

## Musical Identity: Reflecting The Egyptian History through Architecture and Interior Design of South Temples

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### Abstract:

City Identity is remembered by the way of people preserved their own Culture. Egypt History is reflected by various cultural identities including Place Identity, Musical Identity and more identities preserved through time. Musical Identity revealed through Ancient Egyptians in Musical Instruments and in the way they elaborated it through Architecture and Interior Design of Tombs and Temples. The Research introduces a scenario by the South of the River Nile in Egypt in Tall El Amarna in Minia, Dendara Temple in Qena and The Valley of the Nobels in Thebes/Luxor which conserved a Musical Identity. This was revealed through the symbols etched on the walls, through the Musical Notations known from their studies and also through the paintings decorated the Interior design of the Temples. The research aims to Identify the connection between Music, Architecture and Interior Design in reflecting the Egyptian Identity as a correlation between different Arts, also signifying the interdisciplinary studies in studying the Egyptian History with another perspective, Thus preserving the The Egyptian Musical Identity through revealing its hidden treasures and as a dialogue between different Ancient Egyptian Arts. Research Issue: Defficiency in the references expressing the Musical Identity of Architecture and Interior Design. Research Significance: Explaining the relation between Music and Interior Design in Ancient Egypt. Signifying the role of Musical Identity in expressing the cultural context of the Ancient Egyptian Civilization.

### Keywords:

Musical Identity; Ancient Egyptians; South Temples; El Amarna; Valley of the Nobels; Luxor

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### Theoretical Framework:

- Historical Methodology: Historical study of Musical Identity in Ancient Egypt.
- Analytical Methodology: through analytical study of Musical Identity and its relation to Architecture and Interior Design of Tombs and Tempels in Ancient Egypt. (Tell El- Amarna City / Minia, Dendara Temple / Qena and The Valley of the Nobels / Luxor).

### Egyptian Musical Identity

Ancient Egyptian History was associated with Musical Rhythms which reflected the Egyptian Musical Identity. The Egyptian Music was revealed through the Musical Instrumets, The Paintings decorated the Interior Design of the Tombs which was built through the River Nile in Egypt, also through the Egyptian Goddesses which expressed

the Miscal sanctity and its connection to the Ancient Egyptian Religion. The research discusses the Egyptian Musical Identity through Musical Notation and its symbolic values, also through the Murals in the Architecture and Interior Design of the South Tembels and Tombs in Egypt.

### 1.1 Ancient Egyptian Music Scale and Instruments

Researches conducted on Musical Instruments of the Old, Middle and New Kingdom in Ancient Egypt that the Music Scale was Pentatonic scale with five tones similar to the Five Black keys of the piano (Al Hefny, 1971). This was revealed through studying of the Musical Instruments such as The Harp and the Lute (wood winds instruments “Al Nay”) which was excavated in the Ancient egyptian Tombs. see Figure 1 (a).

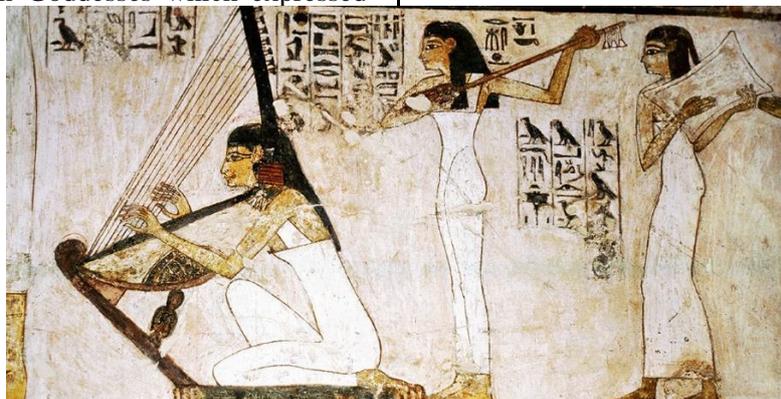


Figure 1 (a) first picture illustrates a wall painting in Interior Design in Rekhmire Tomb in Luxor. It shows a women playing Harb, Lute and Tambourine. Retrieved From: <https://news.cnrs.fr/articles/the-music-of-antiquity> (21-9-2021)

Music in Ancient Egypt was subjected and inspired from different aspects including Social, Cultural, Religious, Political, and economic framework of the Ancient Egyptian Community (Emerit, 2013). It was one of the leading factors of the Egyptians which was revealed through the Architecture and Interior Design of Tombs and Temples in the South of Egypt.

Musical Instruments in Old, Middle, New Kingdoms of Egypt were subdivided to Percussions Instruments (such as Tambourines, Sistrums...), Wind Instruments (such as Flutes), Stringed Instruments (such as Harp, Lute...), also there were Choirs and Chanters with Musicians in Ancient Egypt.

### 1.2 The Sacred Ancient Egyptian music

Music for the ancient Egyptians was respected and considered as a sacred art. They believed that it was connected to other sacred sciences, especially religion and astronomy. They also called the inventor of music "The son of eternity", and its mastermind, "The God of order and harmony". Music Studying was up to the priests alone, so they were its men and the guardians of it.

