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## Music terminology in Ancient Egypt

A lexicographic study of verbal expressions concerning the playing of  
instruments

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Kandidatuppsats 15 hp i Egyptologi D  
VT 2019  
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# Abstract

Molina Muga, G 2019. *Musikterminologi i forna Egypten, en lexikografisk studie av verb uttryck angående spelandet av musikaliska instrument.*

Molina Muga, G. 2019. *Music terminology in Ancient Egypt, a lexicographic study of verbal expressions concerning the playing of musical instruments.*

The focus of this paper concerns different verbal expressions found within the ancient Egyptian historical and archaeological record that describes the act of playing different instruments. This paper sheds light on ancient Egyptian hieroglyphic terminology by presenting the corresponding translations and transliterations from the Pharaonic Period. A discussion is carried out concerning whether or not the terms in question have any polysemic meanings as well as any traceable etymology or developmental aspects. Tomb scenes with captions of expressions on how to play musical instruments are the primary sources for this paper to demonstrate the different variations of the terminology.

Keywords: *Ancient Egypt, Music, Terminology, Hieroglyphs.*

Kandidatuppsats i Arkeologi med inriktning mot Egyptologi 15 hp. Handledare: Sami Uljas. Ventilerad och godkänd 2019-09-02.

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# Table of Contents

1. Introduction .....	5
1.1 Research purpose & questions.....	5
1.2 Theory .....	5
1.3 Material .....	6
1.4 Method .....	7
1.5 Limitations & Problems .....	7
1.6 Practicalities .....	7
1.7 Ancient Egyptian musical instruments.....	8
1.7.1 Idiophones .....	8
1.7.2 Membranophones .....	8
1.7.3 Aerophones.....	8
1.7.4 Chordophones.....	9
2. Previous research .....	10
3. Ancient Egyptian music expressions .....	12
3.1 <i>skr</i> .....	12
3.2 <i>sb3</i> .....	13
3.3 <i>hst</i> .....	14
3.4 <i>dd</i> .....	15
3.5 <i>iri</i> .....	15
3.6 <i>shi</i> .....	16
3.7 <i>ʕš</i> .....	16
4. Analytic discussion of the expressions.....	17
4.1 <i>skr</i> .....	17
4.2 <i>sb3</i> .....	18
4.3 <i>hst</i> .....	19
4.4 <i>dd</i> .....	20
4.5 <i>iri</i> .....	21
4.6 <i>shi</i> .....	21
4.7 <i>ʕš</i> .....	22
5. Conclusion.....	23
6. Bibliography .....	25
Appendix:.....	27



# 1. Introduction

Throughout ancient Egyptian times, there have existed numerous musical instruments of different kinds.<sup>1</sup> From the most primitive kind of percussion instruments, the clappers, to more advanced ones such as stringed instruments like the lute.<sup>2</sup> Their attestation can be demonstrated through the finds of archaeological materials and in ancient tombs where depictions of usage of different instruments exists. It is also possible to discover their attestation through the surviving literary works written by the ancient Egyptians. By interpreting these sources, through captions in the tombs and inscriptions, it is possible to discover the different expressions which the ancient Egyptians used in relation to playing different musical instruments. Since a variety of different terminology were used by the ancient Egyptians to describe the act of playing musical instruments, a further look into these words can provide a deeper understanding of the ancient Egyptian musical culture and their culture in general.

## 1.1 Research purpose & questions

The purpose of this study is thus, to find and gather existing documentation concerning ancient Egyptian terminology of verbal expressions in relation to playing musical instruments and bring them together into one single lexicographical collection. While including a listing of different instruments corresponding with descriptive usage of the terms as well as a presentation of attested sources. Polysemic meanings and symbolism might indicate various meanings and possible translations of certain terms which would help broaden the understanding of ancient Egyptian language. It is evident that it occurred in ancient Egypt, for example, that the sun could symbolize both growth and light as well as the god Ra. A fundamental question of this paper will therefore be, 'Does musical expressions of ancient Egypt possess polysemic meanings?'. In addition, the question 'Is it possible to interpret the etymology of the expressions?', will be investigated.

The purpose questions of this paper are thus the following:

1. What terminology did the ancient Egyptians use to express the playing of different instruments?
2. Do the expressions of ancient Egypt possess polysemic meanings?
3. Is it possible to interpret the etymology of the expressions?

## 1.2 Theory

In order to determine which expressions and musical instruments that are to be used in this study, a definite explanation is required. Per modern definition, a musical instrument is a device that produces musical sounds<sup>3</sup> and the definition of music is to create appealing sounds and

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<sup>1</sup> Manniche 1975, 92.

<sup>2</sup> Manniche 1975, 94.

<sup>3</sup> Encyclopaedia Britannica 1998.

emotional expressions by way of instruments or singing.<sup>4</sup> But for the purpose of this study, only musical instruments will partake. Therefore, expressions and terminology involving creating music with singing or use of body parts, as they are not devices, will not be included in this study. This study contains numerous musical instruments in order to see their connection to different verbal expressions concerning the performance act. In order to differentiate the musical instruments of ancient Egypt, they have been arranged into different classifications. This classification system has been used by both Hickmann<sup>5</sup> and Manniche<sup>6</sup> in order to differentiate the musical instruments and will thus be used in this study. In studies of ancient Egyptian musical instruments, four main groups exist, and they have been categorized as the following:<sup>7</sup>

- Idiophones
- Membranophones
- Aerophones
- Chordophones

The first group mentioned, idiophones, is a classification of instruments in which a resonant hard material trembles to make the initial sound.<sup>8</sup> An ancient Egyptian example of such is the clappers.<sup>9</sup> The second group, membranophones, is the class of any instrument in which a stretched membrane trembles to produce sound.<sup>10</sup> An example for such an instrument in Ancient Egypt is the barrel-shaped drum.<sup>11</sup> Following, is the aerophones, which includes all the instruments that produce sound by vibrating a mass of air,<sup>12</sup> such as the flute. The last group are the chordophones and it is the group of instruments that produces its sound from a stretched vibrating string, which consists of instruments such as the harp.<sup>13</sup>

### 1.3 Material

The gathered material used to complete this paper comes from epigraphical and textual sources. That involves viewing the primary sources of pictures taken of the tomb scenes and drawings created for secondary sources to gather the desired expressions and terminologies for this study. The hieroglyphs, transliterations and translations of the terminologies comes from different literary works and various ancient Egyptian dictionaries have been used in order to find correct spellings. The range of the literary material for this paper, stretches from the 1930's to the 21<sup>st</sup> century and includes information such as secondary depictions and different translations of ancient Egyptian sources. The work *Musicologie pharaonique* created by Hans Hickmann has provided ancient Egyptian instrument terminologies and their translations<sup>14</sup> and *Grosses Handwörterbuch Ägyptisch-Deutsch: Die Sprache der Pharaonen* by Rainer Hannig has provided their transliterations.<sup>15</sup> While other works like *Le tombeau de Ti: Fasc. 3, la chapelle* by Henri Wild has provided source material in order to see the captions of the tomb scenes<sup>16</sup> and other materials have provided where to find the sources of ancient Egyptian texts and

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<sup>4</sup> Encyclopaedia Britannica 1998.

<sup>5</sup> For classification of musical instruments, see Hickmann 1956.

<sup>6</sup> For classification of musical instruments, see Manniche 1975.

<sup>7</sup> Manniche 1975.

<sup>8</sup> Encyclopaedia Britannica 1998.

<sup>9</sup> Manniche 1975, 1.

<sup>10</sup> Encyclopaedia Britannica 1998.

<sup>11</sup> Manniche 1975, 6.

<sup>12</sup> Encyclopaedia Britannica 1998.

<sup>13</sup> Encyclopaedia Britannica 1998.

<sup>14</sup> Hickmann 1956.

<sup>15</sup> Hannig 1995.

