



Dalouka

Other names:

Drum Nugara



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Domain

Performing Arts
Music

COMMUNITY GROUPS AND LOCATION

Community groups

Mostly practised in the regions of Darfur, North, and Central Sudan, and in most of the cities

Quote translation:

“Touch the Dalouka, let the Ja’alin jump”

Practitioners

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Purpose / Use

The Dalouka is used in public events for rhythm, dancing, and singing.

Knowledge / Skills

The singer playing the Dalouka sits on a mat woven from palm leaves, placed on her left thigh. She holds the Dalouka close to her waist, grasping its clay structure with her left hand, and plays with both hands together at the beginning of the song. As for a wedding occasion, one of the girls carries the Dalouka on her shoulder, revealing the opening covered with goat skin on the front side, while the singer walks and strikes it during the performance, with two others behind her playing the small drums called “shatim”.

Transmission

Although learning to play the Dalouka traditionally occurs in public gatherings and events in general, playing the Dalouka requires a special talent in rhythm that is not available to everyone.

Tools, Equipment, Services

The clay is mixed with a quantity of straw to form a dough resembling pottery, and this mixture is shaped into a conical body open on both sides, one of which is covered with goat skin after it is peeled and tanned with salt. After stretching the skin over the opening, some materials are glued together and the container is left in the sun to dry. The material used to make the container is heavier than pottery, but it is more susceptible to damage, breakage, and cracking because it does not burn in fire like pottery. However, when the container is put into use, it undergoes a heating process over the fire to tighten the skin, which becomes loose due to moisture and long-term storage, resulting in a creaking sound. The container should not be exposed to fire for a long period of time as this would damage the skin it is made of.

HISTORY

The “Dalouka” was known during the Sultanate of the Fur, which emerged in the twelfth century AH. It was performed on special occasions and public holidays. It then moved to central Sudan during the Sultanate of the Funj and became more associated with the Ja’alin tribes. Three women were responsible for playing it: the first was the singer who played the large drum, while the other two played on two small drums called “Shatim.”

INTRODUCTION

The "Dalouka" is a traditional rhythm similar to popular African drums made of clay. It is a cylindrical instrument with a height of forty-eight centimeters, tapered from the center to the bottom opening which has a diameter of twenty-four centimeters. There are small holes on the sides to amplify the sound. The top opening of the Duluka is covered with a layer of goat skin for its low density and flexibility in performance. The skin is attached with adhesives and decorated with colors, dyes, and sometimes henna. Historically in Sudan, the Duluka has been associated with folk singing and enthusiastic singing since ancient times, and it is widely spread across various regions of Sudan. The Duluka is made from green clay or milk clay, known locally, and is cylindrical with a large cavity to improve the sound quality. It sometimes has few side openings. The Duluka is played by striking the goat skin on the side that is played with the palm of the hand, fingers, and elbow. In Sudan, the Duluka is associated with "Banat" singing, performed by women, as well as the "Tamatom" rhythm, which originated in the city of Kosti in central Sudan. It was also associated with the "Ardah" dance and the "Dalib" rhythm in northern Sudan. The Duluka is accompanied by songs of enthusiasm and celebration, known popularly as "Sira" songs or Duluka songs. In the past, these songs were composed by women to praise tribal leaders and knights, especially during times of civil disputes. In some cases, the Duluka is accompanied by a small drum known as "Shatam," with a number ranging from two to three.

Cultural Value:

Its close association with most Sudanese weddings and many public events.

Associated Practices:

Dalouka is associated with the phenomenon of “batan” or skin whipping, and it is a deeply rooted custom among some Sudanese tribes alongside the rituals accompanying wedding ceremonies. Young men volunteer to be whipped in front of girls and women, and the groom is tasked with whipping the volunteers on their backs amidst the women’s songs and ululations. The practice of “batan” is prevalent among the Jaleen, Mansair, and Kuwahla tribes in the region of Batana in eastern Sudan.

Cultural Expressions

1. (أهيش الدلوكة خلى الجطى ينقر) – Popular proverb

This proverb literally means “Beat the *dalouka* (traditional drum) and let the Ja’ali jump.” It humorously refers to how certain tribes or people are known for reacting enthusiastically to music and celebration. More broadly, it suggests that when you trigger something, you should expect a lively reaction. It reflects Sudanese festive culture, tribal identity, and the strong connection between rhythm and movement.

2. عمر الطيب الدوش.

(دقت الدلوكة... شان البيت سعاد)

In these lines, the poet describes hearing the *dalouka* drum and feeling reassured that life is still good—people are still celebrating, marrying, and finding joy. The sound of the drum symbolizes hope and continuity despite hardship.

He then paints a lively personal scene: hurriedly fixing his clothes, biting his shirt from excitement, running with overwhelming longing to attend the wedding party. When he enters, he makes a dramatic appearance, all for the sake of “the girl Suad.”

The poem captures youthful passion, humor, and the vibrant atmosphere of Sudanese wedding celebrations, where music, love, and social gathering bring meaning and vitality to life.

VIABILITY

Threats:

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Natural Resources used

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Image(s) source :

Link(s)