### 1.3 The Role of Music and its relation to Ancient Egyptian Religion in Temples

Music and dancing in Ancient Egypt were related to Religion. Rituals, Ceremonies and Religious rites were performed daily in the Interior design of Temples for serving their god and it was enclosed for the King, the High Priest or both of them. Religious songs and hymns were performed daily inside the Ancient Egyptian temples and music also has played a major role in accompanying worship and prayers in the interior design of temples.

Each temple in Ancient Egypt was characterized by the presence of its own holdings of musical instruments. For example, it was in the temple of Amun "The Harp": A Stringed Musical instrument which was used for praising Amun during his leaving from The Holy of Holies.

### 1.4 Architecture and Interior design of Temples

### and its relation to Music Acoustics

Architecture and Interior design of temples in Ancient Egypt specially in the passage leading to the Holy of Holies was designed with respect to Acoustics of Sound inside the Interior space. For example, the ceiling narrows on gradually and the flooring rises until we reach to the entrance of the Holy of Holies. According to the Acoustics of sound this gives large voices and echoes throughout the temple during the hymns and ceremonies at the Holy of Holies. (Al Malt, 2017).

### 1.5 Symbolism of the Tonal expression in Interior Design of Ancient Tombs and Temples:

The interior design of the ancient Egyptian tombs and Temples symbolizes the tonal expression of Music. Researchers studied the Ancient Egyptian walls and discovered that Tones and Voices were illustrated through the engraved painted walls. Tones of music and voices were expressed through hand and finger gestures of ancient Egyptians, body movements, head placement, and the mouth opening engraved on the walls. This was indicated by the following:

-The symbolism of moving the singer's arm upwards and placing the head back with the mouth opening wide indicates

Singing in the sharp Tones.

-The symbolism of the direction of the arm downwards and the direction of the movement of the head down with a narrow mouth opening indicates singing in deep tones.

-The symbolism of placing the head moderately with the singer's body and the mouth opening is medium wide, indicate singing in the first tetrachord of the vocal space, that is, singing does not exceed the first four notes of the melody.

The Interior design of the tomb of "Nekauhor"- Fifth Dynasty in ancient Egypt (see figure 2(b) ) indicates the symbolism of the tonal expression by illustrating **A polyphonic melody engraved on the walls.**

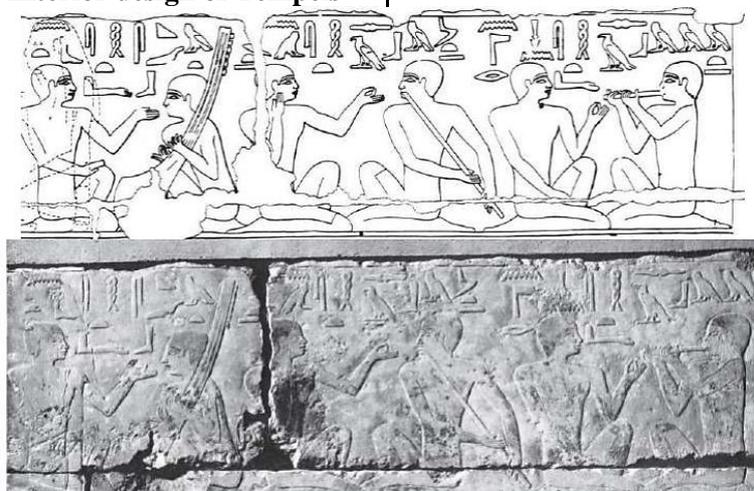


Figure 2(b) illustrates a polyphonic melody engraved on the walls the tomb of "Nekauhor"- Fifth Dynasty in ancient Egypt.

The mural shows a group of musicians playing on different musical instruments: The oboe player on the right, the flute player in the middle, and the harp player on the left. It turns out that there is a leader for every player, and the middle leader is a leader and singer. The movement of the hands of each conductor, the shape of the fingers, the angle of the elbow joint, and the distance between the arm and the knee illustrates the way they sing and play music. Thus, each tone issued by each player differs in terms of its intensity wither it is Sharp or High tones. (Arisha, 2020)

Research Scenario: The South Tembels by The

River Nile

The South Tembels by the River Nile in Egypt expresses the Egyptian Identity through place and time. Iconographic, textual and archaeological sources reflected the relation between Music and Interior Design inside the Egyptian Tombs and Tembels. The Researcher illustrates a scenario through the South Tembels by the River Nile in Egypt including: Tomb of Meryra in Tall El Amarna City in Minia, Dendara Temple in Qena and Tomb of Nakht in the Valley of the Nobels in Thebes “Luxor”. see Figure 3 (c).