<sup>16</sup> Wild 1966.

captions, such as *Topographical Bibliography of Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphic Texts, Reliefs, and Paintings* by Porter & Moss<sup>17</sup> and Rainer Hannig's *Ägyptisches Wörterbuch: 2, Mittleres Reich und Zweite Zwischenzeit*.<sup>18</sup>

## 1.4 Method

This study has been accomplished by studying different source materials in order to find various terminology of ancient Egyptian expressions in relation to playing different musical instruments. By doing so, plentiful discoveries of different captions on tomb scenes and several ancient Egyptian literary works has been analysed. This study introduces and examines the different expressions in chapter 3 in order to present a distinguished portrayal of the music terminology in relation to playing different instruments. Thereafter in chapter 4, analytic discussions will be made concerning each expression one by one.

## 1.5 Limitations & Problems

This study will be narrowed down to the expressions and instrument terminology of the Pharaonic Period in order to focus on what can be considered purely ancient Egyptian. Therefore, instruments and expressions that were brought by the Greeks and Romans will not be included in this study. However, expressions and terminologies of contemporary cultures of Pharaonic Egypt will be considered, such as those from Mesopotamian areas, as the origins of some instruments cannot be determined with absolute certainty. Taking in consideration that during the Pharaonic period, the usage of Old-, Middle- and Late Egyptian occurred.<sup>19</sup> The ancient Egyptian expressions and terminologies that are to be used in this paper, might therefore differ in how it was written according to the period and language. For example, the expression *sb3* 'blow wind instrument' could be written as *s3b* differing from the former but meaning the same thing (see chapter 3.2).

## 1.6 Practicalities

Following this chapter, a minor dictionary has been created in order to introduce which musical instruments that corresponds to which main group of Ancient Egypt and represents the list of musical instruments that have been searched for in order to complete this study. The writing of the hieroglyphs in the following chapters has been achieved by using the *SignWriter Egyptology Software* accessible online.<sup>20</sup> It uses the standard computer-encoding for Egyptian hieroglyphic texts '*Manuel de Codage*' and has proven quite useful for this paper. Chapter 1.7.1 to 1.7.4 is firstly arranged with the English translation of the music instrument following up with transliteration and ending with the hieroglyphic spelling. One ancient Egyptian writing can have various hieroglyphic spellings, and this is presented by larger columns. The transliterations are written with keyboard letters and used the Word font, making it possible to search for the music terminology. The hieroglyphs are, however, made of illustrations (PNG-files) and are thus non-searchable. Some problems do however occur. For instance, all the Late Egyptian hieroglyphs are not provided in the SignWriter software and thus making some of the hieroglyph's flawed. They will however be marked using footnotes and presented with the flaw in order to provide

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<sup>17</sup> Porter & Moss 1960.

<sup>18</sup> Hannig 2006.

<sup>19</sup> Gardiner 1957, 5.

<sup>20</sup> SignWriter Egyptology Software, 2001.

non-faulty interpretations. In addition, the primary sources can sometimes be inefficient as they are not always in their best state. A few of the scenes in tombs can sometimes be damaged and vital parts can be missing thus making it difficult to interpret and as from the New Kingdom, musical scenes in tombs do no longer have captions of expressive music terminology.<sup>21</sup> In some cases this can however be solved by looking at ancient Egyptian literary sources.

## 1.7 Ancient Egyptian musical instruments

As previously mentioned in chapter 1, different kinds of musical instruments existed throughout pharaonic Egypt and naturally, the terms describing different instruments were accompanied by terminologies concerning the performance act. In order to understand what the different ancient Egyptian instruments are, a dictionary of those words is provided here. The verbal expressions describing the playing of instruments in chapter 4 will be concerning these instruments. As an additional note, it is important to keep in mind that more instruments existed in ancient Egypt and these are rather the ones used for this study.

### 1.7.1 Idiophones

Sistrum shaped as naos	<i>sššt</i> <sup>22</sup>	
Sistrum arched	<i>šhm</i> <sup>23</sup>	
Cymbal	<i>hmt</i> <sup>25</sup> or <i>bi3</i> <sup>26</sup>	
	<i>hmt</i> or <i>bi3</i>	

### 1.7.2 Membranophones

Large barrel-shaped drum	<i>kmkm</i> <sup>27</sup>	
Round tambourine	<i>sr</i> <sup>28</sup>	

### 1.7.3 Aerophones

Long flute	<i>m3t</i> <sup>30</sup>	
Double clarinet	<i>mmt</i> <sup>31</sup>	

<sup>21</sup> Hickmann 1956, 26.

<sup>22</sup> Cauville & Lecler 1999, 665.

<sup>23</sup> Cauville & Lecler 1998, 430.

<sup>24</sup> The use of the 4th hieroglyph as a determinative is incorrect. It is supposed to be another kind of sistrum.

<sup>25</sup> Hannig 1995, 573.

<sup>26</sup> Gardiner 1957, 490.

<sup>27</sup> Hannig 1995, 926.

<sup>28</sup> Hannig 1995, 787.

<sup>29</sup> The use of the 3<sup>rd</sup> hieroglyph as a determinative is incorrect. It is supposed to be a bigger circle.

<sup>30</sup> Lesko 2002, 173.

<sup>31</sup> Hickmann 1956, 28.

Trumpet

*šnb*<sup>32</sup>



#### 1.7.4 Chordophones

Harps,  
curved, shovel-shaped, ladle-shaped, naviform portable

*bnt*<sup>33</sup>



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<sup>32</sup> Erman 1930, 514.

<sup>33</sup> Hickman 1956, 44.

## 2. Previous research

Previous research concerning the subject of music has occurred in various forms. Some works are more relevant than others but still appropriate to mention. Such as the work of L. Manniche. She has done a small piece generalizing the music of ancient Egypt. It tells the reader about the different instruments that existed and which instruments that have been used over the different time periods. However, no ancient Egyptian music terminology is used, instead the focus is to provide a small glimpse in how the music life was in ancient Egypt while also showing how the music could be played.<sup>34</sup> In one of her earlier works she presented a catalogue of different ancient Egyptian musical instruments and grouped them together into instrumental categories. Some of the mentioned musical instruments has their corresponding ancient Egyptian word present, but none of them has the terminology on concerning the verbal expression of the performance act. The focus lies on describing the musical instruments different dimensions and show where one can find their representations as well as where surviving material is located.<sup>35</sup> There are, as mentioned, more relevant previous research concerning the subject on verbal descriptive expressions concerning the playing of instruments. L. Kinney has done an enormous research concerning ancient Egyptian dance in the Old Kingdom. In it, different ancient Egyptian expressive terminology on how to dance is provided and as dancing are commonly depicted together with musicians the occurrence of musical words is inevitable. She has therefore provided a small headline concerning a word that can mean both to dance and to play an instrument.<sup>36</sup> R.D Andersson, with the help of British museum, has made a collection of musical instruments existing in the British Museum. The focus lies in portraying their dimensions and their uses. However, none of the instrument mentioned in the catalogue has their ancient Egyptian terminology in correlation.<sup>37</sup> M. Duchesne-Guillemin has also done a piece about music instruments in ancient Egypt and classifies them from the simplest to the most complex and mentioning some of their dimensions, materials they were made of and their dating. Like Manniche, different representations are shown of the different instruments. The focus lays in showing the attestation of musical instruments of both the Mesopotamians and the Egyptians and discussing their origins. Although arguing that names of musical instruments are well known, the use of them in the study is quite sparse.<sup>38</sup> As can be seen from these previous research studies about music, the use of the ancient Egyptian expressions in the studies are quite uncommon. By not implying the ancient Egyptian words, they can be misinterpreted. The most important work of the subject is the work created by H. Hickmann in 1956, *Musicologie Pharaonique*. Under the headline ‘*Terminologie Musicale de l’Égypte Ancienne*’, he emphasizes the importance of having the correct music terminology and has thus done a collection of the different ancient Egyptian musical instruments that has existed throughout all its time. The ancient Egyptian terminologies are put into different headlines corresponding to their categorisation and set into further detail. But most importantly, he writes about different terminologies expressing how to play different instruments. The work seems to focus mostly on the terminology concerning the names of the instruments and the words used to describe

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<sup>34</sup> Manniche 2012, 1–3.

