"Where are you, Children of the Sudan?":
The recollection of slavery in the *lila* ritual of the Gnawa of Morocco[1]

by Tim Abdellah Fuson
Presented at the conference "Slavery and Religion in the Modern Era"
Essaouira, Morocco, June 15, 2001

Introduction

The Gnawa *lila* is a rich progression of songs, dances, smells, tastes and colors that takes place over the course of an entire night. In addition to being the primary cultural expression of the descendants of slaves in Morocco, it is also the site where the memory of the slave experience lives on in performance. While some scholars have demonstrated links and similarities between Gnawa rituals and those of Sub-Saharan and African diaspora peoples (e.g., Pâques 1964, 1991, Lapassade 1977, 1982), few have considered how the Gnawa express the memory of abduction, slavery, and their lands of origin in the song lyrics of their repertoire[2]. My aim in this presentation is to review the types of lyrical expression used to recall slavery, and to suggest what is achieved by this recollection in the overall ritual. While I will begin by focusing on song texts, my role as an ethnomusicologist will be to demonstrate how these lyrics are experienced musically. Indeed, it is through the examination of the musical experience that the spiritual and emotional dimensions of this recollection can be understood.

Recollection of slavery and the Sudan[3] in the *Fraja*

Most of the songs that mention the experiences of the Sudanese and slave forbears of the Gnawa are performed during the *Fraja* (literally, "entertainment") sections that open the *lila* ceremony. During the *Fraja*, the floor of the ritual space is occupied by the Gnawa musicians, who sing and perform dances for the enjoyment of guests at the ceremony. The *Fraja* itself is divided into two sections, called *Ouled Bambara* ("The Sons of Bambara") and *Negsha* (meaning obscure). In the song texts of these sections, the Gnawa also invoke God, the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him), and a number of *awliya* (singular *wali*), Moroccan saints, many of whom are attached to Sufi lineages. With these types of invocations, the Gnawa *lila* resembles the *hadra* and *dhikr* rituals of Sufi brotherhoods. Unlike these groups, however, the Gnawa also invoke the Sudanese

peoples and places that gave rise to their tradition. In *Lalla Imma* ("Lady Mother") they sing[4]:

Sudani	*Lalla Imma*	
Bambarawi	*Lalla Imma*	
Fulani	*Lalla Imma*	
Husawi	*Lalla Imma*	Ya Tungra, Lalla Imma ya Tungra

Here, the Gnawa mention the Bambara, Fulani (Peul) and Hausa peoples of Sub-Saharan Africa. Members of these and other groups, brought as slaves to Morocco, are said to be the ancestors of the Gnawa and their tradition[5]. The experience of abduction and separation is also recalled. For example, in *Ya Sudan Ya Imma*, the Gnawa sing:

Ah Sudan ya Sudan	Oh Sudan, Oh Sudan
Ah jabuni jabuni	They brought me, they brought me
Ah jabuna min as-Sudan	They brought me from the Sudan
Ah duwzuni ʻala Bambara	They brought me by way of Bambara
Ah duwzuni ʻala Timbuktu	They brought me by way of Timbuktu
Wa min Sudan l-Fes l-Bali	From Sudan to Old Fez[6]

In *Sowiye*, they recall the loved ones from whom their forbears were separated:

Wo feenkum ya Uled s-Sudan	Where are you, Children of the Sudan?
Wo feenkum ya Uledi ʻammi	Where are you, Children of my uncle?[7]

In addition to remembering the ties that were broken as a result of slave abduction, the Gnawa also remember the experiences of their forbears under the yoke of slavery in Morocco. In some songs they mention the figure of the *khadem*, the black female servant, or the *dada*, the black nanny. In other songs, they refer to the characters Khali Mbara and Khalti Mbarka (Uncle Mbara and Aunt Mbarka). The names Mbark and Mbarka are Arabic names that were commonly given to black slaves (Westermarck 1926: ii, 406). The name Mbara appears to be both a dimunutive form of Mbark and a play on the word Bambara. In the song *Khali Mbara Meskin* ("Poor Uncle Mbara"), the

Gnawa relate examples of inequality between the luxurious life of the masters and the poor lot of the slaves:

