
The Cultural, Religious and Social Significance of Clappers in Ancient Egypt: Insights on Three pairs of Byzantine Clappers at the Egyptian Museum, Cairo (*JE 100547*)

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Abstract

Since the era of ancient Egypt to the present day, music has consistently functioned as a fundamental component of cultural expression and daily life. It served as a means for individuals to engage with their societal and spiritual identities. Among the diverse array of musical instruments employed in ancient Egypt, clappers represent a notable category, contributing to the performative and ritualistic aspects of their musical practices. This paper investigates the significance of clappers as one of the earliest percussion instruments in ancient Egypt through a comprehensive methodological framework. It employs a combination of archaeological analysis and iconographic review to explore the designs, materials, and multifunctional roles of clappers within various cultural, religious, and social contexts. Particular attention is given to the ornamentation of these objects, ranging from intricate depictions of deities such as Hathor to more simplistic, unadorned forms, thereby elucidating their dual roles in everyday life and sacred practices. This paper further incorporates iconographic and textual evidence to assess the role of clappers in religious ceremonies, festivals, and daily life, emphasizing their function in invoking deities and fostering communal experiences through rhythmic sound. Additionally, it addresses the continued use of clappers within Byzantine

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ecclesiastical contexts during religious rituals. The analysis also includes a detailed examination of three pairs of hand-shaped ivory clappers recently repatriated from the Louvre in 2017, as a part of a larger collection of 586 pieces acquired under the auspices of former Minister of Tourism and Antiquities Prof. Dr. Khaled El Anany. These artifacts, modeled in the shape of hands and forearms, are analyzed through comparative typological and material analyses to understand their design and usage.

Keywords: *clappers, percussion instruments, hand-shaped, music, musical instruments, ceremonies, deities, rituals.*

Methodology

The methodological framework followed in this paper involved a comparative analysis of clappers spanning from the Pre-dynastic period to the Byzantine era. This was achieved using a recapitulative table which allowed for detailed analysis of their morphological evolution, material composition and the cultural influences, particularly from the ancient Egyptian and Graeco-Roman eras, on their development during the Byzantine period. To ensure comprehensive results, the paper is organized into distinct sections corresponding to each historical era, with each part highlighting unique innovations, stylistic developments and the influence of earlier traditions. Furthermore, prior scholarly works on clappers were extensively reviewed, notably including:

-Hickmann, H. (1949). *Catalogue Général des Antiquités Égyptiennes du Musée du Caire*, No 69201 - 69852, *Instruments de Musique*. Le Caire.

-Köpp-Junk, H. (2022). "Clappers in Ancient Egypt: Wood or Ivory for the Same Event or Ritual". *Telestes II: an international journal of archaeomusicology and archaeology of sound*, pp. 51-62.

Moreover, the paper incorporated a comparative examination of selected artifacts exhibited in various museum collections, including the Egyptian

Museum, the Grand Egyptian Museum, the Bibliotheca Alexandrina Antiquities Museum, the Kelsey Museum of Archaeology, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

1. Introduction

Music has served as a vital aspect of human culture for millennia, with ancient Egypt exemplifying a profound reverence for various artistic expressions, including music. In ancient Egyptian society, music fulfilled a diverse range of functions, encompassing religious rituals, amusement and the accompaniment of dance and other communal activities. In addition, it was regarded as having a crucial contribution in promoting both physical and spiritual well-being, thereby surpassing its function as mere entertainment to embody a significant influence on individuals' holistic health and spiritual life (Mark, 2017). Furthermore, music and musicians were accorded considerable respect, reflecting their integral role within religious, cultural, and social contexts. Professional musicians frequently performed in temples, royal courts and during religious ceremonies. Their skills were transmitted across generations, and they were often organized into specialized guilds, which regulated their practices and upheld standards of artistic proficiency (Manniche, 1991).

1.2 Deities Associated with Music

In ancient Egyptian belief systems, various deities were closely linked to music and were venerated and invoked by musicians and performers to seek their blessings and guidance in the creation and execution of musical works. Several deities were specifically associated with music, each embodying different aspects of this art form such as Hathor, Isis, Thoth, Bes, Anubis, and Osiris. Those deities were also regarded as protectors and sources of musical inspiration. The connection between these deities and music emphasizes the

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profound significance of musical practice within both entertainment and religious or ceremonial contexts in ancient Egypt (Goidel, 2010).

