

Nubian dance session for South Cambridge District Council's Black history month - introductory
Presentation by Sue Baker

Nubia is a region along the Nile river located in what is today southern Egypt, (the city of Aswan) to northern Sudan (the City of Debba)

The Name Nubia is derived from the Nomadic Noba people who settled in the area in the 4th Century

The Nubians were one of the earliest civilizations of ancient Northeastern Africa, with a history that can be traced from at least 2000 B.C.

There were several large Nubian kingdoms making up one of Africa's large empires, the last of which collapsed in 1504, when Nubia became divided between Egypt and what is now Sudan resulting in the Arabization of much of the Nubian population.

Following the Egyptian 1952 revolution the Aswan High Dam was built, leaving much of Nubia under the waters of Lake Nasser, which displaced as many as 90,000 people. Approximately 45,000 of whom were resettled in Kom Ombo near Aswan, Thus the Nubian spirit lives on.

A major part of the modern Nubian population became totally Arabized and some claimed to be Arabs (Jaa'leen – the majority of Northern Sudanese – and some Donglawes in Sudan).

A vast majority of the Nubian population is currently Muslim, Although the people are a mix of African, Asian and European Ancestry. They have their own indigenous Old Nubian language, and their main language is Arabic.

Apart from their Old Nubian Language The characteristic of the Nubian is shown in their uniquely east African culture & traditions including dress, music and dances.



<https://www.blackhistorymonth.org.uk/article/section/pre-colonial-history/nubia-and-the-noba-people/>
<http://legacy.soulofamerica.com/ancient-nubia.phtml>

Costume



Traditional dress would be Galabeyas (long overdresses/coats with trousers and tunic underneath for men) and hats, as with many countries in the Arabic world usually white for men and multicolored dresses with veils for women.

For dancing -

Men wear white tunics with Triangular borders, white trousers, hats scarves and flat shoes.

women wear what has become known in Arabic dance circles as Nubian Nighties, these are colorful long dresses with ruffled hems on the sleeves and lower hem. They also wear veils which are integrated into the dance, and simple flat shoes. Elaborate gold or silver Jewelry is worn around the neck and in the ears.

Women also wear simple sari type costumes.



Nubian Music

Nubian Music is very upbeat with enchanting melodies, music you can help but want to dance to



Traditional Nubian Musical instruments include instruments such as

the Rebaba, A primitive Egyptian violin sometimes called a spike fiddle,

the oud (A lute type instrument) and several types of drums including the Tabla. Modern day Nubian music is heavily influenced by western music and one of the surprising additions to Nubian music is that of the Trumpet. Clapping is used a lot in Nubian music and can be heard In this rendition of the National song. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZcOKd2BGjYo&feature=youtu.be>



We will be warming up to a pop song by Mohamed Mounir, So Ya So, which after release, was so popular, became a modern-day anthem for Nubian music. The song we will be learning a dance to was popularized in a 1950's film, Tamr henna, but Nubian dancing was not used for the scene it was in. The version we are using is typical of the feel and tempo of Nubian dance but is very much abridged from the original song. I will tell you the translation of each verse as we get to it. <https://www.experiencenubia.com/nubian-music-culture>

So why is Nubian Dance such an important influence upon Egyptian Dance?

Between 1952 and 1954, public belly dance performance was banned, as it was seen as 'lowering the cultural tone of Egypt'.

At this time a government sponsored folkloric troupe, called the Reda troupe, was allowed to perform stage tableaux of their founder's interpretation of the many different types of Folkloric dances.

Their founder, Mahmoud Reda, went to each area to do his dance research, one of these areas was the Settlement of Kom Omblo.

His troupe consisted of 12 male and 12 female dancers, and his presentation of Nubian Dance would use the whole troupe, as Nubian dance is a social dance, but many Nubian troupes to this day consists of fewer women than men. And no party is complete without a Nubian troupe performance!

Mahmoud Reda was a huge Fan of Gene Kelly, so many of the Reda tableaux include the step patterns from his films. This had a subtle influence on Modern Nubian style.

But Nubian style has influenced modern belly dance because the Reda troupe has become one of the major training grounds for many of the modern-day stars of belly dance.

Therefore, some of the techniques are very similar, just executed in a very different way. All part of the evolution of dance!