Ye Sidi yakul l-hayma	My Lord is eating meat
Lalla takul ash-shhayma	My Lady is eating fat
Mbara igeddad l-'adima	Mbara is gnawing on a bone
Khali Mbara mahboul,	Uncle Mbara is crazy
Hada wa'do meskin	That's his lot, poor guy
Sidi sherbu shororo	My Lord is drinking tea
Lalla sherbu shororo	My Lady is drinking tea
Mbara yakul l-'iqama	Mbara is eating a mint leaf
Hada wa'do meskin	That's his lot, poor guy
Hada wa'do meskin	That's his lot, poor guy
Ye Sidi lebsu belgha	My Lord is wearing slippers
U Lalla tlebsu belgha	My Lady is wearing slippers
Mbarka telbes henqara	Mbarka is wearing old sandals
Rja f-Llah Ta'ala	Hope is God most High
Hada wa'do meskin	That's his lot, poor guy[8]

The Gnawa recall another group of their forbears, namely the *m'allem*s, master musicians, of days gone by. In *Zidumal*, the m'allem asks, "*Feen m'allem Mansum ah zidumal… Feen m'allem Lahcen ah zidumal?* (Where is M'allem Mansum? Where is M'allem Lahcen?" The Gnawa chorus answers, "*Da'im Allah* (God is Eternal)", for after all, it is written in the Qur'an (28: 88) that when everything in the material world passes away, all that remains is the face of God Eternal. In this case, it is not the brutality of slave abduction that has caused a separation from loved ones, but rather *al-mut al-ghaddara*, Death the Deceiver.

In the opening song of the *Negsha* suite, the Gnawa again refer to the passing of old *m'allem*s. Here, they sing

Tarhamu ya Llah, A M'allem 'Omar, a Da'im Allah
Tarhamu ya Llah, a Ba 'Ayuch, a Da'im Allah

Have mercy on him, oh God, M'allem 'Omar, God is Eternal
Have mercy on him, oh God, Ba 'Ayuch, God is Eternal[9]

The expression "God have mercy on him" is used in Arabic when speaking of someone who is deceased. In this song, the Gnawa not only draw a distinction between the impermanence of life and the eternal nature of God, but also between the old *m'allem*s and the saints whose power they revere and invoke. Using the same melody, the Gnawa invoke a list of these saints, preceding each name with the epithet "Difu lillah (Guest of God)" or the exhortation "Rwahu nzuru (Let's go make pilgrimage, or literally, let's leave and visit)". The saints, although dead and buried, are said to still be in possession of *baraka*, a tangible aspect of divine grace. A pilgrim who visits (the tomb of) a saint can benefit from contact with this *baraka*. While a visit to one of these saints is possible, the same cannot be said of the old Gnawa masters. They cannot be visited, and indeed the question is sung, "Where are they"?

Musical dimensions of recollection

What can we make of the recollection of lands of origin, abduction, separation, slave life, and the passing of old *m'allem*s juxtaposed with remembrance of Allah, the Prophet and the saints in a section called "entertainment"? We can gain insight by examining the meanings of the term *fraja* (entertainment) as well as the musical experience of lyrics and singing in the *Fraja* sections of the *lila*.

The term *fraja*, in Moroccan Arabic, refers to any type of activity in which an individual takes delight in watching the performance of another. Concerts, films, television, and *halqa* street performances are all considered to be *fraja*. The term usually implies an interpersonal dimension. While one person is performing, providing a pleasant experience for another (the verb *ferrej*), another is watching, gaining enjoyment from the experience (the verb *tferrej*).

The *Fraja* of the Gnawa *lila* fits this general definition of *fraja*, for one of the aims of its performance is indeed to give an enjoyable experience to the spectator. Guests arrive and, ideally, are seated on carpets and cushions. Dinner is served to guests during and after the *Uled Bambara*. Glasses of mint tea are distributed. In this comfortable and relaxing environment, guests enjoy the masterful *guinbri* playing of the *m'allem*, the call and response interaction of solo and ensemble singing, and the spectacular, graceful, and sometimes humorous dances performed by the *koyo*, the

designated dancer from the Gnawa ensemble.

The verb *ferrej*, meaning to entertain or give a show for someone, also has the meaning of relieving someone's pain or bettering his or her condition (Harrell 1966: 39). In Standard Arabic, one meaning of the verb *farraja* is to comfort or relieve people by distracting them or dispelling their worries and grief (Wehr 1994: 822). The performance of the *Fraja* sections of the *lila* and the environment in which it takes place are clearly intended to accomplish this act. As M'allem Hmida Boussou says, of the opening section, "The 'Ulèd Bambara' are sung… so as to forget the tiredness of the day" (Baldassarre 1992).