1.3 Musical Instruments and Performances

Musical performances have been documented in the archaeological record of Ancient Egypt as early as 2675 BC. Through written and visual documentation of artifacts, murals, and hieroglyphs, music becomes evident as a key aspect of the ancient Egyptian culture. Singers and musicians accompanied by a variety of musical instruments were often depicted on several temples and tomb wall paintings and reliefs (Köpp-Junk, 2018).

The ancient Egyptians used a wide variety of musical instruments which were systematically categorized according to their characteristics and functions. Each category of instruments was associated with specific roles and was employed within particular contexts. These instruments accompanied daily activities, festivals, religious ceremonies, and funerary rituals, reflecting the integral place of music within the social, religious, and cultural fabric of ancient Egyptian society (Manniche, 1991). Percussion instruments in ancient Egypt encompassed clappers, hand-held drums, rattles, castanets, bells, and the sistrum. Additionally, hand clapping served both as a rhythmic accompaniment and as a form of musical participation. Wind instruments comprised different types of flutes (both double and single, with or without reeds) and trumpets. Stringed instruments included harps, lyres, and lutes that were plucked rather than bowed. It was also common for these instruments to bear inscriptions indicating the owner's name and to be decorated with depictions of music deities such as Hathor and Bes (Köpp-Junk, 2018).


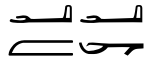



Fig. 1: The earliest depiction of clappers from the Predynastic Period. (Köpp-Junk, 2022).

2. Clappers in Ancient Egypt

The earliest percussion instrument known in ancient Egypt was the clapper. Archaeological discoveries and wall paintings show musicians playing a variety of instruments, including clappers. Clappers have been documented for over 4,000 years, spanning from the Predynastic Period to the Byzantine era (Köpp-Junk, 2018).

The first representations of clappers in ancient Egypt can be traced back to the Predynastic Period, when they were painted on vessels (Fig. 1) placed in tombs to facilitate the deceased's communication with the gods during their journey to the afterlife (Köpp-Junk, 2022).

Clappers, referred to as *ʿwj* ,  or *msh*  in the ancient Egyptian language, were basic percussion instruments designed to create rhythmic sounds through the striking of two objects against one another (Ziegler, 1979). These instruments were vital to the musical and ritualistic practices of ancient Egypt, enriching the region's dynamic musical culture.

In ancient Egyptian society, music played a vital role in everyday life, agriculture, religious ceremonies, and celebrations. Within this cultural milieu, clappers emerged as indispensable percussion instruments, primarily employed to accompany dancers, religious ceremonies, and social gatherings. Beyond their essential function in providing rhythmic support, clappers contributed to the overall sonic texture by complementing string and wind instruments, thereby enhancing the auditory experience. In the context of sacred music, they were used to create rhythmic accompaniment as they were believed to facilitate communication with the deities or to invoke spiritual presence (Manniche, 1991). In addition, their sound was thought to have protective qualities against evil spirits. They were frequently utilized in

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conjunction with other instruments, such as harps and lyres, to create a harmonious musical backdrop. These instruments were often played collectively, enhancing the dynamic nature of music bands, which could be composed of male, female, or mixed musicians (Bayoumy, 2020).

During public festivals and celebrations, clappers symbolize joy and delight. They were used in festivities such as weddings and harvest festivals, where music and dance were central elements of communal expression. Their lively and rhythmic beats boosted the celebratory mood and demonstrated the value of music in ancient Egyptian social life (Ruiz, 2001).

Clappers could be constructed from various materials, depending on the context of their use and the resources available including wood, bone, ivory, clay, ceramic, and metal. They typically consisted of two main components: a handle and a movable piece that produced sound when struck together. The handle was often designed for a comfortable grip, enabling musicians to efficiently utilize the instrument during their performances (Baker, 2016).

These instruments feature a range of ornamental motifs that vary by the period in which they were made, including depictions of Hathor, either with a human or animal head, papyrus plants, or lotus flowers (Emerit, 2013). They are attested in various shapes and sizes adapted to their specific use and musical



Fig. 2: Ivory gazelle clappers from a First Dynasty subsidiary tomb at Giza. (Petrie, 1907).

context as well. Some clappers are undecorated and bent, while others are richly adorned with the face of goddess Hathor. In addition to hand-shaped designs, there are also clappers in various animal forms. Occasionally, they are hollowed out to enhance their volume. Certain clappers showcase a more complex design where pieces are shaped to interlock tightly

into each other, allowing them to produce varying sounds based on their size and thickness (Köpp-Junk, 2022).