<sup>35</sup> Manniche 1975.

<sup>36</sup> Kinney 2008, 45–50.

<sup>37</sup> Anderson & British Museum 1976.

<sup>38</sup> Duchesne-Guillemin 1981, 287–97.

them. He does not go into further detail about the ancient Egyptian expressions in relation to playing different musical instruments, which is the purpose of this study. Additionally, the work does not provide all the expressive terminological variations and does not show their real-life representations. Even though his work provides with music expressions, it does not provide all the various ways to write them.<sup>39</sup> The previous research to the subject of this paper then includes different works concerning music in Egypt, since it is inevitable to consider the terminology of musical expressions in such works. It is important to note that not many of the previous researches has the focus on the terminology concerning the verbal expression on the performance act itself.

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<sup>39</sup> Hickmann 1956, 12-47.

### 3. Ancient Egyptian music expressions

This study will go into further detail concerning seven different verbal expressions that was used by the ancient Egyptians to express the act of playing musical instruments. In order to be as specific as possible, the material provided for the different expressions in relation to musical instrument playing will first be presented here and further discussed below in chapter 4. Before presenting the various expressions, a few features are beneficial to have in mind when it comes to ancient Egyptian writings and spellings. For starters, the ancient Egyptians did not write words corresponding the English ‘the’ and ‘a/an’,<sup>40</sup> thus making the examples in the following chapters to possibly be translated as ‘play the instrument’ or ‘play an instrument’ instead of ‘play instrument’. A similar feature that ancient Egyptian writing had with English, is the use of different prepositions in their texts. Prepositions are words that are put in front of other words to indicate locations, directions, times, accompaniment and how things are done. The ancient Egyptians had a variety of prepositions, for example *hn* which means ‘together with’. The prepositions that have been used in sentences with expressions in relation to playing musical instruments are most commonly *m* and *n*. The former can be translated into several meanings. It can mean ‘in’, ‘with’, ‘from’ and ‘as’. While the latter translates into ‘to’ and ‘for’.<sup>41</sup>

#### 3.1 *sḳr*

The first music expression in relation to performing an instrument that deserves an overview is *sḳr*. The word can have various translations and usages, but every translation essentially means ‘to strike’. One particular method of using the word was when the ancient Egyptians described the act of fighting one’s enemy, they would then use the word ‘to strike’. Another use of the word that existed was in relation to work with metal. The ancient Egyptians would ‘strike’ the metal when working with it. A third use is when the word is written in combination with dough. Ancient Egyptians would thus ‘strike’ their dough meaning ‘to knead it’. Other combinations of *sḳr* are when it is used together with ‘ball’ and ‘ladder/stairway’, translating into hit the ball and erect ladder/stairway. The ancient Egyptians would also use the term *sḳr* when it came to be clapping their hands. They would thus ‘strike’ their hands in order to make clapping sounds. But when the expression is written in relation to an instrument, it would mean to play it.<sup>42</sup> The expression *sḳr* that are in relation to different instruments that this study has discovered are the following:

- Harp *bnt*
- Round tambourine *sr*
- Cymbal (or gong) *hmt* or *bi3*

The ancient Egyptians had various means on how to write the expressions in relation to musical instruments and here are the examples on how, starting with the harp. Firstly, the expression *sḳr* can be found written alone on the tomb scenes, but as it is captioned next to a harpist, it probably implies to play the harp (Fig. 1).<sup>43</sup> Another combination of the word with

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<sup>40</sup> Collier & Manley 1998, 9.

<sup>41</sup> Collier & Manley 1998, 9.

<sup>42</sup> Faulkner 1962, 250.

<sup>43</sup> Lepsius 1849, pl. 74c.

the harp is *skr bnt*<sup>44</sup> which translates to ‘play harp’. This variation of the expression can be found in the tomb of Ty from Dynasty V,<sup>45</sup> where it is written out on the south wall (Fig. 2).<sup>46</sup> A third combination that the word ‘strike’ had with the harp is *skr m bnt* and translates to ‘play with harp’. This variation can be found in a Dynasty V tomb from Giza (Fig. 3).<sup>47</sup> The second instrument that was used in relation to *skr* is the round tambourine. The variations of this expression seem quite sparse as the only combination this study has found is *skr m sr*, which translates to ‘play with round tambourine’.<sup>48</sup> Thirdly, is an instrument that is uncertain on how to transliterate it. It can either be read as *bi3* which seems to be its earlier use and *hmt* the later.<sup>49</sup> But either way, the word translates into ‘cymbal’<sup>50</sup> or ‘gong’.<sup>51</sup> As both meanings may answer the definition as a musical instrument, they will be considered as the same. The expression can be found in a spell written on a coffin and it is *skr m bi3/hmt*, which translates into ‘play with cymbal/gong’ (Fig. 4).<sup>52</sup>

### 3.2 *sb3*

The next music expression that will be looked at in further detail is *sb3*. This is the expression that is used when it comes to playing aerophones and its translation is to ‘blow any wind instrument’.<sup>53</sup> It does not seem to translate into anything else, but it is written with the same 3-consonant root as ‘star’, ‘teach’ and ‘pupil’.<sup>54</sup> The expression *sb3* has only occurred in this study when it is in relation to playing two of the ancient Egyptian aerophones, which are:

- The long flute *m3t*.
- Clarinet *mmt*.

They too come in different variations when it comes to expressing how to play them. The first example of the use of the expression, comes from the mastaba of *k'hif* located on the eastern wall. It shows a flute player standing with a long flute in hand among people with the caption on its right saying *sb3*, as previously mentioned meaning ‘play wind instrument’.<sup>55</sup> This example is however, written as *s3b* instead which is another form of writing the word (Fig. 5).<sup>56</sup> Behind the flautist is another caption that is damaged but it is expected that the title of the flautist is supposed to be written there.<sup>57</sup> Another combination which may occur with the expression in relation to the long flute is *sb3 m3t*, which basically translates into ‘play long flute’. This form can be read on the south wall in the mastaba belonging to its owner *nfr*. The word for playing on this depiction is however not fully written out, instead just written as *sb* (Fig. 6).<sup>58</sup> The expression can also be written with different prepositions. Two such examples are with the preposition *m* and *n*. The expression reads *sb3 m m3t*<sup>59</sup> (Fig. 7)<sup>60</sup> and *sb3 n m3t*,

<sup>44</sup> Hassan 1934, 105.

<sup>45</sup> Porter, Rosalind & Jaromír 1978, 468–71.

<sup>46</sup> Épron 1939, pl. 57.

<sup>47</sup> Lepsius 1849, pl. 53.

<sup>48</sup> Hannig 1995, 787.

<sup>49</sup> Gardiner 1957, 490.

<sup>50</sup> Hickmann 1956, 21.

<sup>51</sup> Faulkner, 1973, 54.

<sup>52</sup> Buck 1935, 248.

<sup>53</sup> Helck & Otto 1956, 234.

<sup>54</sup> Gardiner 1957, 589.

<sup>55</sup> Junker 1943, 136–37.

<sup>56</sup> Junker 1943, pl. 43.

<sup>57</sup> Junker 1943, 141.

<sup>58</sup> Junker 1943, 57–58.

<sup>59</sup> Hannig 1995, 332.