While moving guests away from the worries of day, the *Fraja* also moves them toward the *Mluk* trance sections. In this way, it serves a preparatory function in the overall progression of the *lila*. Gnawa musician Abdenbi Binizi confirms that by means of the *Fraja*, musicians ease the guests into the trance. If the ritual began directly with trance dances, which can be startlingly violent, Binizi says this could be quite a shock for guests[10].

This preparation is at once aural, spiritual and emotional, and its dimensions can be understood by examining the musical experience of lyrics. The opening *Uled Bambara* section is performed without the brash sound of the *qarqaba* metal clappers that accompany the rest of the *lila*. Instead, the singing here is accompanied only by the *guinbri* and the handclaps of the Gnawa. This texture makes the lyrics of this suite considerably more audible than in any other part of the *lila*. The sung text is especially prominent in the opening songs of the *Uled Bambara* section. During this series of chants, the *guinbri* plays one basic accompanying riff while the sung melody changes from song to song. This texture is unusual in the Gnawa repertoire; normally the *guinbri* melody changes along with the sung melody. The monotony of the *guinbri*'s riff here turns the attention away from the *guinbri* and toward the sung text. This series of songs is performed without dancing, thus focusing attention even more on the sung lyrics. The *Uled Bambara* section, then, provides a gentle aural introduction to the *lila*, to which are gradually added the movements of dance, the loud sound of the *qarqaba*, and later the smells, colors and movements of trance.

The Gnawa set an appropriately spiritual tone for the event by beginning with chants in praise of God and the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him). To further understand this spiritual preparation, it is useful to make a musical comparison between the Gnawa *lila* and the rituals of other Moroccan trance practitioners. Sufi groups such as the ‘Aissawa and Hamadsha perform rituals called *hadra* which, like the Gnawa *lila*, enable participants to enter *jedba* trance and, thereby, to negotiate relationships with the *jnun* possessor spirits. Like the Gnawa *lila*, the *hadra*s of these groups also contain a preparatory section that precedes the trance and that is characterized by foregrounding of sung texts. The Hamadsha and ‘Aissawa make use of a subdued instrumental accompaniment in the introductory sections of their rituals in order to present complex texts, the *wird, hizb* and *dhikr* of the Hamadsha (Crapanzano 1973: 190-191), and the *dhikr* of the ‘Aissawa (Brunel 1926: 112-21). These poetic texts either praise the founder of the order (‘Aissawa) or are attributed to *shaykh*s from the chain of spiritual teachers of the order (Hamadsha). In both cases, it is through the performance of these poetic texts that the adepts ally themselves with their patron saint, the *wali* who gave his name to the order (Sidi ‘Ali ben Hamdush for the Hamadsha, and Sidi Mohammed ben ‘Aisa for the ‘Aissawa). By asserting this alliance with the saint in performance, these ritual practitioners assert their authority to activate his spiritual energy and to enable people to enter trance in the *hadra* by use of loud *ghaita* oboes.

Like the ‘Aissawa and Hamadsha, the Gnawa also claim a patron saint – Sidna Bilal. Bilal was one of the first individuals to embrace the faith of Islam at the time of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him). He was an Ethiopian slave who was freed by the Prophet, and who was the first Islamic *muezzin* (the person who announces the times of prayer by calling from the minaret of a mosque). His story resonates on several levels with the experience of the Gnawa. He was a black slave of African origin, and he was transformed and freed through his devotion to Islam.

Although Gnawa practitioners claim Sidna Bilal as a spiritual leader, they do so as an act of spiritual identification, not because he was the historical founder of the Gnawa as a Sufi order. In the opening section of the *lila*, where sung text is most prominent, it is not Bilal that the Gnawa recall to express their identity and their relationship to spiritual authority. Rather, they recall the slave forbears of the Gnawa tradition. Bilal is not

mentioned at all in this section. Moroccan slaves were disempowered, displaced and dispossessed, and many of them were unlettered, having no direct recourse to the usual sources of Islamic spiritual authority, namely the lettered traditions of the Qur'an and the Hadith. Although Gnawa practitioners do not dispute these sources of authority, they situate themselves in relation to them not by identifying with learned, spiritually empowered predecessors and their poetic texts, but rather by recalling the lived experience of their own disempowered slave forbears.

