

On the history of the Basinkoob

سمسمي /*hɛɔ*/kisir/ ربابة /tambour/*Kιθαρα*/lyre

On the history of the **Basinkoob**

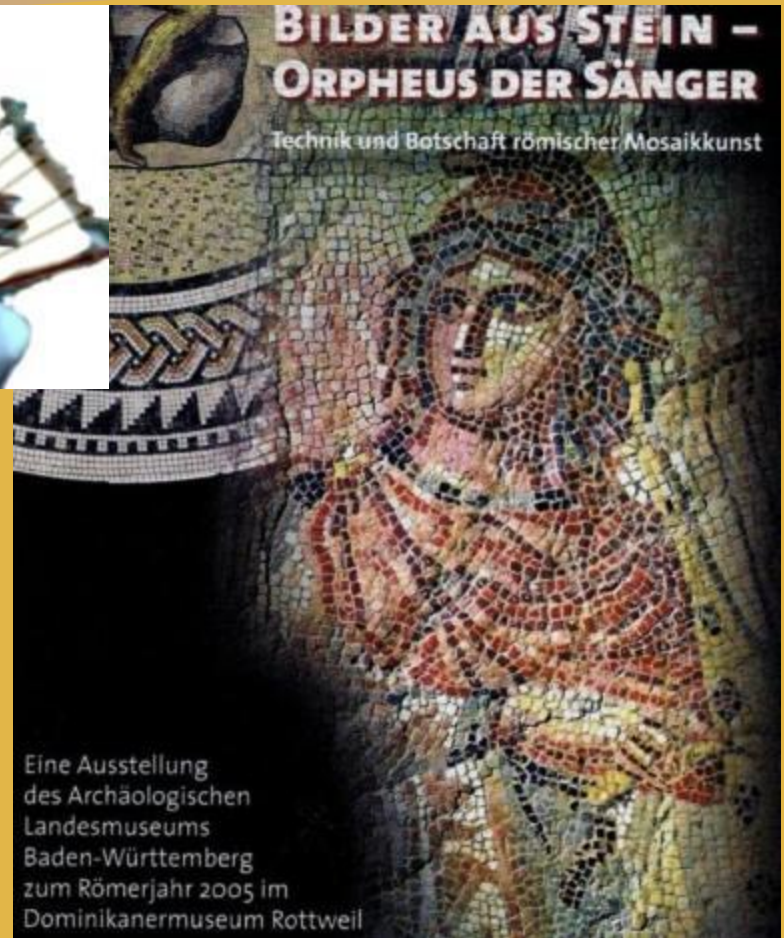
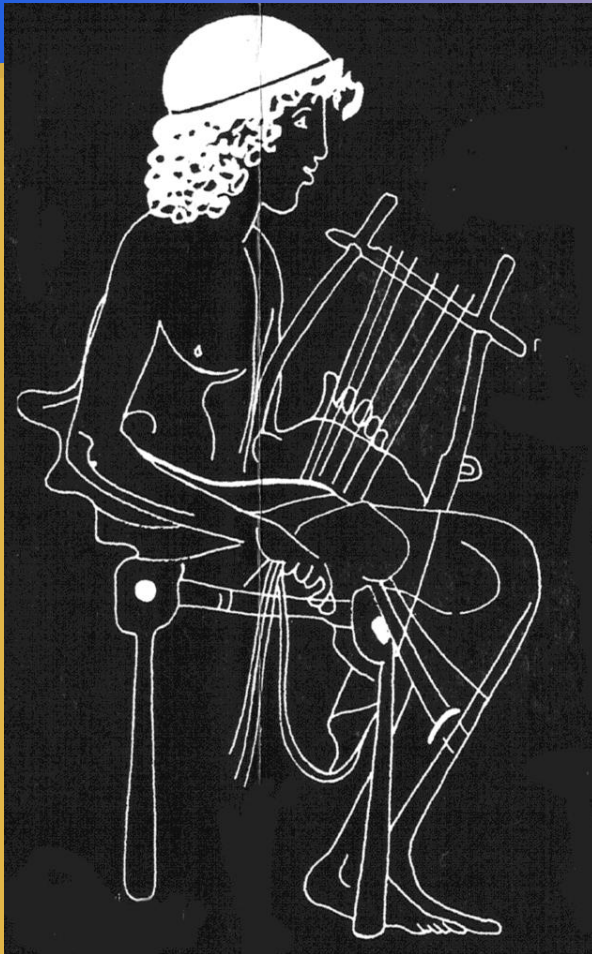
سمسمي / **ḥ-c** / kisir / رباة / tambour / **Κίθαρά** / lyre



Would you call all four of these instruments “**basinkoob**”?

On the history of the **Basinkoob**

سمسمي / **ḥ-c** / kisir / ربابة / tambour / **Kiθapa** / **lyre**



A very old picture of one who plays this instrument is in **Rottweil**

On the history of the name **Basinkoob**

Introductory question:

Does anyone have good information on the history of the **name** "basinkoob"?