<sup>60</sup> Hayes 1953, 103.

which can be found in the tomb of *ni-ḥnh-hnmw*<sup>61</sup> the former meaning ‘play with long flute’ and the latter ‘play to long flute’. Concerning the other aerophone which was used in relations to the expression, the clarinet, there existed two varieties. Firstly it could be written simply as *sb3 mmt* (Fig. 8)<sup>62</sup> and consequently translates into ‘play clarinet’.<sup>63</sup> The second variation of the expression can be found with the preposition ‘with’ and is written *sb3 m mmt* (Fig. 9)<sup>64</sup> and means ‘play with clarinet’.<sup>65</sup>

### 3.3 *ḥst*

Thirdly, is the expression *ḥst*, which is commonly depicted above performers in musical scenes (Fig. 2, 3 and 6) in tombs and means ‘to sing’ and possibly derives from the ancient Egyptian word ‘to please’. However, when written in relation to an instrument it can be translated as ‘play an instrument’. The expression has been found in relation to one chordophone and two aerophones, which are:

- Harp *bnt*.
- Long flute *m3t*.
- Clarinet *mmt*.

When the expression is written in relation to the harp, three different forms have been discovered in this study *ḥst bnt*, *ḥst m bnt* and *ḥst n bnt*. L. Kinney has suggested that when the expression is written with the preposition *m*, it would mean ‘play with’ and when written with *n* it would be ‘sing to’. Thus, resulting in *ḥst m bnt* being translated into ‘play with harp’ and *ḥst n bnt* into ‘sing to harp’ indicating that a person is singing with the accompany of a harpist.<sup>66</sup> The former example can be found on the north wall in the tomb of Kheni and is found above a harpist. It is a bit damaged, but one could easily assume that it is a *m* written in between the expression and the instrument (Fig. 10).<sup>67</sup> A heavily damaged caption in the tomb of Kahep/Tjeti-iker might show the same spelling but only the *s* of the word survives with the determinative (Fig. 11).<sup>68</sup> The latter example can be found on the eastern wall in the mastaba of *k3-dw3* above a performer that is seated in front of a harp player (Fig. 12).<sup>69</sup> The prepositions are not always used which can be observed from two examples once again written in the mastaba of *nfr* on the south wall with the caption *ḥst bnt* above the performers, where *bnt* is directed over the harpist and *ḥst* over the other, implying that they may be separate words (Fig. 13).<sup>70</sup> Whether the expression translates into ‘sing harp’, ‘play harp’ or ‘harp and sing’ remains in question and will be further discussed in chapter 4.3. The expression was also used with two of the aerophones mentioned in chapter 1.4.4. It could be written as *ḥst n m3t*, meaning ‘sing to long flute’ when in relation to the instrument.<sup>71</sup> When the expression was in relation to the clarinet, it could be written *ḥst mmt*, as shown by the depiction on a flautist and a performer with the caption between them, meaning either ‘play clarinet’ or ‘sing clarinet’ (Fig. 14).<sup>72</sup> A notable feature with the expression *ḥst* is that it could be used in combination with other expressions, such as with the expression ‘to strike’ and ‘blow wind instruments’. An example

<sup>61</sup> Kinney 2008, 47.

<sup>62</sup> Lepsius 1849, pl. 74c.

<sup>63</sup> Helck & Otto 1956, 234.

<sup>64</sup> Hayes 1953, 103.

<sup>65</sup> Hannig 1995, 352.

<sup>66</sup> Kinney 2008, 45–47.

<sup>67</sup> Kanawati 1989, 63.

<sup>68</sup> Kanawati 1980, pl. 12.

<sup>69</sup> Hassan 1935, 105.

<sup>70</sup> Junker 1943, 57.

<sup>71</sup> Hannig 1995, 332.

<sup>72</sup> Lepsius 1849, pl. 52.

of the combination with ‘to strike’ can be found in the tomb of *idw* captioned above a female harpist reading *hst skr*, meaning ‘singing and striking’ and as it is captioned above a harpist consequently translates into ‘singing and playing harp’ (Fig. 15).<sup>73</sup> The different ways the expression could be written in relation to ‘blow wind instrument’ are *hst sb3* (Fig. 16)<sup>74</sup> and *hst n sb3*.<sup>75</sup> The former can be found on the north wall in the tomb of *3ht-htp* at Saqqara, where it is captioned above a flautist and a performer, meaning ‘singing and blowing wind instrument’,<sup>76</sup> which will be further discussed in chapter 4.3. The latter presumably translates to ‘sing to blow wind instrument’.<sup>77</sup>

### 3.4 *dd*

The next expression that was used in relation to play an instrument is *dd*. The translations of the word vary and one of the usages of the word is when ancient Egyptians wanted to utter a speech. Another usage could be when they wanted to recite spells and additionally, it could be used in order to call someone or to make an official report. But in the end, the translations all have a common purpose and that is ‘to say’.<sup>78</sup> However, when the expression was used in the topic of music, it could first of all be used as a word ‘to sing’<sup>79</sup> and secondly, when the expression was used in connection to a musical instrument, it would mean ‘to play’ it. In this study, only one musical instrument, an aerophone, has been identified in relation with the expression:

- Trumpet *šnb*.

When the ancient Egyptians wanted to express themselves playing with the trumpet, they would thus write *dd m šnb*, which can be seen in a Ramesside text, (Fig. 17)<sup>80</sup> and literally meant ‘speak with/into trumpet’.<sup>81</sup> The expression is mostly found as a title for a person in literary sources and can thus also be translated into ‘trumpeter’.<sup>82</sup>

### 3.5 *iri*

The expressions *iri* could also be used in relation to play an instrument but when not used in that manner, it could be translated into many things. The range of translations of the word *iri* is particularly vast and thus only a few will be mentioned here. Primarily is the word translated into when ancient Egyptians wanted to ‘create’, ‘construct’ or ‘make’. It is also used when it came to ‘do’ or ‘act’.<sup>83</sup> But when it was written in relation to a musical instrument, it could be translated into ‘play’. The expression has been identified in relation to playing with idiophones, more specifically, two different ancient Egyptian sistrums, which are:

- Sistrum in the shape as naos *sššt*
- Arched sistrum *šhm*

When the ancient Egyptians expressed themselves playing with these instruments, they would use the term ‘do’ and they varied in the ways of being written. The first variation to be

<sup>73</sup> Simpson & Dows Dunham 1976, 25.

<sup>74</sup> Ziegler 1993, 158–59.

<sup>75</sup> Kinney 2008, 47.

<sup>76</sup> Ziegler 1993, 155.

<sup>77</sup> Kinney 2008, 47.

<sup>78</sup> Faulkner 1962, 325.

<sup>79</sup> Hoch 1994, 73.

<sup>80</sup> Kitchen 1982, 769.

<sup>81</sup> Hoch 1994, 73.

<sup>82</sup> Kitchen 2012, 549.

<sup>83</sup> Faulkner 1962, 25–27.

presented is *iri sššt*,<sup>84</sup> which means ‘play naos sistrum’ but is literally written as ‘do naos sistrum’. Likewise, is it when it comes to the arched sistrum. It too is written as ‘do arched sistrum’ *iri šhm*<sup>85</sup> which consequently means ‘play arched sistrum’. They can also be written in combination which each other, which can be seen by the variation *iri sššt šhm*<sup>86</sup> meaning ‘play naos sistrum and arched sistrum’. The form in how it was written could also be vice versa as the variation *iri šhm sššt*<sup>87</sup> shows, meaning ‘play the arched sistrum and naos sistrum’.

