

Somali Traditional Dance: Shirib



Learning Targets:



- I can recognize traditional Somali arts across all genres.
- I can identify the Somali traditional dance of “Shirib.”

Essential Question

How does Shirib reflect and reinforce the values of **bravery** and **community identity** within Somali culture?

Significance of Shirib Dance

- **Cultural Importance:** Shirib is a vital part of the **Istunka celebrations**, marking significant social and cultural events within the Somali community.
- **Preparatory Step:** The Shirib dance serves as one of the initial steps in the **Istunka** festivities, helping to set the mood for the celebrations that follow.



Istunka (Dabshid)

- **Description:** Istunka, also known as “Dabshid,” is an annual mock fight that takes place in the riverside town of **Afgooye**, along the banks of the **Shebeele River**.
- **Historical Significance:** Tournament originated in the **Middle Ages** and has been practiced annually, reflecting the town's rich cultural heritage and traditions.



Istunka (Dabshid)

- **Timing:** The event coincides with the **beginning of the Somali New Year** and marks the start of the **main harvest season**, making it a significant time for celebration and community gathering.
- **Community Engagement:** The tournament fosters a sense of unity and pride among participants and spectators, reinforcing communal bonds through shared cultural practices.



When/How Shirib is Performed

- **Timing:**
 - **Friday nights**, a convenient for farmers who do not work in the fields that day.
- **Performance Structure:**
 - **Participants:** A group of men form two long lines
 - **Song Master (Laashin):** The performance begins with the Laashin, who recites a song or poem that conveys the essence of the context.
 - **Call and Response:** After the Laashin delivers an easy piece of verse, the other participants sing in response, creating a rhythmic interplay.



Purpose of Shirib

- **Cultural Significance:**
 - Shirib serves multiple purposes, encompassing various meanings and uses within Somali traditions.
- **Celebration of Bravery:**
 - In the context of **Istunka**, the songs and verses recited focus on themes of **bravery and pride**, often celebrating the valor of a group or an individual warrior.



Purpose of Shirib

The performance includes **ritualistic elements**: rival groups are taunted regarding their perceived cowardice and any wrongdoings committed by their members.

This adds to the competitive nature of the event, fostering a spirited rivalry.



Highlight of the Shirib

- **Dhafarka (Night of Sleeplessness):**
 - The **highlight of Shirib** nights is known as **Dhafarka**, which translates to the "Night of Sleeplessness." This event marks the final gathering of the Shirib festivities.
- **Themes of the Performance:**
 - The performances on Dhafarka feature **verses filled with threats and boastful predictions** about the actions of determined warriors in the upcoming day.



Vocabulary

- **Laashin:** The song master who recites the song, often leading the performance.
- **Sarqaatis:** A group of men who recite or chant in response after the Laashin, contributing to the call-and-response style of the performance.
- **Buun:** A long, locally made trumpet used in traditional music, adding a distinctive sound to the performance.



Significant Verses:

Role of the Laashin:

- The **Laashin** plays a pivotal role in the Shirib, calling upon the **Sultan** and his lineage to recite the **Quran**, emphasizing the importance of faith and hard work in ensuring an abundant harvest.

Themes of devotion and determination are highlights:

“Dayrta ducaan aan u rabaa,” (I seek a plentiful harvest)

“Diine Adeer, diin ku dadaal,” (Dear religious leader, strive in faith.)

“Gaalada horteeda goobeernaad eheed-ee”
(You stand before the non-believers.)

“Ninkii ku guuhaado maxaas kaa galaya”
(Whoever perseveres will reap the rewards.)

Shirib examples

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wUYzufG44Nc>