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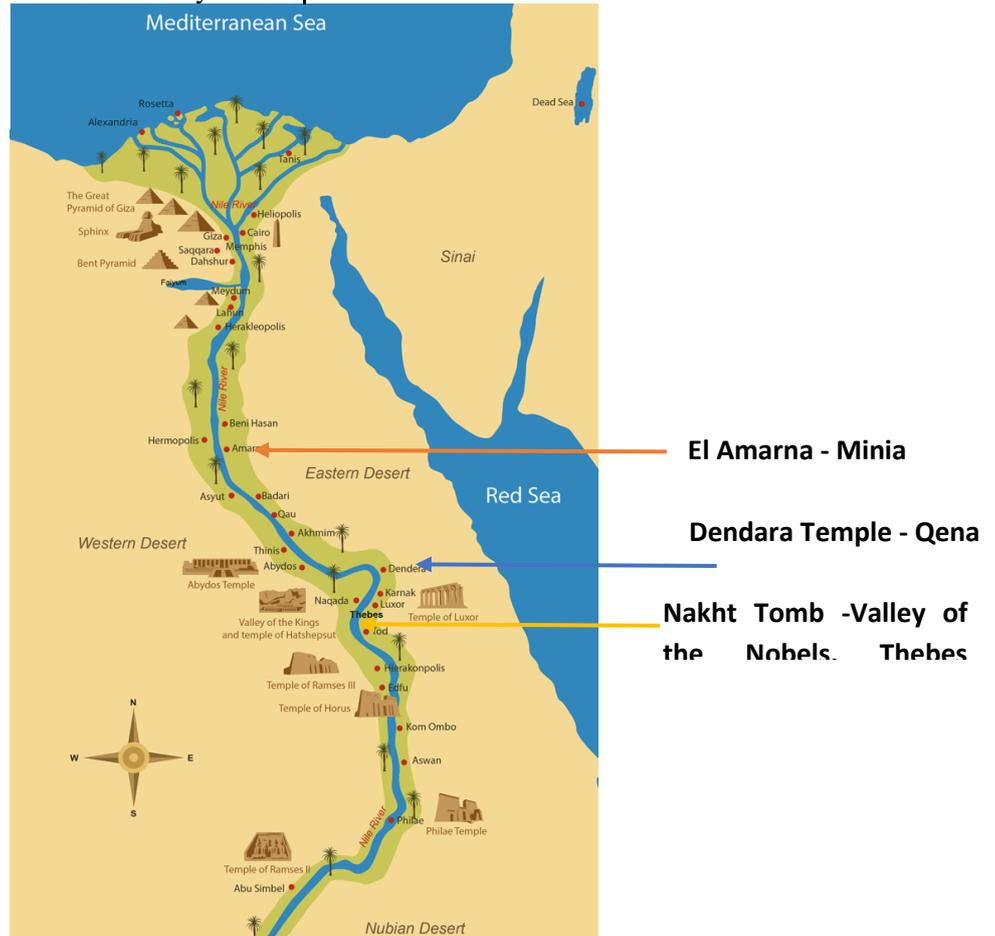


Figure 3 (c) picture illustrates Egypt Map. The Researcher illustrates the Research Scenario though different Places and Cities by the South of the River Nile in Tall El Amarna in Minia, Dendara Temple in Qena and The Valley of Nobels, Thebes “Luxor”.

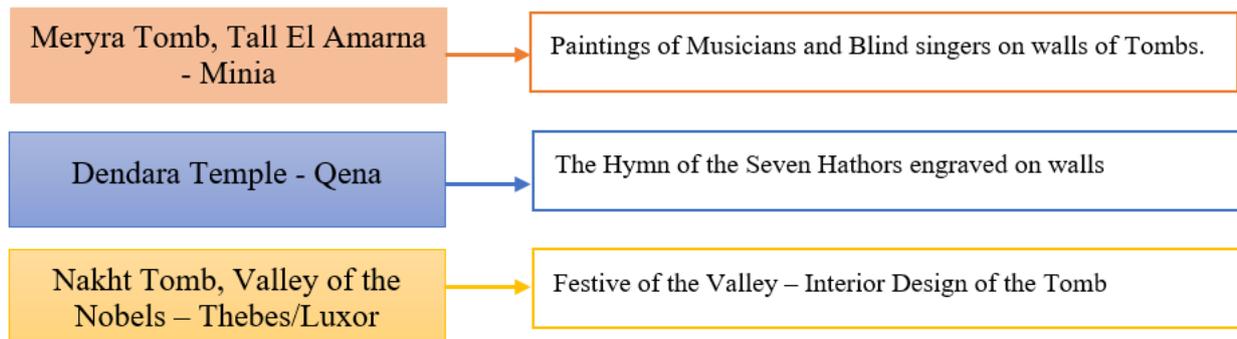


Figure 4 illustrates The research scenario through the south of Egypt. It illustrates El Amarna in Minia, Dendara Temple in Qena and The Valley of the Nobels in Luxor/ Egypt . (By Researcher)

## 2.1 Tall El Amarna City – Minia, Egypt

Tall al-Amarna or Tall al-‘Amarīnah is the city of Akhenaton “Amenhotep IV” (ruled ca.1353-1337 in the Eighteenth Dynasty during the New Kingdom in Egypt) who directed the political and religious system from Thebes in Luxor to Tall El

Amarna and considered it as the new capital of reign, dedicated to the Sun disk “The Aten”. (Jessica, 2016). The City of El-Amarna includes Tempels of Aten, Palace of Akhenaten, Tombs also it is known for the songs of Akhenaten, Border plates inscribed with Akhenaten's soliloquy to God.