On the history of the name **Basinkoob**



Which of these instruments is called **[masink'o]**?

On the history of the name **Basinkoob**



This one is called
[masink'o]
ማስኑቆ

The Red Sea 3500 years ago

Some say that the “**Medja**” of Pharaonic times were **Beja**



Nothing is known about the **music** of the Medja, but ...

The Red Sea 3500 years ago

Some Beja scholars claim that the **Medja** must have had connections to the Pharaonic court, pointing out the name of this queen >

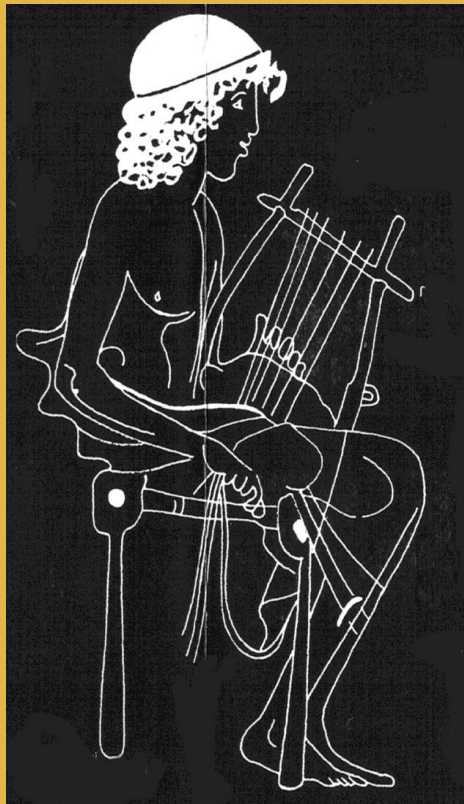
In Old Egyptian her name "Nefertiti" means "**the beautiful one has come**"

The luxury of her Pharaonic court included **harps and flutes** but nothing like a basinkoob



Music 2600 years ago

- Only pictures have survived
- especially on vases and other pottery



Music 2600 years ago

The old pictures show two kinds of instruments:

- (1) box-shaped (square)
- (2) bowl-shaped (round)

... as we will see next.

Music 2600 years ago

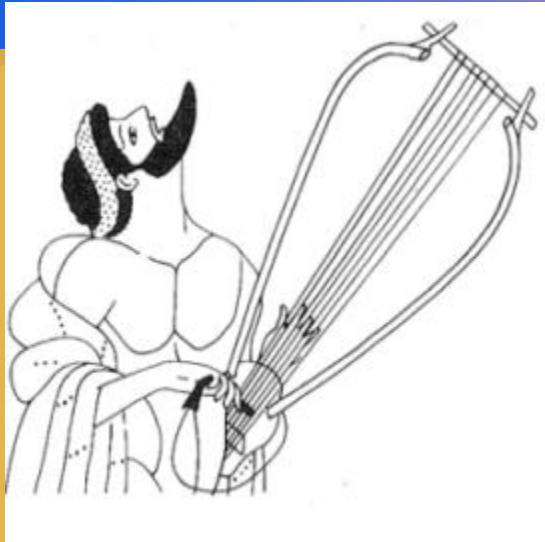


- (1) **Box-shaped** instruments called **Kithara**
- **square** resonance body
- artful design



- Compare:
- **Nubian „Kísír“**, from Greek **κιθάρα**
- Eritrean „Krar“ ክራር
- Ethiopian „Begenna“ በገና

Music 2600 years ago



- (2) Bowl-shaped instruments called Lyre
- round resonance body
- simple design



- Compare:
- Beja „Basinkoob“
- Sudanese „Tambour“
- Ethiopian „Krar“ ክራር
- Arab ربابة سمسمي

The Red Sea 2000 years ago



Most scholars agree that the Blemmyes were Beja

Music 2000 years ago

In: Mytilene Aisne Vienne Rottweil



In the houses of rich Roman officers, there were "mosaics" of the **Κίθαρα** (lyre, basinkoob) ...

but now, Europeans have **lost** the art of playing this instrument

...

The Mediterranean 2000 years ago

What exactly is a "mosaic"?

Compare the player's left hand on the different pictures: the mosaic consists of many small, coloured stones.

(Obviously mosaics were expensive - only the rich had them in their villas.)



The Mediterranean 2000 years ago

Please watch how carefully the position of the **fingers** has been presented in this mosaic – and count the number of strings.

How do Beja musicians play now, 2000 years later?



The Mediterranean 2000 years ago

All around the Mediterranean more than 200 mosaics are found showing “**basinkoob**”-like instruments.