Clappers typically appeared in pairs, producing a contrasting sound when struck together. The sizes of the clappers could differ, with one being larger or heavier than the other, allowing for a varied range of tones. Smaller clapper versions were crafted for portability, allowing musicians to carry them easily to various settings (Manniche, 1991).

The earliest archaeological evidence of clappers can be dated back to the fi period. Among these are fragments of animal-headed clappers discovered in the tombs of King Djer and King Djet of the First Dynasty. For example, a pair of gazelle-headed clappers made of ivory was discovered in tomb no. 23 during an excavation at Giza (Fig. 2). This tomb is associated with a first-dynasty mastaba whose owner is called *Zet* (Petrie, 1907). This pair is the sole known example of the gazelle-headed clappers, and they consist of two parts: the head and the handle, which are joined together (Strandberg, 2009). During this early period, clappers were predominantly designed in zoomorphic styles, while those shaped like human hands were relatively uncommon (Köpp-Junk, 2022). Clappers were commonly featured in music scenes from as early as the 6th dynasty, indicating their longstanding use in Egyptian music (Bayoumy, 2020). Tomb reliefs from the Old Kingdom often illustrate troupes performing with boomerang-shaped clappers (Morris, 2017).

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A depiction on the western wall, south of the false door of the mastaba of *Nunūter* at Giza, illustrates musicians engaged in performance while holding clappers. At the center of the scene, four female musicians are represented, each is shown standing on her

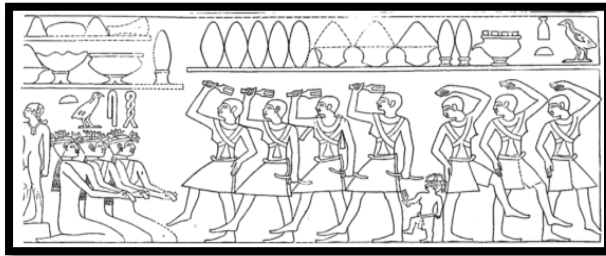


Fig. 3: Female musicians while holding clappers from the tomb of Nunūter. (Arroyo, 2003).

left leg and holding a fork-shaped sistrum in her right hand. Three of them also grasp what appear to be serpent-shaped clappers, or possibly a standard pair of clappers, in their left hands (Bayoumy, 2020). All four musicians share identical costumes and hairstyles, suggesting a standardized or ritualized mode of presentation consistent with their ceremonial context (Fig. 3). The final member of this group is a female dwarf, adorned with a garland of lotus flowers in her hair, as she dances and holds a small sistrum in her right hand (PMIII, 1974, Arroyo, 2003).

The development of clappers during Egypt's Middle Kingdom reflects a significant evolution in musical expression, craftsmanship, and cultural practices of the era. These instruments played various roles in religious ceremonies, entertainment, and everyday life. The clappers of the Middle Kingdom were initially made of wood; however, some examples were crafted from ivory and stone (Baker, 2016). The typical shape of a clapper is that of two separate, solid pieces, often resembling elongated, oval-shaped boards that are connected by a handle. When struck together, they produce a sharp, resonant sound. Many clappers from the Middle Kingdom were found decorated with sophisticated carvings, hieroglyphs, motifs, and geometric patterns (Manniche, 1991).



Fig. 4: An ivory clapper from the Memphite region, 12th dynasty. (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000).

The most prominent types of clappers seen in Middle Kingdom art are those adorned with wedge-shaped or human-headed finials, often portrayed being held by male *Hathoric Ihy* priests (Blackman, 1914). Interestingly, hand-shaped

clappers disappeared from Middle Kingdom art as they started to emerge in significant quantities in the archaeological record (Morris, 2017). Additionally, the elaborate bracelets were characteristics of the Middle Kingdom clappers revealed from different archaeological finds (Fig. 4).

It has been observed that clappers from the late Old Kingdom to the late Middle Kingdom are often discovered in association with nude female figurines, ominous masked figures, depictions of snake-grasping, and a variety of other images inspired by the mythology of Hathor and the sun. One theory regarding the origins of hand-shaped clappers from the late Old Kingdom and Middle Kingdom suggests that they may have been influenced by artifacts such as wooden and ivory 'hands' found in the First Dynasty contexts at the burial sites of *Umm el Qa'ab* and *Helwan*. Additionally, boomerang-shaped clappers, which were common in the Old Kingdom art, are infrequent and can be challenging to differentiate from throw sticks in various publications (Morris, 2017).