Figure 5 (e) picture illustrates Tall al-‘Amarīnah - the city of Akhenaton . Retrieved From <https://egyptiangeographic.com/ar/news/show/233> (27-9-2021)



Figure 6 illustrates Akhenaten, Nefertiti and their daughters under the rays of the sun god Aten in the tomb of the official Aye at Tall El-Amarna in Minia/Egypt. Retrieved From: <https://www.arce.org/resource/akhenaten-nefertiti-aten-many-gods-one> (4-10-2021)



Figure 7 illustrates Female Musicians ca. 1353–1336 B.C. New Kingdom, Amarna Period. Female musicians who play during festivities or leisure time in the palace. The varied hand positions of the five give an illusion of movement. The second woman from the right is obscured by the lyre; she is possibly a singer, as she does not seem to hold an instrument. .

Retrieved From [Female Musicians | New Kingdom, Amarna Period | The Metropolitan Museum of Art \(metmuseum.org\)](https://www.metmuseum.org) (3-10-2021)

### 2.1.1 Tomb of Meryra, New Kingdom Tell el Amarna

The tomb of Meryra is considered to be one of the six inscribed tombs which constitute the north group and bears the number 4. The tombs are

carved in the cliff which encloses the site of Tell el-Amarna and of which all entries open roughly southwards.

[www.osirisnet.net/tombes/amarna/meryra/e\\_meryra\\_01.htm](http://www.osirisnet.net/tombes/amarna/meryra/e_meryra_01.htm) (5-10-2021)

The tomb is attributed to “Meryra” the only high priest of Akhenaten. The Architecture and Interior Design of the tomb characterized by the presence of engravings of Amaranian period in Tomb Entrance,

Columns, Wall Paintings which reflects different scenes through colours on the Interior walls. (see figure 8)

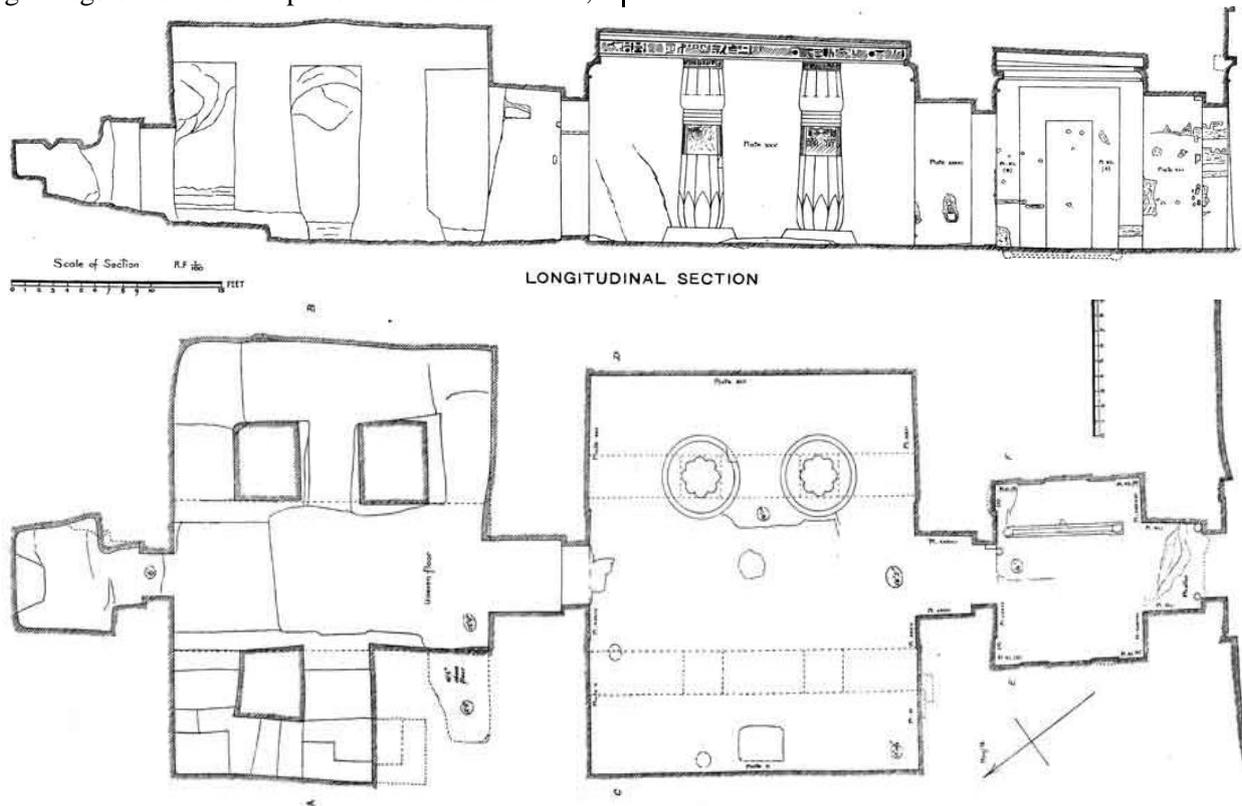


Figure 8 illustrates The Longitudinal section and The Plan of The Tomb of Meryra. The figures illustrates the presence of Architectural and Interior design elements of Amaranian period including Entrances, Openings, Columns, Cornices and Chamber Designs.