The recollection of slavery in the *Fraja* thus serves an important spiritual function in the *lila*. It situates the Gnawa in a relationship with spiritual authority that is markedly different from that of other Moroccan trance practitioners. The Gnawa in effect place themselves not on the side of saints, but of slaves and dead *m'allem*s; not on the side of the placed (those whose tombs can be visited), but of those who are displaced (where are they?); not on the side of divine grace, but of the precarious human condition; not on the side of the Eternal, but of that which passes away. To use the terminology of ritual studies scholar Catherine Bell (1992: 101), these oppositions and their organization into hierarchichal schemes are key factors in the construction of a ritual environment. The musical dimensions of the *Fraja* reinforce the importance of the sung texts that express these relationships.

In addition to this spiritual function, the recollection of slavery in the *Fraja* has a strong emotional impact, and the musical dimensions of recollection again play an important role. During the *Fraja*, the primary participants are the Gnawa musicians themselves. While entertaining guests with music, song and dance, individual musicians warm up their own voices and bodies, as well as the fraternal ties between them. The interaction between musicians in the *Fraja* is much more complex than in the *Mluk* trance sections, where the musical parameters are controlled by the *m'allem* and the people in trance.

In the *Uled Bambara*, individual musicians dance in a dialogue with the *m'allem*; the musical phrases of the *guinbri* sometimes respond to movements of the dance, sometimes direct them. In the *Negsha*, the interaction is more complex. A group of Gnawa are singing, rotating in a circle, facing each other, and taking dance cues from each other. Often, the lead singer is one of the dancers in the circle rather than the

m'allem, who remains seated. It is entertainment for the assembly, but the energy is directed inward, between the musicians. *Negsha*, then, is a high point of the musicians' interpersonal experience in the *lila*. They face each other, smiling and dancing together, singing about the forgotten slaves of bygone years and about the old *m'allems* who remain in living memory, celebrating the joy of the moment, but also remembering the impermanence of worldly life and the inevitability of death, the deceiver. By calling on this full range of emotions, the musicians prepare themselves and the assembly for the intense experiences of the trance sections.

References to slavery and the Sudan in the *Mluk* sections

The most explicit references to the slave experience occur in the *Fraja*. However, the songs dedicated to the *mluk* (singular, *melk*, "genie" possessor spirits[11]) also contain lyrics that, to return to Catherine Bell's terminology, both nuance and are nuanced by the hierarchies and oppositions established in the *Fraja*. Oppositions and hierarchies that are clearly drawn in the *Fraja* defer to each other in circular chains of reference during the songs of the *Mluk*. Through this type of deferral, as well as the generation of schemes of opposition and hierarchization, a ritual environment is constructed (1992:101). Several examples will demonstrate how this type of deferral occurs in the songs of the *Mluk*.

The first reference to a slave after the *Fraja* is to Sidna Bilal, who is invoked in a short song in the *Ftih ar-Rahba* suite[12]. While representing the disempowered status of the slave, he also holds high status as one of the Suhaba, the Companions of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him). Thus, as a symbol, he refers both to the disempowered slaves and to the saints.

Another conflation of hierarchies is achieved with the invocation of the black *melk* of Sidi Mimun and Lalla Mimuna. These spirits are said to come, like the slaves, from the Sudan. But unlike their disempowered slave counterparts, Khali Mbara and Khalti Mbarka, these powerful spirits are considered to be saints. Sidi Mimun, in fact, is considered to be a *cherif*, that is, a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him). They bear the titles of Sidi and Lalla, titles used for saints but also for slave masters in days gone by. Yet they are associated not with white or green, the colors of the *awliya* saints, but, like the slaves themselves, with the color black and with the Sudan.

References to Sudanese places of origin also occur in the *Mluk* sections. Whereas in the *Fraja* these refer to the origins of the Gnawa's slave forbears, *the Uled as-Sudan*, the Children of the Sudan, here they refer to the origins of the black *mluk*, the *Uled al-Ghaba*, the Children of the Forest, and the *Husiyin*, the Hausa. Like their human counterparts, some of these spirits bear the epithets of Fulani, Husawi, or Sudani, indicating that this Forest is coterminous with the Sudan. The *Ghaba* is a vision of a savage Sudan, and its spirits are the most fierce of those invoked in the *lila*. The trance dances for spirits such as Belaiji, Juju Nama, and Bala Bala Dima are the movements of wild animals. While poor Khali Mbara gnaws bones because of his inferior position as a slave, Juju Nama terrifies the assembly with his taste for raw meat and writhes as a serpent on the *lila* floor.