### 3.6 *shi*

The word *shi*,<sup>88</sup> is another word that the ancient Egyptian used in relation to musical instruments in order to express how to play. As in the other expressions, it varies in its usage. Comparable with *skr*, ‘to strike’, this expression was used in a similar manner because one of the translations of the word means ‘to beat’, more specifically, another person in a fight or an enemy. In similar ways, it could also be used when it came to ‘produce’ objects. Similar to the rest of the expressions, this too could have a different meaning when written in relation to a musical instrument, which once again is ‘to play’. The musical instruments that have been identified in relation to this expression has been two membranophones, which are the following:

- Round tambourine *sr*
- Large barrel-shaped drum *kmkm*

These two also varied in the means on how to write them. One variation when it came to play round tambourine, was written *shi sr*, which literally would translate into ‘beat round tambourine.’<sup>89</sup> Concerning playing the large barrel-shaped drum, it could be written *shi m kmkm*,<sup>90</sup> which would be ‘beat with large barrel-shaped drum’ if translated literally.

### 3.7 *šš*

The expression *šš* is the final expression that will be examined in further detail. Similar to one of the uses of *dd*, this expression is translated into ‘call’ or ‘summon’.<sup>91</sup> Another similarity is that the expression could be in relation to the same musical instrument when it came to play, that is *šnb*, the trumpet. The one variation that this study has found of the combination is *šš m šnb*,<sup>92</sup> which consequently means ‘play with trumpet’, or literally ‘call with trumpet’.

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<sup>84</sup> Hannig 1995, 834.

<sup>85</sup> Cauville & Alain 1998, 430.

<sup>86</sup> Cauville & Alain 1999, 665.

<sup>87</sup> Cauville & Alain 1998, 434.

<sup>88</sup> Hannig 1995, 802.

<sup>89</sup> Hannig 1995, 787.

<sup>90</sup> Hannig 1995, 926.

<sup>91</sup> Hannig 1995, 171.

<sup>92</sup> Hannig 1995, 897.

## 4. Analytic discussion of the expressions

As previously mentioned, the expressions will be analysed and discussed one by one in the same order as the expressions in chapter 3 as a continuation of their presentations. In order to answer the questions of this paper, the discussion will include analytical observations concerning etymological aspects as well as possible polysemic meanings. The analytical process consists of interpreting the contexts in which the words were being used during ancient Egyptian times. By collecting depictions in connection to certain terms, the context of how the terms were being used within the Ancient Egyptian language can be further interpreted. The purpose of the analytical discussion is therefore to clarify the contexts of the terms in order to better understand their translation and usage. A remark worth mentioning before discussing the individual expressions, once again concerns the ancient Egyptian written language. Complications arise in terms of translation as the ancient Egyptian writings are not always written with the preposition *m*,<sup>93</sup> and thus creates the possible translation that the expressions without the preposition could still assume to have it.

### 4.1 *skr*

As shown in chapter 3.1, the expression *skr* seems to be used in relation to three out of four different kinds of musical groups, with a chordophone (harp), a membranophone (round tambourine) and with an idiophone (cymbal). These instruments would thus, as written by the ancient Egyptians, be stricken in order to be played. The use of this expression as a manner to create musical sounds from these sorts of instruments seems rather reasonable as they all can be ‘stricken’ in order to do so. Striking the strings of the harp, striking one’s hand on the tambourine or striking the cymbals together are all reasonable methods in order to make the instruments construct musical sounds. The only main group that is not in combination with the expression *skr* is aerophones, which is logical as an instrument from such group does not seem convenient ‘to strike’ in order to create music. The various ways the expression *skr* could have been written in relation to the harp, exists in three different forms, as *skr*, *skr bnt* or *skr m bnt*. Firstly, when the expression is written alone, in this case in the form of a caption, it seems to imply that it means ‘to play’ the instrument that is depicted. As shown by Fig 1., the expression is written as a caption next to the rightmost harpist. Therefore, the expression *skr* seems to have been able to be used when written alone in relation to a depiction of the instrument it consequently meant to play and in this case the harp. When written as *skr bnt*, it can be translated into ‘play harp’, but as mentioned in the introduction of chapter 3 that ancient Egyptians did not write English corresponding words for ‘the’ and ‘a’, it can therefore also be translated as ‘play the harp’ or ‘play a harp’. Another regard to consider mentioned in chapter 4, is that ancient Egyptians did not always write out prepositions thus making the possibility that *skr bnt* consequently was supposed to be written with the preposition *m*. The third form is thus the one written with the preposition *m* which is *skr m bnt* and literally translates into ‘strike with harp’.

The next musical instrument that was considered to be stricken in order to play it, is the round tambourine. The only attestation discussed in this study with the expression ‘to strike’ and the round tambourine is *skr m sr* which literally translates into ‘strike with round

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<sup>93</sup> Collier & Manley 1998, 9.

tambourine'. However, the usage of the musical instrument *sr* differs from the other instruments in this paper. As it seems, it could be used in the same way by the ancient Egyptians as in today's use of the noun 'drum' in order to express the verb 'to play drum'. It could thus be used to express the musical instrument and as a verbal expression describing the act of playing it, *sr m sr* 'drum with round tambourine' (Fig. 18).<sup>94</sup>

The musical instrument cymbal or gong was also an instrument that was considered by the ancient Egyptians to be stricken in order to play it and like the round tambourine, only one written attestation has been found in this study which is *skr m bi3/hmt* and literally means 'strike with cymbal/gong'.

## 4.2 *sb3*

The expression *sb3* appears to be a specific verbal terminology meaning 'to blow wind instrument' and is used in relation to one of the main groups, which is the aerophones. As presented in chapter 3.2, it does however, consist of the same 3-consonant-root as 'star', 'teach' and 'pupil'.<sup>95</sup> The root could provide etymological information as well as possible polysemic meanings. The connection between the different translations of the root opens up possible interpretations concerning in which context the instruments might have been used. An interpretation could for example be that aerophones would have been used in terms of teaching and learning how to play instruments. It is however difficult to determine the most reasonable interpretation of the connection between the words without even further research. The expression does however seem to only have been used when it was in relation to a specific group of aerophones, the long flute and the clarinet. The different varieties concerning *sb3* in relation to *m3t*, the long flute, can thus be written in four different manners *sb3*, *sb3 m3t*, *sb3 m m3t* or *sb3 n m3t*. All four indicate the playing of the long flute but does it in different ways. The first variation *sb3* when written alone is much like the example of *skr* when it was written alone. It had to be written in relation to a depiction of the instrument it intended to play, as can be shown by Fig. 5 that shows the playing of a long flute with the caption *s3b* on its right side, which as mentioned in chapter 3.2, is another form to write the word *sb3*. The second variation simply translates to 'blow long flute' or 'blow the long flute' and the thirds means 'blow with the long flute'. Whilst the fourth can be translated into 'blow to the long flute'. The use of the preposition *n* with the expression *sb3* meaning 'blow to the wind instrument' can show that the ancient Egyptians knew, that in order to play a wind instrument, it had to be blown into.

When the expression is in relation to the ancient Egyptian clarinet, at least two written forms existed, *sb3 mmt* and *sb3 m mmt* literally meaning 'blow the clarinet' and 'blow with clarinet'. The first form now again raises the question if there should have been a preposition *m* in it, thus making the two forms exactly the same if that would be the case. The examples mentioned show that one word could be used in different ways and possibly indicate different meanings. The result of this notion opens for further interpretations concerning the grammatical information and how the Ancient Egyptians expressed themselves verbally. This kind of information can have a great impact when trying to understand and interpret how ancient Egyptians experienced and valued music. A translation of particular interest which can be used to demonstrate this, is 'play to the long flute'. It raises questions concerning the ancient Egyptians relationship to the instruments. Translated into the modern English language it could indicate that the flute was an entity of its own in the way the Egyptians experienced it. Notably, it is important to include every possible interpretation connected to the translations for the purpose of creating as objective a theory as possible. Another interpretation of the translation 'playing to the long flute' concerns the way they used their words grammatically and how it might seem to indicate an entirely different meaning when translated into modern languages.

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<sup>94</sup> Hickmann 1956, 25.

<sup>95</sup> Gardiner 1957, 589.