Retrieved from: [www.osirisnet.net/tombes/amarna/meryra/e\\_meryra\\_01.htm](http://www.osirisnet.net/tombes/amarna/meryra/e_meryra_01.htm) (5-10-2021)

**The East part of the south wall in the Tomb of Meryra** illustrates the Musical Identity of Amaranian period. Musical Instruments such as The Harp and Tambourines were engraved on the interior walls of the tomb expressing different scenes of men, women and chanters playing

musical instruments. **In the Lower Side at the bottom right** a group of Eight Blind seated men were represented. The first one to the right playing “The Harp” and the rest were chanters (see figure 9).

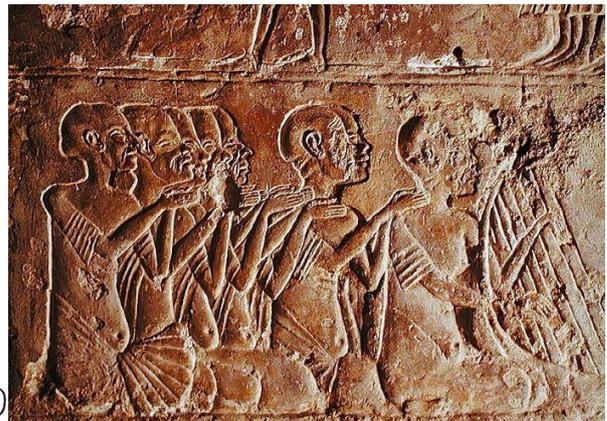
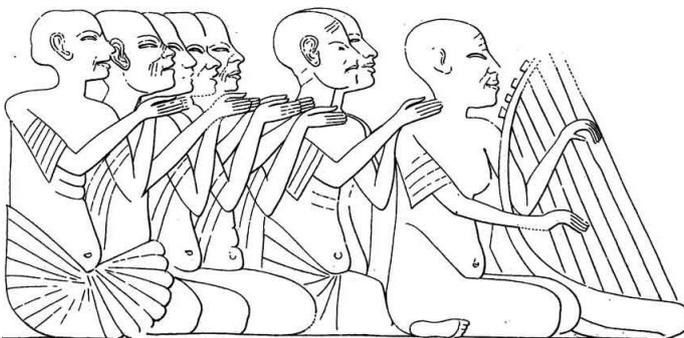


Figure 9 illustrates a relief depicting blind singers and a harpist – Tomb of Meryre, New Kingdom Tell el Amarna, Egypt. Retrieved From: <https://www.meisterdrucke.uk/fine-art-prints/Egyptian-18th-Dynasty/584102/Relief-depicting-blind-singers-and-a-harpist,-from-the-Tomb-of-Meryre,-New-Kingdom-.html> (4-10-2021)

The second scene inside the interior design of Meryra Tomb is the scene of women making

ovations and beating Tambourines. (see figure 10-11)

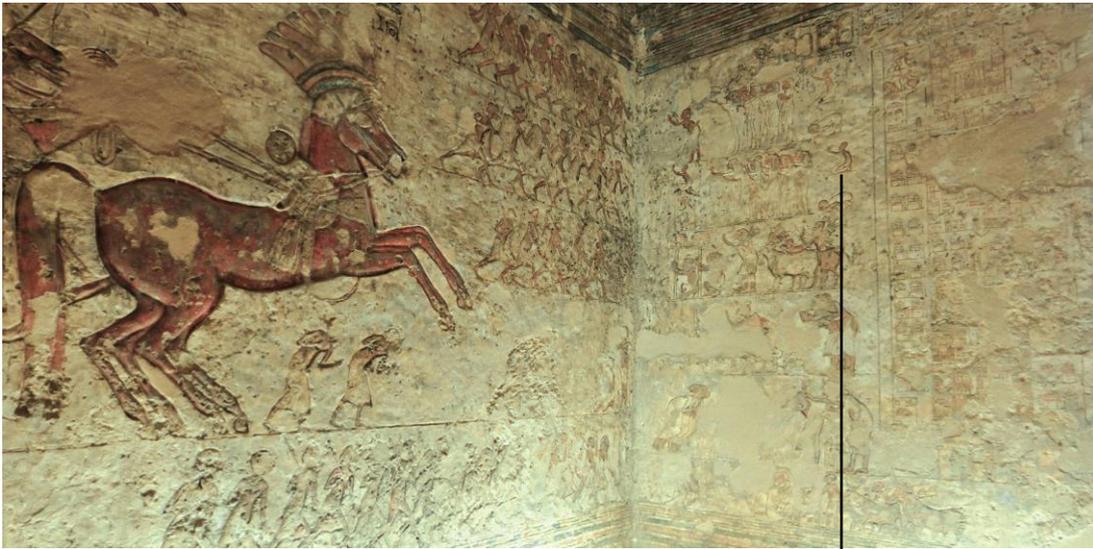


Figure 10 illustrates the Interior walls of Meryra Tomb in El Amarna – Minia . It illustrates scenes from daily life during the 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty of Akhenaten.