In the *Fraja*, the arrival of the slaves from the Sudan is described as a passive act: "*Jabuni jabuni* (They brought me, they brought me)". The arrival of the black spirits from the Sudan, however, is described actively. In *'Aisha L-Gnawiya*, they sing "*Ha hiya jat, Lalla 'Aisha* (See, she has come, Lalla 'Aisha)". The arrival of the Gnawi Sidi Mimun is described as very impressive:

Ah jaw a jaw a jaw
Jaw Gnawa jaw
Jaw 'abid Sudan
L-Gnawi Sidi Mimun

Ah chechiya min luda'
F-yedu harba ikha'
Jani f-'agub al-lil
Foq men rasu sheshiya
Ah kehla melwiya…
W 'ala ktafu 'atrus.
L-Gnawi Sidi Mimun [13]

Oh they've come, they've come, they've come
They've come, the Gnawa have come
The slaves of the Sudan have come
The Gnawi Sidi Mimun

Oh, his *chechiya* cap is covered with cowries
In his hand is a frightening staff

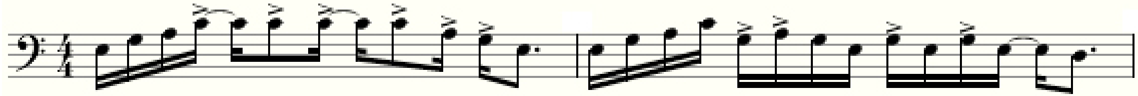
He came to me in the dark of night
With a *chechiya* cap on his head
Oh, black and stringy…
And with a goat on his shoulders
The Gnawi Sidi Mimun

This is clearly an impressive arrival from the Sudan. Rather than expressing loss and separation, this song shows the Gnawa coming in spectacular fashion from the Sudan, frighteningly attired in symbols of otherness.

References to slaves and Africa in the *Mluk* sections thus confound the oppositions so clearly established in the *Fraja* through polysemic figures that refer at once to the disempowerment of the slave experience and to power and spiritual authority as well as savagery. However, there also remains an expression of the loneliness and separation experienced by slaves. It takes the form of stock phrases that are featured in a number of songs. To understand the impact of these phrases, we turn to the way they are experienced through music.

The songs of the *Mluk* sections are first and foremost a dialogue between the Gnawa musicans and the people in trance. The focal experience here is that of the individual trancer. The musicians tailor the performance to help the trancer reach the desired climax of the trance[14]. The role of lyrics and singing is, in a way, secondary to that of the *guinbri*. The *guinbri* itself is said to "speak" (Schuyler 1982). It announces a new song by playing the signature musical phrase of that song, and the climactic moments of the trance occur when the singing has finished and the trancer is moving in dialogue with the speech of the *guinbri.* Lyrics and singing, however, do play an important role in the progression of a trance. Some people require a period of time in trance before falling into rhythm and embodying the song and spirit. The deployment of singing is one technique musicians use to help individuals reach this state.

To demonstrate the way singing and lyrics are deployed during trance, I will draw several examples from a performance of the song "Kubaily Bala"[15]. The *guinbri* announces the song with the opening motto:



EXAMPLE 1 – *Kubaily Bala* guinbri motto

The *m'allem* strikes the skin of the *guinbri* to accentuate the rhythm of the motto. (I have indicated this type of accent with the *marcato* symbol, ">"). The announcement of this motto can bring individuals to tumble headfirst onto the floor, to scream or to cry. The singing begins, which can send more people into trance:

M'allem vocal
Ku - bai - ly Ba - la___ Hé - Ku - bai - ly Si - di Ye
Gnawa chorus
Ah wel - lah ya - Ba - la___ Ye
Guinbri

M'allem vocal
Yé
Gnawa Chous
Ku - bai - ly___ Ba - la___ ye___ Ku - bai - ly___ Ba - la Wel - lah ya___ Ba - la
Guinbri

EXAMPLE 2 – *Kubaily Bala* – vocal intro and refrain

As shown here, the *m'allem* repeats the signature motto, including the striking of the skin, during the choral refrain (the second staff of Example 2), but plays a different melody to accompany his own solo singing (the first staff). This type of melody is called the *mwima* ("little mother"). It serves as a rhythmic accompaniment to the singing and does not feature much striking of the skin. This musical texture reduces the volume of

the *guinbri*, thus the solo singing of the *m'allem* can be better heard. It also provides some relief for the people in trance, who are sensitive to the overwhelming sound of the *guinbri.*