'Playing to the long flute' could simply have meant playing it since it is possible for the ancient Egyptians to understand the meaning of how the words were expressed in a way you can only understand it by experience the language first-hand. An example of this philological phenomenon could be demonstrated by comparing it with modern English. If a poster were to show a violinist with the headline 'Playing the violin' it could for example literally be understood as playing the 'game of violin' rather than expressing music using the violin if one was not familiar with the actual meaning of the way the word 'playing' was being used in relation to individual instruments. This way, it is also possible to interpret polysemic meanings behind the word 'playing' in the modern English language if explored from a literal perspective. A conceivable interpretation would be that 'playing' the violin could mean both 'expressing musical sounds with the violin' and indicating that it's a kind of game. Demonstrating the example of comparing different interpretations of literal translations in the modern English language provides a realistic view of the unavoidable complexity which is the interpretation process of the ancient Egyptian language. It is therefore worth exploring the possibility of the polysemic meanings behind ancient Egyptian terms but important to keep in mind its complications and the consequences one faces by not being able to actually experience the language first-hand. When reaching possible interpretations of terms such as 'play to the long flute' it is important to look at the other translations which do not in any way indicate anything other than the act of 'playing the instrument'. It is therefore a reasonable conclusion that the translation 'play to the long flute' is rather misleading and should be interpreted as having similar meaning as the other translations.

### 4.3 *hst*

The expression *hst* can be thus found in relation with two out of four of the main group of musical instruments, which are chordophone and aerophone. The chordophone instrument that has been used in relation to the expression is the harp. Concerning the aerophones, two musical instruments have been used in relation to the expression, which are the long flute and clarinet. As shown in chapter 3.3, three different varieties occur when it comes to *hst* when written in relation to the harp. The three forms are *hst bnt*, *hst m bnt* and *hst n bnt* and they seem to have different meanings depending on the preposition and it would thus mean either 'play with the harp' or 'sing to the harp'. But as mentioned in chapter 3.3, the translations of the expressions do not occur without complications. As L. Kinney has argued about the expression *hst* that it is 'particularly difficult to differentiate' as it can indicate more than one meaning because of the many different usages of the word. When *hst* is used with the preposition *m* it seems to mean that a person is playing with the instrument as in the case of *hst m bnt*, but as the word *hst* also translates into 'sing', it could mean 'singing with harp' indicating that a person is singing with a harpist, and to make it even more problematic, it can also indicate that the harpist is singing while the person is playing the harp. Fig. 10 could presumably assume this as there are two harpists in the depiction with one having the caption *hst m bnt* on its right side and the other has *skr m bnt*, indicating that the former might be singing while playing and the latter is only playing. If the preposition *m* would instead use one of its other translations, that is 'from', the expression *hst m bnt* would then be able to be translated as 'sing from the harp' suggesting that the sound that the harp constructs is like singing. As it seems, when the expression is used with the preposition *n*, it indicates that a person is singing to the musician playing an instrument as a singer is often depicted with an instrumentalist (Fig. 12). However, if one were to consider the expression *sb3 n m3t* mentioned in chapter 4.2, that means 'blow to long flute' indicating the playing of the instrument. The expression *hst n bnt* could likewise indicate the playing of the harp. The latter expression would thus have to be put in context of a singer and an instrumentalist in order to correctly understand it. When the expression is written without prepositions, as the *hst bnt* example, it could indicate 'play the harp', but also that the person is 'singing and playing' at the same time. But meanwhile, the *hst mmt* example exists (Fig. 14)

and would in that case indicate that the flautist would sing and play at the same time which would seem rather difficult to do, thus instead assuming that it can be translated into 'play clarinet'. However, having consideration of the orientation of the hieroglyphs, it could indicate that it is supposed to be read 'sing and clarinet' instead of meaning to play it. The same occurrence of problems seems to appear when the expression *hst* is in relation with the aerophones, long flute and clarinet, as they are written of similar appearances as with harp, being *hst n m3t* and *hst mmt*.

With the expression *hst* a different kind of usage exists that separates it from the rest of the expressions, that is, that it could be used in combination with other expressions for musical instruments playing. This expression is the only one that have been discovered in this study with such capability. As mentioned in chapter 3.3, it has been found in relation to two other expressions *skr* and *sb3*. The both has different varieties on how to be written, where the former has one, which is *hst skr* (Fig. 15) and the latter has two, *hst sb3* (Fig. 16) and *hst n sb3*. The first example translates to 'singing and striking' and as it is in the context of a harp it would thus indicate that the person is singing and playing the harp. The second example *hst sb3* is split and written above a musician respectively an instrumentalist and translates into 'singing and blowing wind instrument' as shown by Fig. 16, thus indicating that the person with *hst* above is singing and the other with *sb3* is blowing a wind instrument. But if the rule of the missing preposition *m* would occur in the sentence it could instead be translated into 'playing with blow instrument'. Lastly, the third example *hst n sb3*, is similar to the earlier mentioned expressions using the preposition *n* as a manner to indicate that a person is singing to a person blowing wind instrument or singing into the wind instrument creates musical sounds. Therefore, to correctly understand the various written forms of *hst*, it is important to consider the contexts of the depictions as the expression can have different meanings depending on its context.

The translation in connection to the act of singing opens up for interpretations concerning whether or not the ancient Egyptians viewed the human voice as an instrument. It raises questions concerning what they might have considered as musical sounds or musical instruments. Could animals for example have been considered to produce musical sounds, such as bird song, as expressed in modern English, and would the animals then be considered masters of their vocal instruments? Further research of the subject would be interesting and provide information on how the ancient Egyptians experienced different aspects of life. The etymological possibility that the term would derive from the word 'to please' could provide additional information concerning how they experienced musical sounds as it would have been pleasing sounds or sounds meant to please the ear. There are many sounds that would today be considered musical but not necessarily pleasing. The translation 'to please' could also indicate a purpose of performance. However, if the purpose of musical instruments was 'to please', would not the verb *hst* be capable to be in relation with all the musical instruments in order to express to play them? Would it not be 'pleasing' to hear for example a membranophone be played such as the round tambourine? The use of *hst* in relation to the mentioned instruments, if it derives from *hst*, it could thus indicate that the playing of these instruments was considered more pleasing than the playing of others. The translations can thus bring to question what the ancient Egyptian considered as musical sounds as well as the purpose of music in social contexts. It brings us closer to understanding their relationship with and experiences of sound. It follows that the translation of the words as explored in this paper becomes fundamental in terms of understanding ancient Egyptian life and personal experiences.

#### 4.4 *dd*

As mentioned in chapter 3.4, only one use of the expression *dd* has occurred in this study and that is in relation to an aerophone, the trumpet *dd m šnb*. The phrase can be translated into 'speak with trumpet' and 'speak into trumpet, which both seems to be reasonable ways on how it was used to play it. If the expression would instead use one of the other translations it has,

for example ‘to call’, ‘call with trumpet’ would still be a realistic term as a way of expressing to play, as a trumpet can be rather loud and a good tool to call for someone. The translation ‘speak with trumpet’ is of particular interest since it raises the question of music as a means of communication which modern minds can easily relate to. The artistic expression may have differed with different styles belonging to different eras, but the experience of artistic expression as a means of communication something which might be considered beyond words seem to be a consistent artistic phenomenon ‘A language without words’. It is a reasonable interpretation of the translation that at least certain sounds or instruments, such as the trumpet, were used by means of communication.

