



Kambala Dance

Other names:

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Domain: Performing Arts Dance

COMMUNITY GROUPS AND LOCATION

Community groups

The Nuba Mountains are located in South Kordofan and are characterized by tribes such as Kadugli, Qurri, Saburi, Miri, and Mora.

Practitioners

Local communities.

Purpose / Use

Celebrating rain, harvesting, and religious worship are cultural and religious practices among those who believe in the Kojur.

Knowledge / Skills

The men lead the bulls or buffaloes in a rhythmic and lively dance, accompanied by music and songs that celebrate the bravery and strength of the tribe's warriors. The dancers wear colorful traditional clothing and move gracefully to the beat of drums and flutes. The dance symbolizes unity, courage, and the tribe's connection to nature and its surroundings. Those who excel in the dance are honored and respected by the community, as they are seen as embodying the spirit and values of the tribe. The dance continues late into the night, with the dancers displaying their stamina and endurance as they perform intricate and energetic movements. The dance is not just a form of entertainment, but a sacred ritual that reinforces the bonds between the tribe members and their ancestors.

Transmission

Experience and the succession of generations.

Tools, Equipment, Services

The tools of the "kembla" consist of the "bukhs" and the horns of the cow or buffalo, after these horns are tied at the top of the head by a cloth strip that is tightly tied with a turban to secure the horns well on the head in a position resembling the horns of a bull, with a bundle of palm leaves tied around the waist extending down to below the knees. Iron rings, known as "kashkush," are tied to the legs to create the desired rhythms of the dance until its creative cycle is complete, alongside a bell held in the right hand to regulate the rhythm, and a tail of an animal held in the left hand called "sabeep" is used to ventilate the face during the dance. Small tails are also tightly tied to the muscles of the arms and leather straps from the waist down.

HISTORY

Ancient indigenous populations have been present in the areas where they are found.

INTRODUCTION

One of the most famous dances in South Kordofan is accompanied by a legendary story that tells of a farmer from the Nuba Mountains region who heard a mysterious voice asking him to slaughter a bull, tie its horns to his head, and then hold a whip to strike the horsemen. The dance became widespread, becoming associated with a famous saying during the harvest season when the horsemen call on each other that you cannot eat what you have harvested unless you dance the Kambala. It is also a social tradition practiced in the autumn to celebrate the rains and then the harvest. These rituals are also performed before weddings and happy occasions. It is a festival awaited by tribe members who prepare special types of clothing and decorative items, accompanied by songs and chants about bravery, generosity, and hope. The Kambala dance among the Nuba tribes is linked to the maturity of young men, where the Nubians liken their courage to that of bulls. The attire, movements, and sounds produced during the dance resemble these large animals. Men wear horns on their heads as a symbol of strength and carry very heavy animal skins on their backs. Those under the age of ten are not allowed to perform the Kambala dance, and anyone who abstains from practicing this dance for six consecutive years without a valid excuse must place the horns on their head. The Kambala dance ritual is performed by the Nuba tribes to honor the harvest season, and it symbolizes courage, strength, and unity.

Cultural Value:

The "Kambala" is associated with some Nubian tribes in social occasions, but with other tribes it is linked to religious rituals. They believe that a whip emerges between early September and mid-September, making a sound as it extends over Mount Sabouri where the Kajur resides. The Kajur is believed to live in a hut somewhere on the mountain, and many Nubian tribes believe that the Kajur is their spiritual father and that he has a whip that remains hanging all year. Whenever they sense hearing his sound during the first half of September, it is considered an announcement to start the Kambala dance.

Associated Practices:

The Kambala dance begins in the month of September every year, a month that the Nubian people call the time of "jaldoo," which is a measure of bravery for boys enduring hardships. Competitions with whips are held, and the season concludes with the Kambala dance, where the season of "jaldoo" and Kambala are attended by all boys in the region and neighboring areas. A large square away from residential areas is designated for the event, where in the afternoon, they gather wearing Kambala attire, accompanied by their siblings and relatives, and dance. Then the executioner arrives, carrying a whip made of palm leaves, and begins to whip the boys on their backs until blood flows. All of this takes place amidst dancing, enthusiastic cheers, and songs that call for steadfastness and fearlessness. After the whipping, the girls wash the blood off the boys' backs, and they are taken to a place where foods made of ghee, honey, and milk are served. They then enter a camp that lasts for weeks or a month, during which none of them are allowed to go back to their families or anywhere else without being accompanied by an elder. After the camp ends, the boys receive gifts from their families and relatives in preparation for the final celebration, followed by a collective exit of the youth from the camp, dancing amidst cheers and songs of the Kambala dance until the early hours of the morning, marking the end of the Kambala season and the harvest season.

Cultural Expressions

1. The traditional dance costume

- Includes a head covering resembling a buffalo's head, made of leather and horns, and this covering is sometimes called a "kambala," from which the dance gets its name.
- Participants wear leather around the waist or chest, and sometimes feathers or shells on the arms or legs.
- Small bells on the legs are used to produce a harmonious sound with the movements.

2. The dance performance

- Begins with the participants entering the arena in synchronized steps, their bodies slightly bent forward, mimicking the movement of a buffalo or bull as a symbol of strength and stability.
- Some dancers carry short sticks or wooden knives that move in harmony with their leg movements.
- The dance is performed to the rhythm of traditional Nubian drums, which produce a warlike rhythm that stimulates the movement.

VIABILITY

Threats:

- Urban expansion and civil urbanization
- Climate change
- Influence of other cultures
- Social or religious stigma

Some strict religious interpretations may consider the dance "inappropriate" or associated with pagan rituals, leading to its rejection by some members of society. Communities that adopt conservative lifestyles may reduce the participation of women or children in these rituals.

- Armed conflicts and security instability

Areas where the Kambala dance is practiced (such as South Kordofan) have suffered from conflict and displacement, leading to the fragmentation of communities and the loss of the traditional contexts in which this dance is performed.

Forced displacement reduces opportunities to pass this heritage on between generations.

Natural Resources used

- **Animal Skins:**
Used in making the traditional costume, especially the head covering that resembles a buffalo's head (sometimes called "Kambala"). Goat or cow hides are commonly used.
- **Animal Horns:**
Placed on the head covering to resemble buffalo horns, symbolizing strength and pride. Bull or ram horns are sometimes used.
- **Plant Fibers:**
Used to make ropes or ties to fasten the skins or for decoration, such as fibers from the doum palm or acacia trees.
- **Feathers:**
Used to decorate the head or arms, especially feathers from large birds such as ostriches or guinea fowl.
- **Henna and Clay:**
Sometimes used to decorate the body or create body drawings during the dances.
- **Small Metal Bells (though not natural, they are traditional):**
Hung on the legs to produce sound while dancing. They are sometimes handmade and added as decoration.

- **Wood:**
Used to make some dance tools or accompanying drums, often taken from local trees such as heglig (desert date) or lalob trees.

[Image\(s\) source :](#)[Link\(s\)](#)