At points in the singing, which I will call "verses", the sung phrases become shorter, the alternation of solo and choral phrases comes more quickly, every 2 beats rather than 8 (compare Examples 2 and 3), and the singing is accompanied by the *mwima*. The lead singer has the option of continuing this texture indefinitely by repeating stock phrases that fit with the meter and mood of the song. His decision to continue this texture, to return to the choral refrain, or to end the singing and let the *guinbri* continue speaking is informed by what is happening on the floor of the *rahba*. The *m'allem* must keep an eye on the people in trance and decide what musical texture will best suit their needs.

The musical texture of the verses is generally characterized by a foregrounding of singing. The use of the *mwima* provides trancers with a break from the insistent call of the *guinbri* while bringing the lyrics into the musical foreground. The *m'allem*'s choice of musical texture works together with his choice of lyrics for maximum effect. The song "Kubaily Bala" features certain stock phrases expressing loneliness and despair, where the emotional impact of the slave experience is compressed into short phrases of 2 beats. In Example 3, the *m'allem* sings:

Ye l-'ati Mulana	Oh Our Lord who gives
Ma-insana	May He not forget us
Lli jebd wulana	Those He took before us
Wa kula u khutu	Everyone is with their brothers
Ana berrani	I am an outsider
Ma 'andi wali	I have no protector (saint)
Wa Rebbi waliya	My Lord is my protector

M'allem vocal
L'a - ti Mu - la - na___ Ma - in - sa - na___
Gnawa Chous
Ah wel - lah ya Ba - la Ah wel - lah ya Ba - la
Guinbri

M'allem vocal
Lli jebd wu - la - na___ Wa ku - la u khu - tu___
Gnawa Chous
Ah wel - lah ya Ba - la Ah wel - lah ya Ba - la
Guinbri

M'allem vocal
Ana ber - ra - ni___ Ma'an - di wa - li___ Wa
Gnawa Chous
Ah wel - lah ya Ba - la Ah wel - lah ya Ba - la
Guinbri

M'allem vocal
Reb - bi wa - li - ya___ Yé___ Ku - bai - li___ Si - di___ yé
Gnawa Chous
Ah wel - lah ya Ba - la Yé___
Guinbri

M'allem vocal
Wo
Gnawa Chous
Ku - bai - ly___ Ba - la___ ye___ Ku - bai - ly___ Ba - la Wel - lah ya___ Ba - la
Guinbri

EXAMPLE 3: Vocal Phrases in *Kubaily Bala*

Other phrases of this type include:

Dunya ghaddara	This world is deceitful
Dunya ma-idumu	This world does not last
Kula u hbabu	Everyone is with their loved ones
Ma ʻandi wali	I have no protector
La mwi la baba	No mother, no father
Ghrib u berrani	An outsider and a stranger

In "Kubaily Bala", the *mʻallem* may also choose to sing phrases invoking and praising the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him). By shifting between references to the Prophet and to loneliness and separation, the *mʻallem* brings into relief the opposition between alienation and the divine power that redeems.

Thus in this song, as in others[16], the Gnawa recall the emotional experience of slaves to help people on the *lila* floor reach a state in which they can hear the *guinbri* speak. Once the trancers have reached that state, the singing stops, and the voice of the *guinbri* guides them to the desired climax of the trance.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

As dancers and musicians pass through the Gnawa *lila*, they move through a ritual field constructed on schemes of ritualization, binary oppositions and hierarchies. These schemes relate to each other in circular chains of reference. For example, the color black is associated with the black slaves from the Sudan, but also with the black *mluk* such as Sidi Mimun. Sidi Mimun is also from the Sudan, but is considered to be a *wali*, a saint. The saints, however, are associated with green and white, and with the Eternal aspect of God Most High. According to Catherine Bell's theory, the ritual environment is experienced physically by the bodies of agents. Through this experience, ritual behavior comes to produce a "ritualized social body, a body with the ability to deploy in the wider social context the schemes internalized in the ritualized environment" (107). When the *koyo* rises from the crouching position to remember the *m'allem*s of bygone days during the *Negsha*, or when the trancer dons the black robe to embody the movements of Sidi Mimun, they are both constructing and internalizing the schemes on which the *lila* is based.