#### 4.5 *iri*

The expression *iri* seems to have been solely used when it comes to playing with one of the four main group instruments, the idiophones, more specifically the naos- and arched sistrum, as shown in chapter 3.5. The forms that they are written in are not different from the other expressions and is written simply as *iri sššt* and *iri šhm* where the former literally translates to ‘do naos sistrum’ and the latter ‘do arched sistrum’. They do however differ from the other expressions as the two sistrums could also be written in relation to each other as *iri sššt šhm* or vice versa as *iri šhm sššt* translating into ‘do naos and arched sistrum’ and ‘do arched and naos sistrum’. The word for sistrum derives from the word *sšš* that means ‘to shake’,<sup>96</sup> which can give an interpretation of the etymology of the expression *iri sššt*. It would thus be translated into ‘do the shake’, being an idiophone as it is meaning that shaking the instrument will cause it to make musical sounds. As the rule of the missing preposition *m* can also apply here, all of the translations can consequently be translated into ‘do with sistrum(s)’. If another of the translations of the word were to be used, like ‘make’ or ‘construct’, it would still be relatable usages as the sistrums are idiophones and are meant to be shaken in order to construct their musical sounds, thus maybe the usage of *iri* comes from the idea of making/constructing musical sounds.

#### 4.6 *shi*

The use of the expression *shi* in relation to musical instruments seems to have been exclusively used in relation to playing membranophones, more specifically two of them, which are the round tambourine and the large barrel-shaped drum. The different written forms that this study has discovered concerning these instruments in relation to ‘beat’ is *shi sr* and *shi m kmkm* translating into ‘beat round tambourine’ and ‘beat with large barrel-shaped drum’. As many of the other forms of expressions, *shi sr* could probably have a preposition *m* in it, thus becomes translated into ‘beat with round tambourine’. Having in consideration that the musical instrument *sr* could both be written in combination with the expression *shi*, ‘to beat’, and *skr*, ‘to strike’, in order to describe the act of playing. While an instrument from the same category group such as *kmkm*, does not seem to appear with both. Both the expressions are of the same concept, that an instrument had to be hit in order to create musical sounds, still only one of the two musical instruments appear to be able to be written with both expressions. According to this study, it seems the ancient Egyptians would not use the expression *skr*, ‘to strike’, in relation to *kmkm* even though the act of playing the instrument could be considered as ‘to strike’ in order to play it. The example provides information concerning how the ancient Egyptians could use synonyms in relation to the act of playing music in relation to different instruments. It could be that the ancient Egyptians did not consider the playing of a *kmkm* to be stricken, and therefore did not consider it to be a synonym for *shi*. The problem may therefore lay in the complexity

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<sup>96</sup> Wilson 1997, 931.

one faces when translating ancient Egyptian to modern English.

#### 4.7 𐀓

Similar to *dd*, only one use of the expression 𐀓 has been found in relation to an instrument and likewise it is an aerophone, the trumpet. The form how it is written is 𐀓 *m šnb* literally translating into ‘call with trumpet’ or ‘summon with trumpet’. If the preposition *m* were to be translated into one of its other forms, it would mean ‘call from trumpet’ or ‘summon from trumpet’, which would indicate similar idea of its usage. The use of 𐀓 as a word for expressing to play the trumpet can be considered quite rational, as the trumpet might be considered a convenient tool in order to call or summon. Therefore, this information can provide etymological information about the trumpet. As the expression translates into ‘to call’ and ‘to summon’, the use of it in relation to the musical instrument might indicate that the primary usage of the trumpet was for those purposes. Henceforth, in relation to playing the trumpet, the expression 𐀓, may have become a word for playing it, without necessarily indicating to call or summon. As it seems, the ancient Egyptians thus had two ways of expressing how to play the trumpet, suggesting that they had a varying vocabulary when it came to play musical instruments. On an additional note, considering that both the expressions *dd* and 𐀓 are manners to indicate some sort of communication. There is a possibility, that a concept existed were the ancient Egyptians used musical sounds as means of communication.

## 5. Conclusion

The main purpose of this paper was to investigate the different terminologies used by the ancient Egyptians to express how they played different instruments and as this paper shows, several examples existed. This paper has come with the conclusion that their existed at least seven expressions in Ancient Egypt, which are:

- *skr* ‘to strike’
- *sb3* ‘to blow wind instrument’
- *hst* ‘to sing’
- *dd* ‘to say’
- *iri* ‘to do’
- *shi* ‘to beat’
- *š* ‘to call’

When these expressions would be in relation to a musical instrument, they would all indicate to play it, as shown in chapter 3 and chapter 4. Their usage was however dependent on which musical instrument they were in relation with. Therefore, each expression that has been found are limited to only a few musical instruments. The different expressions can be found in relation to various different categories of instruments, as shown by the previous chapters: *skr* can be in relation with three types of main group categories, chordophone, membranophone and idiophone; *sb3* with aerophones; *hst* with chordophones and aerophones; *dd* with aerophones; *iri* with idiophones; *shi* with membranophones; *š* with aerophones. A conclusion can thus be drawn, that some of the expressions can be used in more general terms and some are more specialized oriented, such as the use of *shi* that has only occurred in relation to membranophones while the expression *skr* can occur with three out of four of the musical instrument groups. But the musical instruments are however restricted in order to be played. They must confirm the expressions specific act that takes place to construct musical sounds, for example, that if *sb3 bnt* ‘to blow harp’ were to be used together, it would not be a convenient action in order to create musical sounds. There are clearly logical elementals in the way the ancient Egyptians used the expressions in relation to the different musical instruments. As it appears from the study, only one of the seven expressions are a terminology used specifically for playing musical instruments, which is *sb3* ‘to blow wind instrument’, while the other expressions are actions that is not only restricted to musical instruments. This raises the question on why this is the only expression with such a case and why did it not exist other specific terminology for playing musical instruments such as a word for ‘to play harp’. The ancient Egyptians did not seem to have one term used for expressing how to play the different musical instruments that existed, but rather instead used several terms to achieve it. This paper has shown that there existed various expressions depending on the instrument that was being played. It would seem that the ancient Egyptians would thus have a varying vocabulary when it came to playing instruments as some of the expressions can be used for several instruments, such as both words ‘to strike’ and ‘to beat’ can be used as a way to express how to play the round tambourine. In similarity to the trumpet, that both words ‘to speak’ and ‘to call’ can be used to express playing it. In addition, as shown in chapter 4.4, it can be a necessity to look at the depictions context in order to understand the various expressions. Thus, by looking at the contexts in which the words are presented, a clear understanding of how the words were used and in which circumstance can be interpreted. For example, with *hst* that can mean either ‘play’ or ‘sing’ depending on which context it is written in.

Leading to the question of whether or not the expressions have polysemic meanings. The

following conclusion have been made. Considering the fact that all of these expressions are used to describe different actions that do not involve solely the creation of musical sounds, making them thus of a polysemic nature. The word *sb3* is however, an exception as it only expresses the creation of musical sounds by blowing into a wind instrument. The expressions do not necessarily possess a polysemic meaning on their own, but rather when they are used in a sentence and put into a context. For example, with *skr*, ‘to strike’ would simply describe the action of striking. If, however, it would be used as a word to describe to ‘strike an enemy’, it would thus mean to harm the enemy. While written in the context of ‘striking a harp’, the intentions would not be to harm it, but instead striking it in order to produce musical sounds, resulting in having a completely different meaning. Another, perhaps even more distinct example of this phenomenon, is the word *sr* describing the noun ‘drum’ or the verb ‘to drum’ depending on how it is used in a sentence and its context as can be seen on Fig. 18.

As been shown in previous chapters, the etymology of the expressions can possibly be interpreted with the help of the consonant root of the words such as *hst* having similar consonant root as *hsi* that means ‘to please’ and thus creating the possibility that the origin of the expression *hst* was to please. By understanding the different concepts of the expressions, it could also provide with possible interpretations of the etymologies. For example, the concept of striking was the action that was considered necessary by the ancient Egyptians to create musical sounds from a harp or cymbal.

The conclusions of this paper are thus, that in the Ancient Egyptian language, there existed several different expressions in connection to the act of constructing musical sounds. The usage of the expressions could differ depending on which musical instruments it was in relation to. In addition, the paper shows that it is possible to interpret that some of the expressions may have polysemic meanings as well as providing etymological information.