Figure 11 illustrates details from scenes inside Meryra Tomb. It shows Women making ovations and beating round and “rectangular” tambourines. Tomb of Meryra, el-Amarna.

[https://escholarship.org/content/qt6x587846/qt6x587846\\_noSplash\\_7ab80dc35fc9d33e30e447d2ce1c488f.pdf](https://escholarship.org/content/qt6x587846/qt6x587846_noSplash_7ab80dc35fc9d33e30e447d2ce1c488f.pdf) (28-9-2021)

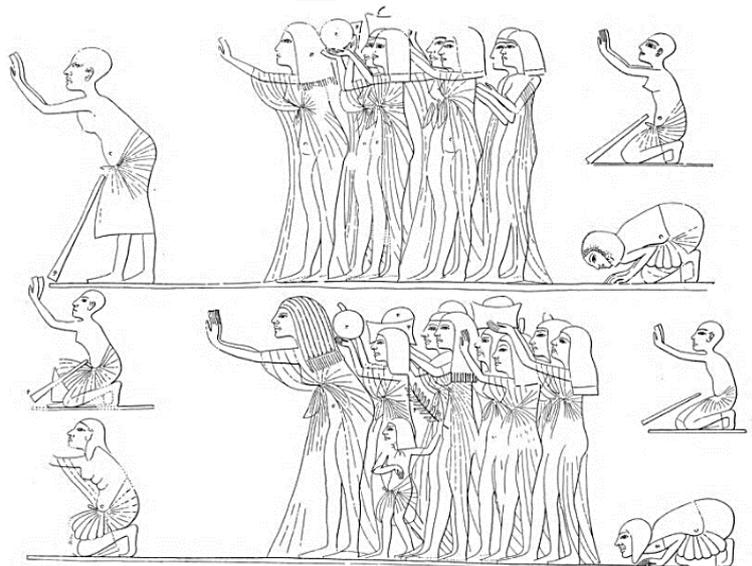


Figure 12 Women making ovations and beating presented in Ink drawings.

## 2.2 Dendara Temple / Qena

Dendara is located on the West Bank of the Nile, about 3 km northwest of Qena city. Dendara is the Arabic name for the ancient Egyptian city “Eunt”,

and the importance of Dendara is due to the fact that it was the center for the goddess "Hathor" - (The Goddess of beauty, love and music). The oldest building in Dendara Temple (see figure 13)

dates back to the era of "Khufu", also Some of the kings of the old Kingdom of the ancient Egyptians made many additions, including King "Pepi the first" and wrote his name in one of the inscriptions.

As for the current temple, it dates back to the Greco-Roman era, and it is believed that its construction took place about 38 years. Retrieved from ([antiquities.gov.eg](http://antiquities.gov.eg)) (18-10-2021).



Figure 13 illustrates the entrance of Dendara Temple in Qena. The temple characterized by the presence of Rock gate leading to the Entrance then to The Hypostyle Hall of Dendara Temple. Retrieved from: <http://www.ancient-egypt.co.uk/dendera/index.htm> (18-10-2021)

The Hypostyle Hall inside the temple of Dendara is characterized by the presence of Hathor Columns shown from the main entrance and inside the interior design of the hall. The rhythms of the columns are transitionally clear from the vertical plan to the crown of the column that shows Hathor

(the goddess of love and music), then to the formation of the ceiling of the temple which shows the linear zodiac (see figure 14-15) expressing a cosmic journey in the sky with harmonious shades of Blue.

#### Hathor Columns



Figure 14-15 illustrates the Hypostyle Hall in Dendara Temple. It shows the rhythms of Hathor columns leading to the linear zodiac in the ceiling hall. Retrieved from: [Egypt: Temple of Dendera - paulsmit \(smugmug.com\)](http://egypt.templeofdendera-paulsmit.com) (18-10-2021)

#### The Linear Zodiac

Hathor was represented in the temple with symbols indicating the relation between the temple and music in Ancient Egypt. Hathor was engraved in reliefs in a crypt located in the southern wall of Dendara (see figure 16). A Menat Necklace is engraved in relief on the wall which when held in the hand produce a rustling sound. It was said that

these sounds pleased the Goddess Hathor. The Menat was engraved with 4 Hathor faces holding Sistrums (which is considered a musical instrument) on her head. These faces symbolized the four cardinal points of the universe and explained the universal character of the goddess Hathor and its relation to sky, who was also called "Lady with the four Faces".