The performance of the *lila* does not resolve these oppositions. Indeed it could be argued that it reinforces them. What ideally occurs, however, is that participants, as they engage with their voices and bodies in this ritual field, gain a level of "ritual mastery", an embodied knowledge that allows them to walk through the contradictions of daily life with a degree of confidence.

Where are you, Children of the Sudan? The slaves, their lost loved ones, and the Gnawa *m'allems* of old are all gone. By remembering them in the songs of the *lila*, today's Gnawa draw strength and spiritual authority from their experiences and offer a spiritual and emotional path to those of us still here in the world who, after all, are all *'ibad Allah*, slaves of God.

Bibliographic References

Baldassarre, Antonio

1992 Liner *notes* to *Gnawa Leila - Amida Boussou,Volume 1*. Al-Sur compact disc 101.

1999 "Musique et danse des Gnawa: La lila/derdeba comme hypertexte". In *L'univers des Gnaoua*, pp. 87-103. Edited by Abdelhafid Chlyeh. Casablanca: La Pensée sauvage/Le Fennec.

Bell, Catherine

1992 *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*. New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Brunel, Rene

1926 *Essai sur la confrérie religiuse des Aïssaoua au Maroc.* Paris: Geuthner.

Chlyeh, Abdelhafid

1998 *Les Gnaoua du Maroc: Itinéraires initiatiques, transe et possession*. Casablanca: La Pensée Sauvage/Le Fennec.

Crapanzano, Vincent

1973 *The Hamadsha: A Study in Moroccan Ethnopsychiatry*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Harrell, Richard S., editor.

1966 *A Dictionary of Moroccan Arabic: Moroccan-English*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University.

Hell, Bertrand

1999 *Possession et Chamanisme: Les maîtres du désordre*. Paris: Flammarion.

2000 "<<Travailler>> avec ses génies: De la possession sauvage à la possession maîtrisée chez les Gnawa du Maroc". In *La politique des esprits: Chamanismes et religions universalistes*, edited by Denise Aigle, Bénédicte Brac de la Perrière and Jean-Pierre Chaumeil, pp. 411-34. Nanterre: Société d'ethnologie.

Lapassade, Georges

1977 "Recherche sur la situation des Gnawa et des religions populaires extatiques en Afrique du nord". *Bulletin d'Etudes Berberes* 11, 19-40.

1982 *Gens de l'Ombre*. Paris: Meridiens/Anthropos.

Pâques, Viviana

1964 L'Arbre cosmique dans la pensée populaire et dans la vie quotidienne du Nord-Ouest Africain. Travaux et Mémoires de l'Institut d'Ethnologie 70. Paris: Institut d'Ethnologie

1991 La Religion des esclaves: Recherches sur la confrérie marocaine des Gnawa. Bergamo: Moretti & Vitali editori

Schuyler, Philip D.
1981 "Music and meaning among the Gnawa religious brotherhood of Morocco". World of Music 23/1: 3-13.

Wehr, Hans
1994 *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic (Arabic-English)*. Fourth edition. Ithaca, N.Y.: Spoken Language Services

Westermarck, Edward
1926 *Ritual and Belief in Morocco*. London: Macmillan.

Discographic References

Chaaroune, Abdelghani ("Baghni"), *m'allem*
2000 Gnawa *lila*, Marrakech, Morocco, November 4, 2000. Private recording by Tim Abdellah Fuson.

Larfaoui, Abbes ("Baska"), *m'allem*
2000 Gnawa *lila*, Tamesloht, Morocco, June 24, 2000. Private recording by Tim Abdellah Fuson.

al-Mansoum, al-M'allem ('Ali)
c. 1980 *Derdeba*, vol. 1. Editions Hassania cassette EH1188, Casablanca.

Oughassal, Said, *m'allem.*
1990 Gnawa *lila*, Marrakech, March 10, 1990. Private recording, collection of Abdenbi Binizi.

Zourhbat, Mohammed ("M'allem Sam")
1995 *Gnawa Leila, Volume V: The Dark and Yellow Suites.* Al Sur CD ALCD148. Recorded by Antonio Baldassarre.