Various musical instruments were illustrated on the walls of the New Kingdom tombs and temples, with several examples discovered in Tutankhamun's tomb, such as silver and gold trumpets, a gold-plated wooden sistrum, and ivory curved clappers (Gadalla, 2018).

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The ivory clappers associated with King Tutankhamun demonstrate that clapper designs during the New Kingdom maintained the same styles as those from the Old and Middle Kingdoms, featuring either curved or straight handles or animal-like shapes, and were crafted from similar materials like wood or ivory (Hickmann, 1950).

The pair of clappers attributed to Tutankhamun, displayed at the Grand Egyptian Museum (15630), are made of ivory and measures 17 cm in length (Fig. 5). They are designed in the form of a curved human hand adorned with a bracelet, and feature a cartouche with the following inscriptions:



hmt nswt wrt ty 'nh.ti sHt nswt mryt itn

*The great royal wife, Ty, may you live, the
royal daughter, the beloved of Atun*
(Hickmann, 1949).



Fig. 5: The clappers of
Tutankhamen. (© The Global Egyptian
Museum, Cairo).

The inscriptions on Tutankhamun's clappers suggest they were created during the early years of his reign, prior to his relocation to Thebes, as evidenced by the inscription of his name in the *itn* form. Additionally, this is not the only item found in Tutankhamun's tomb that references Queen Ty; the four renowned coffins also contain a lock of Queen Ty's hair, which may have served as a family heirloom or possibly as a means to affirm Tutankhamun's legitimacy to the throne, given that she could be his grandmother.

3. Clappers in the Graeco-Roman Period

In Graeco-Roman Egypt, percussion instruments occupied a crucial role in the musical and ritual practices of the society. Among these, clappers emerged as prominent percussion instruments valued for their rhythmic and symbolic functions. In ritual settings, they were believed to possess protective qualities,

warding off evil spirits and facilitating communication with deities. In this regard, the Muses are often depicted playing with many percussion instruments, further emphasizing the significance of these instruments within both mythological and cultural contexts. During religious ceremonies, they accompanied offerings, processions and dance performances, thereby contributing to the establishment of a sacred atmosphere. In secular contexts, clappers played a key role in festivities such as weddings, public entertainment and harvest celebrations, where their vibrant rhythms fostered communal engagement and participation (Rocconi and Lynch, 2020).

Clappers commonly served to establish a clearly defined rhythm that complemented the sounds of the auloi and the lyre (Schas, 2012). Additionally, auletes occasionally utilized specialized footwear known as *Kroupeza*, which was equipped with clappers attached to the sole. This technique enabled the performer to audibly maintain an internal rhythm, providing a temporal framework for a chorus while executing their instrumental performance (West, 1992).

The clappers were referred to as *Krotala* or *Krembala* in Greek. They consisted of two or more flat rigid pieces that could be struck together to produce sound. The most common form consisted of two handles, securely fastened at the base, and connected by a single flexible metal rod

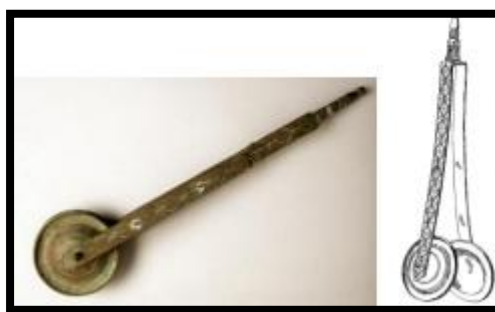


Fig.6: A Roman clapper with a decorated handle. (Anderson, 1976).

(Elkady, 2018). Each handle features a metal plaque or cymbal at the top, oriented so that the two plaques face one another. In some instances, the handles can be joined together by a stick of various shapes (Fig. 6). Some

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variations included carved or painted decorations, often depicting religious motifs or symbolic imagery, emphasizing their role in ritual contexts. The size of these instruments ranged from small handheld devices to larger and more elaborate pieces used in processions and ceremonies. Initially, they were held by men, but over time, women took on this role (Wegner, 1986). The stork was known as *crotaistria* (Chappell, 1874).

The primary material used for constructing clappers was high-quality wood such as cedar wood or ebony and in some instances metal elements were incorporated such as bronze or brass. One such example of a wooden clapper dating back to the Graeco-Roman period (Fig. 7) features a short handle



Fig.7: A Wooden Roman clapper (© Kelsey Museum of Archaeology).

adorned with a small pointed circle. The upper part of the clapper consists of three small wooden boards that are attached together with a cord. When the handle is shaken, the three boards strike each other, producing a musical sound (Kelsey Museum of Archaeology, 2020).