Figure 16 illustrates the four hathor faces carrying the Sistrums (a musical instrument in ancient Egypt). Retrieved from: [Egypt: Temple of Dendera - paulsmit \(smugmug.com\)](https://www.paulsmit.com/egypt-temple-of-dendera) (18-10-2021)

### 2.2.1 The Hymn of Seven Hathors in Interior design of Dendara Temple

The Interior design of Dendara temple reflected the relation between The Musical Identity and The Metaphysics of the heavenly spheres. The temple revealed the symbolism in the connection between music, the universe, celestial bodies, and calculating time. Hathor was associated with music in depicting it on the walls of the temple, which was associated with the seven musical tones.

The Temple of Hathor in Dendara was associated

with the annual musical celebrations from the temple and to it. A Hymn of the 7 Hathors was engraved on the walls in the interior design of Dendara Temple. The Hymn Text of the Ancient Egyptian temple was composed of 7 stanzas, in which researchers said that it was equally to the 7 metaphysical fields. Each stanza was composed of 4 lines which was equally to the 4 strings “Tetra Chord” in the Ancient Egyptian Music. (Gdalla, 2018)



Figure 17 Clarifying part of an inscription in the Temple of Hathor in Dendera, showing the seven Hathors playing. The inscriptions included 4 Hathor playing Sistrums and 3 Hathor playing Tambourines.

Retrieved from: <https://egypttraveluxe.blogspot.com/2014/12/nefertari-seven-hathors.html> (19-10-2021)

3 Hathor playing

Tambourines Instruments



4 Hathor playing Sistrums

Instruments

### 2.3 Nakht Tomb / Valley of the Nobles -Thebes, Luxor – Musical Identity through Festive of the Valley

Nakht Tomb located in the Tombs of The Nobles in Luxor. It was named after its owner “Nakht” who lived during the reign of King Thutmose IV, and was the astrologer and the writer of Amun. The schematic drawing of this cemetery in its general

form is the architectural layout of the Nobels cemetery in the eighteenth dynasty. In this Tomb Musical Identity is revealed through the Architecture and Interior design of the walls which presents the festivals of the Valley in Thebes.

<https://sites.google.com/site/cityamon/tombs-of-the-nobles> (30-9-2021)

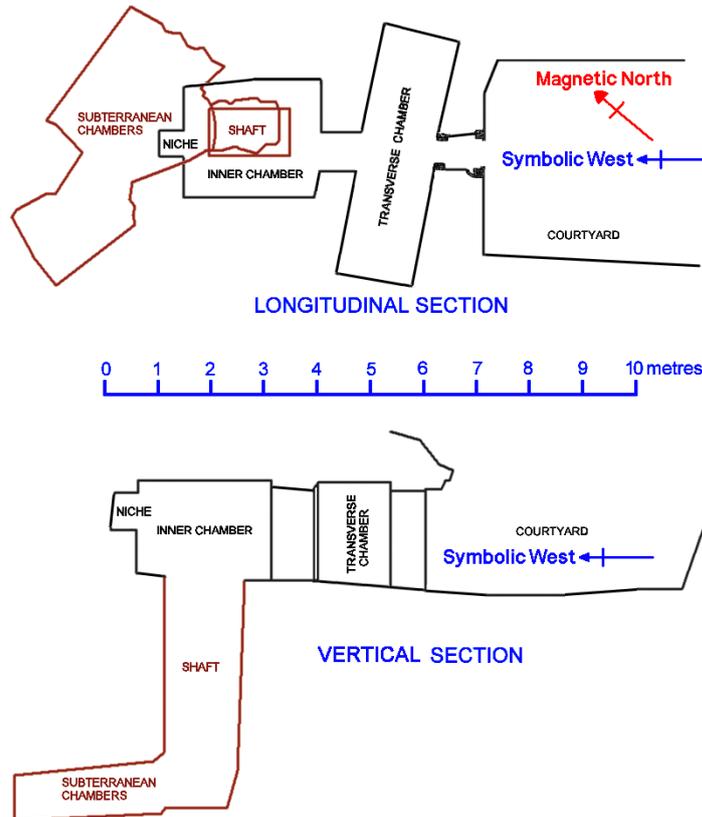


Figure 18 illustrates a Longitudinal and Vertical section in the Tomb of Nakht in the Valley of the Nobles in Luxor/Thebes.



Figure 19 illustrates the Entrance of Nakht Tomb – 18th Dynasty.

Retrieved from: [https://www.osirisnet.net/tombes/nobles/nakht52/e\\_nakht\\_01.htm](https://www.osirisnet.net/tombes/nobles/nakht52/e_nakht_01.htm) (2-10-2021)

On the wall facing to the left of the Tomb (see Figure (20)), the remains of a festive scene are painted where guests of men and women gather and a blind man sitting on the musical instrument “The Harp” plays for them, while behind him a group of girls listening to the Music. Below this view there

is a group of men enjoying the melodies of the orchestra, which consists of three girls, the first playing "the harp", the second playing "the lute" and dancing at the same time, and the third blowing "the flute". see Figure (21).

