

Asian Arts & Culture Program



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

What: Sidi Goma: Black Sufis from India and Africa

When: October 5, 2005 at 8PM

Where: Bowker Auditorium UMASS

Call 1-800-999-UMAS or 545-2511 for tickets

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Sidi Goma bring their exuberant ritual music and dance to UMASS

Sidi Goma, the renowned African-Indians Sufi community from Gujarat, India will bring their joyful, energetic devotional music and dance in a powerful ritual performance to area audiences on October 5 at 8PM at Bowker Auditorium at UMass in Amherst.

Sidi Goma are African-Indian in origin being descendants of slaves and traders who traveled to India eight centuries ago fleeing in the wake of religious persecution. The Sidis carried with them their exceptionally rich musical tradition and kept it alive and flourishing through the generations, unknown to the rest of the world. Their native African music styles, melodic and rhythmic structures, lyrics and musical instruments have mingled with local influences to form this unique symbolic representation of African-Indian-ness. The dozen members of this community are Sufis, or Muslims who believe in direct access to God through ecstatic experience and as devotees to their African saint and symbolic ancestor, Bava Gor, their sacred songs praise the gift of joy he brought from the waves of the sea.

Sharing this sacred gift through their music and dance is their divine calling and life-affirming talent and has won them phenomenal success in their first 2004 tour of Europe and the United States and the release of their first CD album.

Sidi Goma deliver a performance that the New York Times says has an “ecstatic power...building slowly and steadily to a fever pitch”. According to Amy Catlin-Jairazbhoy at UCLA with the newly found fame the **Sidis are** “sacrilising non-sacred spaces rather than secularizing their celebration of their saint Bava Gor.”

The group performs with four lead musicians (drummers/singers) and eight dancers presenting an overview of Sidi ritual from the traditional *muezzin* call to prayer to a staged ritual performance of a *damal* centered around danced *zikrs* –prayers in praise to their ancestral saint Bava Gor. Intoxicating drum patterns that “speak” the zikr prayers support the dancers who perform increasingly virtuosic solos, gradually reaching an ecstatic climax. While the music gets more rapid and excited, the dances unfold with constantly evolving solo and group acts of satirical imitations of animals and other creatures, climaxing in a coconut-breaking feat. Solos on the malunga, an instrument resembling the Brazilian berimbau, prayer calls and seated ritual songs *baithi damal and qawwali* will be part of the evening’s program.

Two related events and free events

Films on October 3 at 7PM UMass Campus Center Room 904-08

“We’re Indian and African” and “Voices of the Sidis” by filmmaker Beheroze Shroff

These films voice the conflicts and dilemmas of an Afro-Indian Sidi community in a village in Gujarat, India. Co- presented with **Women’s Studies Program**

Talk on October 4 at 7PM in Bezanson Music Recital Hall

Black Sufis of India and Africa by Professor Amy Catlin Jairazbhoy UCLA researcher, writer and sometime curator for **Sidi Goma** her work has an applied focus on community development of minority traditions. Co-presented with Dept. of Music and Dance

Sidi Goma in concert on Wednesday, October 5 at 8PM. in Bowker Auditorium

Tickets are \$20 for adults, \$10 for students.

Call the FAC Box Office 413-545-2511 or 1-800-999-UMAS

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