4. Clappers in the Byzantine Period

During the Byzantine period in Egypt, religious practices and liturgical ceremonies incorporated various percussion instruments including clappers, cymbals, triangles, and small tongueless bells (Beshara, 2020). Clappers functioned as integral percussive elements that highlighted various aspects of the Byzantine Christian worship. Their role extended beyond mere auditory signals, embodying deep theological and cultural meanings. Specifically, they were employed to mark the beginning and end of prayers or hymns, to accompany processions, and to denote pivotal moments within the service such as the consecration, the elevation of the Eucharist, or the reading of the Gospel (Marinis, 2015). Moreover, during the Prayer of Inclination, it was customary

for the bishop to incense the altar while simultaneously using clappers (Homer, 2008).

Coptic believers hold the conviction that the musical genres performed during church services evoke an experience similar to creating a divine realm on earth, whereby musical worship and praise serve as essential means of establishing a spiritual connection with God. Consequently, these musical practices are essential to a wide range of religious rites, including infant baptism, weddings, and funerals, which are all accompanied by singing. Coptic religious music is organized into three distinct genres: *alhan*, *madah*, and *taratil*. (Farang, 2013). In performance, Coptic choirs typically sing, or chant melodies known as *cappella*, that is, without instrumental accompaniment, aside from the use of small percussion instruments such as clappers and cymbals (Ajmera, 2014). The tradition of Coptic chant is often regarded as descending from the temple music of ancient Egypt, with all musical styles characterized by simple melodies designed for solemn psalmody, and the singing of Psalm verses (Hinnells, 1999). This continuity highlights the historical and spiritual significance of Coptic music as a means of fostering divine communion through musical expression that is both accessible and reverent.

Clappers were known as *cymbala* in Byzantine liturgical contexts (Marinis, 2015). The term "clappers" itself had no native equivalent in the Coptic language; therefore, the word "cymbals" was used in the Bible to refer to them. This designation is derived from the Greek word *κύμβη* (Sachs, 2012). Examples of the clappers mentioned in the Bible, Psalm 150:5 "*Praise him with loud cymbals, praise him with resounding cymbals.*", Corinthians 13:1 "*If I speak in the tongue of men and angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.*".

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The predominant material for producing clappers was wood; however, certain examples particularly those used within ceremonial contexts were crafted from metal, such as bronze or copper, thereby enhancing their durability and producing a resonant acoustic quality. Additionally, bone and ivory materials were also utilized in their construction. Byzantine clappers were generally simple in form, designed for ease handling and producing a loud sound. They are documented in two principal variations: the first type combined with cymbals on their handles, functioning as cymbals themselves; the second type was modified with accentuated boracic elements to resemble castanets (Hickmann, 1949). Further examples indicate that some Byzantine clappers bear similarities to ancient Egyptian hand-shaped clappers, used in similar religious or funerary contexts. These could be held in one or both hands and featured either straight or curved handles, producing sound through striking against each other to substitute for hand clapping. Moreover, the design of clappers during this period was influenced by Roman prototypes. For instance, a wooden clapper preserved in the Bibliotheca Alexandrina Museum



Fig.8: Wooden clappers dating back to the Byzantine Period (© BA Antiquities Museum, 2010).

BAAM 0885 (Fig. 8), dating from the 4th to 5th centuries CE, bears a close resemblance to Roman counterparts. It consists of a wooden handle and three wooden boards, which, when the handle is shaken, strike one another to produce a musical sound. This artifact exemplifies the continuity and adaptation of earlier technological traditions (BA Antiquities Museum, 2010).

Following the Arabic conquest, the sound of church bells was louder than the Muslim call to prayer. In response, the Caliph issued an order in the 8th century to remove all church bells, prompting the church to replace them with clappers

(Sharkey, 2017). In this context, the Arabic word *nāqūs* was used to refer to both clappers and church bells, as well as the wooden tool used during prayer and liturgical ceremonies (Rassi, 2022).

5. Three Unpublished Pairs of Hand-shaped Ivory Clappers at the Egyptian Museum, Cairo (*JE 100547*)

The six clappers date back to the Byzantine period (Fig. 9). They were repatriated in 2017 from the Louvre by the former minister of Tourism and Antiquities Prof. Dr. Khaled El Anany, as a part of a collection consisting of 586 pieces.



Fig. 9: Three pairs of hand-shaped ivory clappers
(© Egyptian Museum, Cairo).