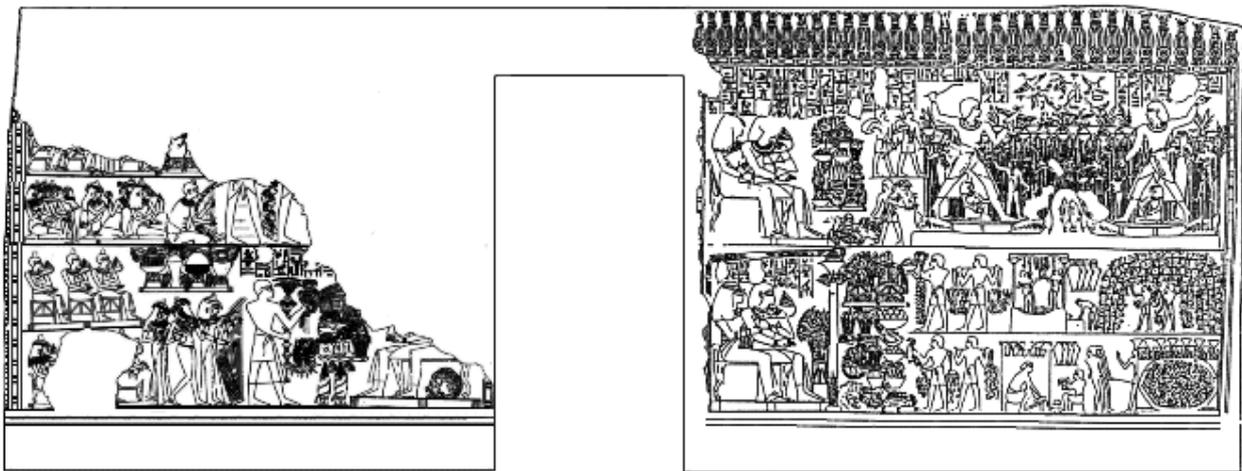


Figure 20 Illustrates Front view the remains of the festive scene on the interior design of the wall facing to the left in Nakht Tomb.



Figure 21 Illustrates details of the festive scenes in Luxor including the orchestra of the three girls playing The Harp, The Lute and the Flute, also the Blind man sitting and playing the Harp.

Retrieved from: [https://www.osirisnet.net/tombes/nobles/nakht52/e\\_nakht\\_05.htm](https://www.osirisnet.net/tombes/nobles/nakht52/e_nakht_05.htm) (2-10-2021)

The festive scene in the Tomb of Nakht reflected the Musical Identity in the City of Thebes/Luxor through the way the musicians and dancers were painted on the walls in the Interior Design of the Tomb. It was illustrated by the musical Instrument painted such as the Harp shown here in figure (22), of six and of Fourteen strings (Davies, 1917). It gives the viewer the sense of the **3D dimensional form** through the position of the troupe of three

Girls, their dark color of their bodies playing on the musical instruments.

As to the middle player, the painter painted it with an extreme twist given to her body. It gives the impression of the dancer and a Musical player playing "The Lute". It gives the viewer the impact of a **4<sup>th</sup> dimension which is "The Movement"** through the Rhythm of her right leg in a perspective form with the movement of her face and her right

hand while playing the Lute.



Figure 22 illustrates the Orchestra composed of three girls playing The Harp, The Lute and The Flute (From right to left).



Figure 23 illustrates blind male harpist. His blindness is expressed by a curved line instead an actual eye.

Retrieved from: [https://www.osirisnet.net/tombes/nobles/nakht52/e\\_nakht\\_05.htm](https://www.osirisnet.net/tombes/nobles/nakht52/e_nakht_05.htm) (3-10-2021)

### Research Findings

- The impact of Musical identity on the Egyptian civilization which was illustrated during the study of Architecture and Interior design of south tempels and tombs.
- Community participation among all sectors of Ancient Egyptians in social, cultural, political, religious and during the festivals of the valley which was revealed in co relation with Musical Identity.
- Preserving City Identity through music in Meryra Tomb in El Amarna in Egypt by analysing Architecture and Interior design of the scenes telling the life of Ancient Egyptians.
- Signifying the relation between music and metaphysics which was illustrated by the Hymn of the goddess Hathor and its symplizm with music in the Temple of Dendara.

### Research Conclusion

The research discusses the Musical Identity in Reflecting the Egyptian History through Architecture and Interior Design of South Temples and Tombs. It reveals the Symbolism of the Tonal expression in Murals which engraved on the walls of the Interior Design of ancient tombs and temples. The research also illustrates the relation between the interior design of temples and Music Acoustics as musicians played different instruments inside the halls of Ancient Egyptian Temples. Egyptian Musical Identity was revealed through Musical Instruments painted and decorated the Interior design of the tombs and temples. This was illustrated in Meryra Tomb in Tall El-Amarna in Minia which was built in Akhenaten reign in the 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty. Scenes of Blind Musicians playing The Harp and women beating the tambourines were engraved and painted in the Interior design of the walls inside the tombs. The research also concluded the relation between Musical Identity and

metaphysics in the engraved reliefs of the 7 Hathors in Dendara temple. In The Valley of the Nobles scenes of the festivals were painted in the Interior design of Nakht Tomb which revealed the orchestra of the three girls playing The Harp, The Lute and the Flute, also the Blind man sitting and playing the Harp Instrument.

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