NOTES 2023

- This text was prepared in the fall of 2001, based on a presentation I gave at the conference “Slavery and Religion in the Modern Era” on June 15, 2001. The conference took place concurrently with that year's Gnaoua festival In Essaouira. From footnote 2, I gather that I thought this essay would be published in a collection of essays from the conference, as was done with papers from conferences at earlier editions of the Gnaoua festival. However, this did not happen for the 2001 conference.
- From my electronic copies of this paper, I can't remember whether I actually played any music (recorded or live) at this presentation, and I'm too lazy to dig out my paper notes, if they still exist. Since I have Included some musical transcriptions in this version of the paper, though, here Is a link to the recording of that performance: "Kubaily Bala", M'allem Baghni Chaaroune, Marrakech, November 4, 2000 - mp3 - 7.1MB.
- Apologies for the poor resolution of the musical transcriptions. The images were not in my saved version of this paper. All that remains on my hard drive are these low-resolution images, the original transcription files having disappeared long ago.
- I subsequently changed my mind about Baldassarre's qarqaba transcription, which I praised in footnote 15. See my 2009 dissertation for my later thoughts on the matter.
- The recording of Maalem Ali El Mansoum, referred to In footnote 8, Is currently available to download at the Snap, Cracke & Pop music blog.

Tim Abdellah Fuson, PhD
Richmond, CA
April, 2023
tim@timabdellah.com

[1] My research during the summer of 1999 was made possible by a Mellon Grant for Middle East Research from the Center for Middle Eastern Studies, University of California, Berkeley. My current research (2000-2001) is being funded by a grant from the Al-Falah Program of the Center for Middle Eastern Studies, University of California, Berkeley, a research grant from the American Institute for Maghrib Studies, and a Dissertation Research Fellowship in the Social Sciences and Humanities from the Middle East and North Africa Program of the Social Science Research Council. Thanks to Professors Ben Brinner, Amin Sweeney, Stefania Pandolfo, Mary McGann and Deborah Kapchan for impetus, inspiration and patience along my path to this article.

[2] Chouki el-Hamel's essay in the present collection is a welcome exception.

[3] The terms Sudan and Sudanese, as used by the Gnawa and in this paper, refer not to the present-day nation of Sudan but to the lands south of the Sahara desert in general. (In Arabic, the term *bled as-Sudan* means, literally, the land of the Blacks.) When the Gnawa say they come from the Sudan, they refer primarily to areas in present-day Mali and Niger.

[4] The repertoire of songs performed in the *lila* varies from city to city. In addition, the actual lyrics sung in any Gnawa song will vary from performance to performance, even by the same performer. However, the general lyrical content and many phrases do remain constant. Any transcription of Gnawa lyrics should be understood to reflect one particular performance, not all of the possible permutations of lyrics to a given song. This particular transcription is mine, from the recording of a *lila* in Marrakech (Oughassal 1990)

[5] See Chlyeh 1998: 23

[6] Oughassal 1990, transcription and translation mine.

[7] Larfaoui 2000, transcription and translation mine

[8] Adapted from a version recorded by the late *M'allem* 'Ali Mansoum (c.1980). In the recording, M'allem Mansoum sings the song as a first person narrative ("I am gnawing a bone… I am wearing old sandals). I have chosen to substitute the names of Khali Mbara and Khalti Mbarka here, as it reflects the way this song is most commonly performed.

[9] Larfaoui 2000

[10] Interview with Abdenbi Binizi, September 2000.

[11] For a thorough consideration of the discourse around the Gnawa *mluk*, see Hell 1999: 115-46.

[12] The *Ftih ar-Rahba* "the opening of the space" is not dedicated to a particular *melk*. The *rahba* is the floor of the ritual where people enter *jedba* trance under the influence of the *mluk.* I include this example here with the *Mluk* songs because people do indeed enter *jedba* during the *Ftih ar-Rahba*, thus signalling the presence of the *mluk*. Frank Welte (1990: 188-90) lists the songs of the *Ftih ar-Rahba* as belonging to the *melk* of 'Abdelqader Jilali.

[13] Zourhbat (M'allem Sam) 1995, transcription and translation mine.

[14] For a discussion and description of *jedba* trance among the Gnawa, see Hell 1999a: 51-56, 91-94, and Hell 2000

[15] Chaaroune 2000. I have chosen not to transcribe the fixed rhythmic pattern of the *qarqaba* here. A transcription and analysis of this deceptively simple sounding rhythm would take us away from the issue at hand. A fine transcription of the rhythmic patterns of the *qarqaba* has been published by Antonio Baldassarre (1999: 93-94).

[16] In addition to appearing in "Kubaily Bala", these types of phrases can appear in a number of different songs during the *Mluk* sections. Among these songs are "Hammadi" and "Allah ya Rebbi ya Mulay".