The three pairs vary in dimension and were made of

ivory, displaying a slightly darker hue than typical ivory, which suggests that they are derived from elephant ivory known to undergo a color transformation from white to brown upon exposure to atmospheric conditions (Shaw and Nicholson, 2000).

They are designed in the shape of hands and forearms, reflecting the most common forms used during the Middle Kingdom (Oppenheim and Arnold, 2015). Based on the positioning of the fingers, it can be inferred that each pair comprises a left and a right hand. The fingers and fingernails are depicted through incised lines, and each wrist is adorned with bracelets.

Two pairs feature a small hole at the end of the straight handle, allowing for a cord or string to be attached, enabling one-handed play by striking the clappers

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together. The third pair lacks this hole, indicating that it was intended for use with both hands.

The First Pair: It consists of two clappers that are noticeably longer than the others (Fig. 10). The arms are slender and elegantly carved. The hands are represented in a clenched fist. This pair features a symmetrical design that allows for use with both hands. Each piece has a long handle (forearm) in proportion to the hand and is adorned with five dots arranged to form a Greek cross, along with three geometric line decorations. They also include bracelets at the wrist and a cross on the hand.



Fig. 10: The first pair of the ivory hand-shaped clappers (© Egyptian Museum, Cairo).

The Second Pair: This pair exhibits stylistic similarities to the longest pair; however, it is notably shorter in length. The arms are rendered with slender proportions, and the hands are depicted in a clenched fist position. One piece of the second pair is unfortunately broken at the lower end and shows a small hole in the handle. It is similarly decorated with dots that create a cross shape. This pair also features a bracelet and an additional ring on the ring finger. While the decorative motifs are less intricate compared to those on the first pair, they nonetheless adhere to comparable design schemes.

The Third Pair: This pair represents the shortest within the collection. The arms are proportionally shorter and thicker than the other pairs. The hands are shown clenched, and the decorative elements are notably simpler and less elaborate, which may suggest variations in manufacturing duration, artistic craftsmanship, or intended function. Notably, this pair bears a strong resemblance to the first pair; however, it is distinguished by the absence of the hole at the upper end, suggesting that it was designed for use with both hands.


Overall, the three pairs share a consistent aesthetic, indicating that they are interconnected artifacts originating from a similar period and provenance. The minor distinctions in length, hand detailing, and carving technique likely reflect individual craftsmanship or potentially denote variations in functional purpose within a broader ritualistic framework. The use of ivory, meticulous carving skills, and the consistent thematic motifs collectively suggest that these clappers are of considerable cultural significance from Byzantine Egypt.


6. Analysis

The analysis is structured around a comprehensive comparative table designed to examine the evolution of clappers across different historical eras. It focuses on the material, shape, decorations and functional aspects. In addition, it presents a selected examples of clappers spanning from the Pre-dynastic period to the Byzantine era, with the objective of investigating the extent of influence exerted by ancient Egyptian and Graeco-Roman artistic traditions on Coptic art.

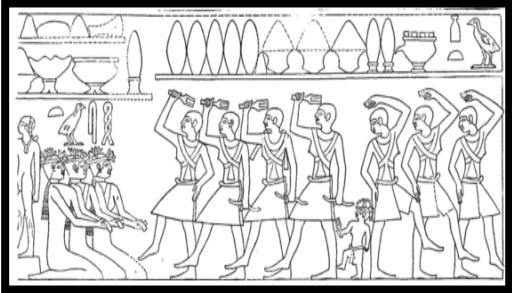
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6.1 Recapitulative Table

Era	Material	Shape	Function	Figures
Predynastic Period	Ivory, wood, clay, bones, metal or ceramic.	Clappers were represented in various shapes and sizes. Some of these instruments showcase a variety of ornamental motifs, while others remain undecorated, depending on the period in which they were made. Typically, they comprised a handle and a movable part that created sound when struck, often	They were placed in tombs to facilitate the deceased's communication with the deities during their journey to the afterlife or to invoke spiritual presence.	

		modeled after Hathor, featuring either a human or animal head or hands, as well as designs resembling papyrus plants or lotus flowers.		
Early Dynastic Period	Ivory or bones.	Clappers were primarily designed in zoomorphic styles, whereas those shapes like human hands were relatively rare. One example from this period is a pair of gazelle-headed clappers	Beyond their religious significance, clappers were used in various occasions and celebrations including wedding and harvest festivals. They were symbols of joy and delight.	



