch this great victory of President Obama for freedom and democracy," Dhiab said. Landowners in southern Iraq had brought Iraq's black population from eastern Africa, from where Obama's family originates, to toil on their labour-intensive estates some.

© Copyright BiyoKulule Online All rights reserved®
Contact us administrator@BiyoKulule.com or roobdoon2000@yahoo.ca