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## Appendix:

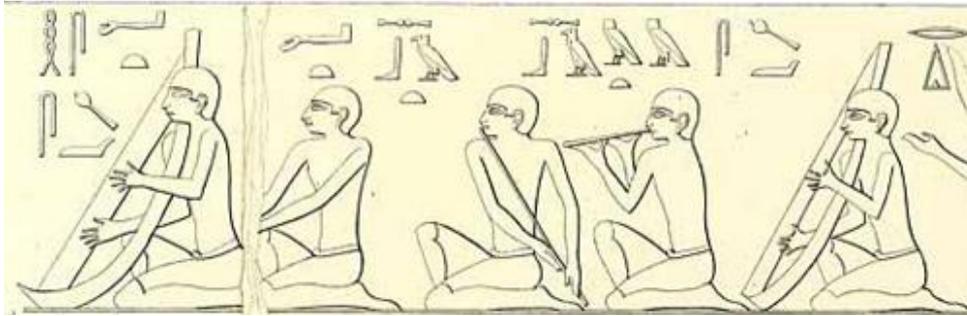


Fig. 1 From left to right, *hst skr*, *sb3t*, *sb3 mmt* and *skr*.

Description: Playing of different instruments with accompanied hieroglyphs.

Image taken from: Lepsius 1849, pl. 74c.

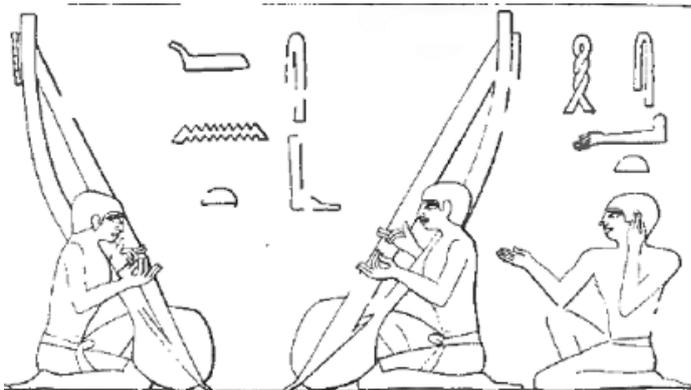


Fig. 2 *skr bnt* and *hst*

Description: Playing harp with accompanied hieroglyphs.

Image taken from: Épron 1939, pl. 57.

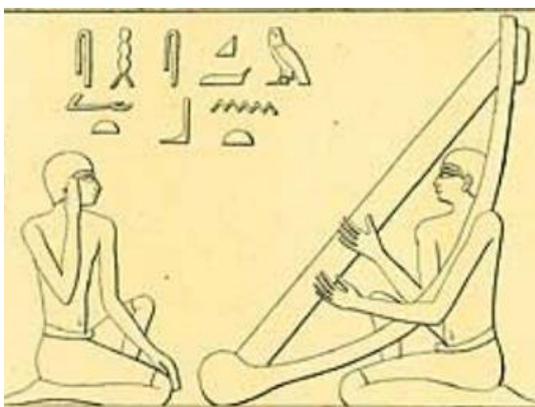


Fig. 3 *hst* and *skr m bnt*

Description: Playing harp with accompanied hieroglyphs.

Image taken from: Lepsius 1849, pl. 53.



Fig. 4 *skr m (n=f) bi3/hmt*

Description: Hieroglyphs meaning playing cymbal/gong.

Image taken from: Buck 1935, 248.



Fig. 5 *s3b*

Description: Blowing wind instrument but written as *s3b* instead of *sb3* with accompanied hieroglyphs.

Image taken from: Junker 1943, pl. 43.



Fig. 6 *sb(3) m3t* and *hst*

Description: Playing long flute with accompanied hieroglyphs.

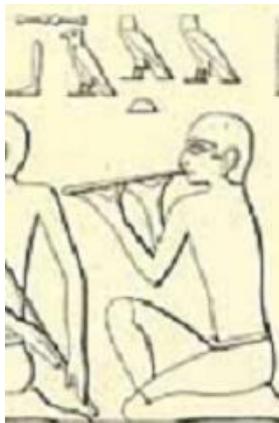
Image taken from: Junker 1943, 57–58.



*Fig. 7 sb3 m m3t*

Description: Playing long flute with accompanied hieroglyphs.

Image taken from: Hayes 1953, 103.



*Fig. 8 sb3 mmt*

Description: Focused image of Fig. 1. Playing clarinet with accompanied hieroglyphs.

Image taken from: Lepsius 1849, pl. 74c.



*Fig. 9 sb3 m mmt*

Description: Playing clarinet with accompanied hieroglyphs.

Image taken from: Hayes 1953, 103.

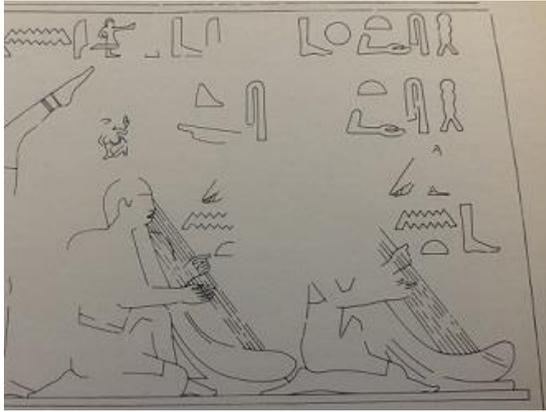


Fig. 10 *ḥst m bnt* and *skr m bnt*

Description: Two harpists playing with accompanied hieroglyphs. Assumed to be preposition *m* in damaged parts

Image taken from: Kanawati 1989, 63.



Fig. 11 *s* with arm determinative.

Description: Playing harp. Assumed to be depicted *ḥst m bnt* as Fig. 10 considering the similarities.

Image taken from: Kanawati 1980, pl. 12.



Fig. 12 *ḥst n bnt*

Description: Harpist with a performer with accompanied hieroglyphs.

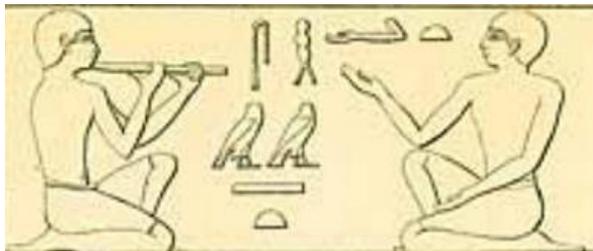
Image taken from: Hassan 1935, 105.



*Fig. 13 ḥst bnt*

Description: Two harpists with performers with accompanied hieroglyphs.

Image taken from: Junker 1943, 57.



*Fig. 14. ḥst mmt*

Description: Clarinet player with performer.

Image taken from: Lepsius 1849, pl. 52.



*Fig. 15. ḥst skꜣr*

Description: Playing harp with accompanied hieroglyphs.

Image taken from: Simpson & Dows Dunham 1976, 25.



Fig. 16. *ḥst sb3*

Description: Blowing wind instrument with a performer.

Image taken from: Ziegler 1993, 158–59.

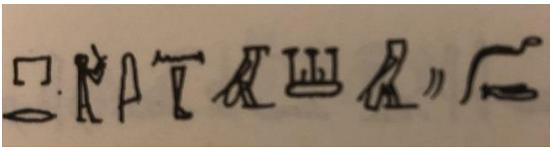


Fig. 17. Read from right to left. *dd m šnb*

Description: Hieroglyphs meaning playing with trumpet.

Image taken from: Kitchen 1982, 769.



Fig. 18. *sr (m) sr*

Description: Hieroglyphs meaning playing (with) round tambourine.

Image taken from: Hickmann 1956, 25.