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		discovered in a First Dynasty mastaba at Giza.		
Old Kingdom	Ivory and wood.	Boomerang-shaped clappers were common in the Old Kingdom art and were often depicted in musical scenes.	They served as musical instruments to accompany processions and offerings. They were also used in religious and ceremonial rituals. In addition, they may have had symbolic or ceremonial significance in tomb rites.	



<p>Middle Kingdom</p>	<p>Ivory, wood, and stones.</p>	<p>They were designed in the shape of human hands and forearms. The most prominent types of clappers seen in Middle Kingdom art are those adorned with wedge-shaped or human-headed finials, often portrayed being held by male <i>Hathoric Ihy</i> priests. Many clappers from the Middle Kingdom were found decorated with sophisticated carvings,</p>	<p>They were employed in religious ceremonies and rituals to produce rhythmic sounds. They were also used to accompany music, dance and festivities.</p>	
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		hieroglyphs, motifs, and geometric patterns. Additionally, the elaborate bracelets were characteristics of the Middle Kingdom clappers revealed from different archaeological findings.		
New Kingdom	Ivory.	They were developed in the form of a curved human hand adorned with a bracelet, featured with inscriptions. Some clappers were elaborately decorated, indicating social or religious status.	They played a significant role during banquets, funerary processions, and religious ceremonies. They were used as percussion instruments to	

			produce rhythm during musical performances and ceremonies.	
Graeco-Roman Period	Wood and metals	The most common clapper form had two handles attached at the base and connected by a flexible metal rod, with metal plaques or cymbals	They were believed to possess protective qualities, warding off evil spirits and facilitating	

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		<p>facing each other at the top. Another type featured a short handle with a small, pointed circle, and three small wooden boards tied together with a cord at the top.</p>	<p>communication with deities.</p> <p>clappers played a key role in festivities such as weddings, public entertainment and harvest celebrations</p>	
Byzantine Period	<p>Ivory, bones, wood, and metals.</p>	<p>Three distinct types of clappers are identified. The first type features cymbals at their handles, functioning as percussion cymbals. The second type is modified with accentuated boracic elements, resembling</p>	<p>Clappers were repurposed for religious use, serving as substitutes for bells to announce prayer times and highlight important moments during church services.</p>	

		<p>catenates. The third type comprises a wooden handle and three wooden boards that produce sound when shaken. Moreover, certain designs incorporate hand-shaped pairs by ancient Egyptian stylistic convention; however, in this context, they are decorated with crosses.</p>		
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From the above analytical table, it is evident that clappers have been in use from Pre-dynastic period through the Byzantine era, and they continue to serve similar functions within contemporary Coptic Orthodox practices including rituals, funerary rites and religious ceremonies.

Ivory can be identified as the predominant material employed in the manufacturing of clappers during these periods. Although the shapes of clappers exhibit considerable variability, the hand-shaped and forearms clappers remain the most prevalent and enduring forms. Notably, during the Graeco-Roman period, there was a development in shape, exemplified by wooden clappers with three boards or those featuring cymbals mounted at the top. However, in the Coptic tradition, there appears to be a reversion to earlier archetypes, with artisans adopting hand-shaped form clappers, which were prominent during the Middle Kingdom and reinterpreting them with a Christian context by incorporating crosses.

7. Conclusions

The examination of clappers in ancient Egypt reveals their multifaceted role within the social and cultural fabric of the civilization. These instruments first emerged during the Pre-dynastic Period and continued to be used until the Arabic conquest. Typically, they are found in pairs, indicating their significance in various contexts. The primary materials used for their construction included wood, ivory, stone, metal, and occasionally animal bones, which collectively reflect the artistic craftsmanship of the respective eras. Notably, ivory was the most prevalent material for producing clappers from the Early Dynastic period through to the New Kingdom. Conversely, during the Graeco-Roman and Byzantine periods, wood, ivory, and metal remained the most employed materials, underscoring the continuity and adaptation of these instruments across different epochs.

The designs of ancient Egyptian clappers exhibited considerable variation; some were elaborately decorated with depictions of the goddess Hathor, while others remained plain and undecorated. This diversity in form and ornamentation demonstrates their importance in both everyday life and religious rituals. Although their shapes evolved over time ranging from animal-headed forms in the Early Dynastic period to wooden board clappers and metal plaques during the Graeco-Roman and Byzantine periods, their design often reflected specific symbolic or functional considerations. Remarkably, from the Middle Kingdom onward, many clappers were fashioned to resemble hands or forearms, indicating a shift towards more representational forms. In addition, during the Graeco-Roman period, some clappers featured metal plaques or cymbals mounted at the top, suggesting an adaptation of their form and function. Furthermore, wooden clappers with wooden boards emerged during the Graeco-Roman period and persisted into the Byzantine era, with examples maintaining similar shapes and design elements throughout these successive periods.

The three pairs of Byzantine-era hand-clappers demonstrate that hand-shaped clappers continued to exist during the Byzantine period, despite the predominance of wooden board and metal plaque clappers during both the Graeco-Roman and Byzantine eras. These particular pairs are regarded as unique in their design, as they bear a resemblance to earlier examples originating from the Middle Kingdom and New Kingdom periods. This stylistic continuity suggests that Coptic artisans may have been significantly influenced by ancient Egyptian artistic traditions, thereby reflecting a persistent cultural connection across these historical epochs.

Clappers historically functioned as sound-producing instruments and fulfilled a variety of significant roles across diverse cultural contexts. In ancient Egypt,

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they were integral to musical performance during banquets, funerary processions, and religious ceremonies, with their rhythmic sounds serving not only as musical accompaniment but also as believed protective agents against evil spirits and means to enhance the spiritual ambiance of sacred rituals. In Graeco-Roman Egypt, the use of clappers extended to ward off evil spirits and facilitate communication with deities, while their presence at weddings, harvest festivals, and processions often coincided with the sounds of instruments such as the auloi and lyre. During the Byzantine period, clappers were adapted for ecclesiastical use, functioning as substitutes for bells to signal prayers and mark pivotal moments within church services. Contemporary musical instruments used in liturgical contexts, including cymbals, can be traced back to these ancient clappers, highlighting their enduring influence.

In conclusion, clappers were vital components of ancient Egyptian musical culture, exemplifying the profound connection between sound, social interaction, and spiritual experience. Their sophisticated roles contributed significantly to the vibrancy of ancient Egyptian civilization, offering valuable insights into the cultural significance of music and its enduring legacy in human expression.

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الملخص العربي

مثّلت الموسيقى عنصراً جوهرياً في التعبير عن الثقافة والحياة اليومية، كما كانت وسيلة رئيسية للتفاعل مع الهوية الاجتماعية والروحية للأفراد، بدءاً من عصر مصر القديمة وصولاً إلى العصر الحديث. وتُعدّ المصنفات من أبرز الآلات الموسيقية المستخدمة في مصر القديمة، حيث لعبت دوراً محورياً في الممارسات الموسيقية المرتبطة بالطقوس الدينية والحياة. يركز هذا البحث على أهمية المصنفات كواحدة من أقدم آلات الإيقاع في مصر القديمة، معتمداً على إطار منهجي شامل يجمع بين التحليل الأثري ودراسة المناظر. ويهدف أيضاً إلى استكشاف تصميم المصنفات والمواد المستخدمة في صناعتها، بالإضافة إلى استخداماتها المتعددة ضمن سياقات ثقافية، دينية، واجتماعية متنوعة. كما يولي البحث اهتماماً خاصاً بدراسة زخارف هذه القطع، من النقوش المعقدة التي تصور آلهة مثل حتحور إلى الأشكال البسيطة غير المزخرفة، بما يعكس أدوارها المزدوجة في الحياة اليومية والممارسات الدينية. ويتناول البحث تقيباً لدور المصنفات في الاحتفالات الدينية والمهرجانات والحياة اليومية، مسلطاً الضوء على دورها في إستحضار الآلهة وتعزيز التجارب الجماعية من خلال الصوت الإيقاعي. يُضاف إلى ذلك دراسة إستمرارية استخدام المصنفات خلال العصر البيزنطي في الكنائس أثناء ممارسة الشعائر الدينية. علاوة على ذلك، يتضمن البحث تحليلاً مفصلاً لثلاثة أزواج من المصنفات العاجية المصممة على هيئة أيادٍ بشرية، والتي تم إستردادها مؤخراً من متحف اللوفر في عام ٢٠١٧. تُعتبر هذه القطع جزءاً من مجموعة أثرية أوسع تضم ٥٨٦ قطعة أُعيدت برعاية وزير الآثار السابق، الأستاذ الدكتور خالد العناني. يهدف البحث إلى نشر معلومات حول هذه القطع الأثرية ذات التصميم الفريدة التي تتخذ شكل الأيدي والسواعد، كما يقدم دراسة تحليلية ومقارنة مع قطع أثرية مشابهة من عصور سابقة لفهم تصميمها واستخداماتها.