Those shown are in:

- Rabat – **Morocco**
- Al Jem - **Tunisia**
- Tripolis – **Libya**
- Antakiya - **Turkey**
- Woodchester- **Britain**
- Rottweil – **Germany**
- Vienne - **France**
- Rome - **Italy**
- Miletus - **Greece**
- Iraklion – **Cyprus**

The Mediterranean 2000 years ago



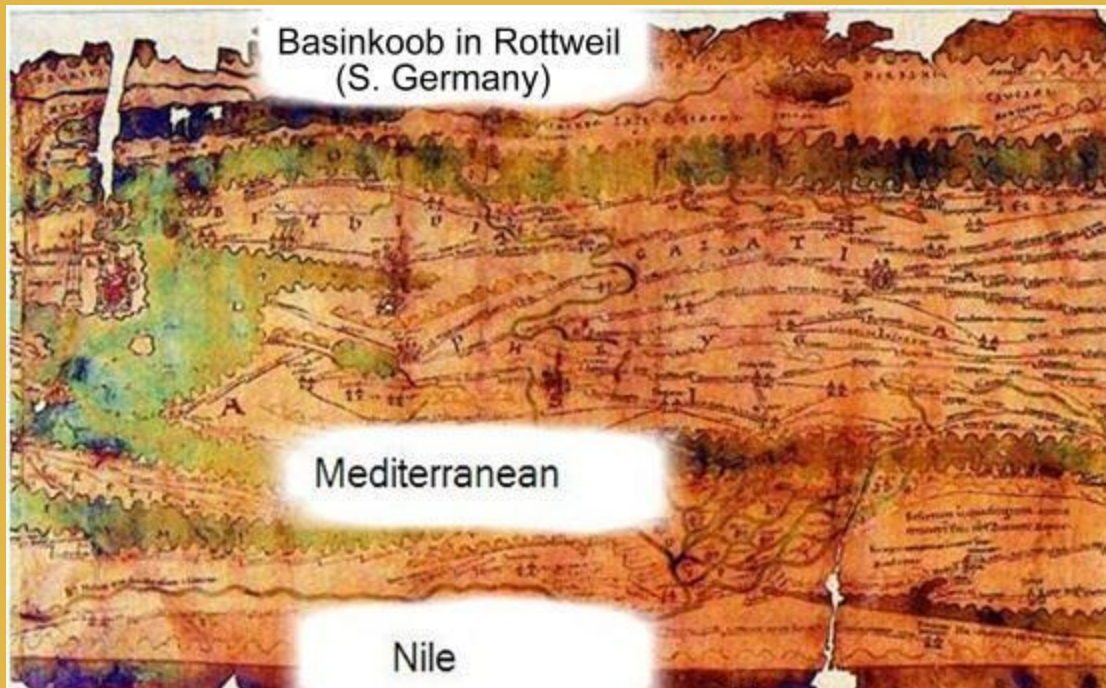
Many mosaics show how an instrument like the **basinkoob** was played at that time.

At that time, the **Blemmyes** lived in Egypt and had contact with Romans, i.e. with people who made these mosaics.

The world 1800 years ago

1800 years ago, the world was culturally “connected”:

Three areas were marked on this very old road map –
A road map which was used by Roman soldiers:



- 1 the town **Rottweil** with its rich villas & **mosaics**
- 2 the **Mediterranean**
- 3 the **Nile**

The world 1800 years ago



■ Europe

- Was divided into provinces dominated by Roman soldiers

■ “Aegyptus”

- Was the southernmost Roman province

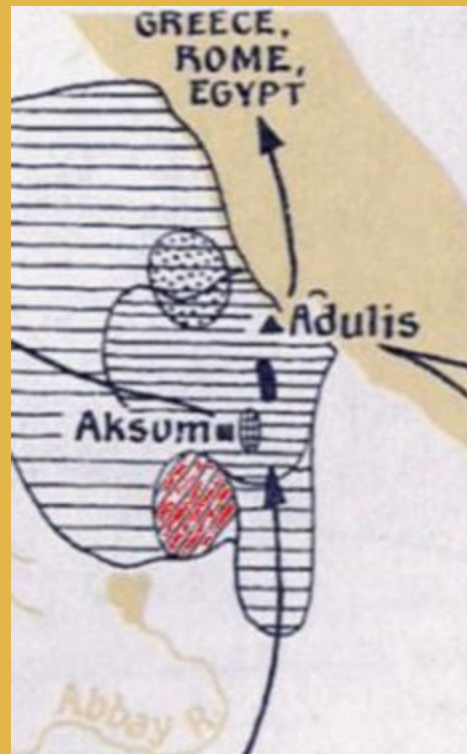
■ “Blemmyes” (Beja)

- Were confronting the Roman soldiers
- Defending their land, just like “Mauri” did.

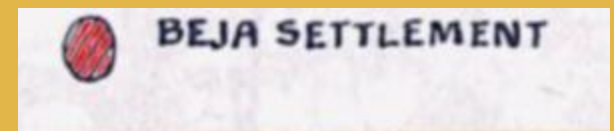
East Africa 1800 years ago



Huge "stelae" monuments
- all that remained of Axum



- The **Axumites** had relations with:
- Greece
- Rome
- Egypt
- ... and the **Beja**



Europe 500 years ago



- One of the last **lyres** in Europe is a 6-stringed instrument of a musician who died about 500 years ago.
- The **lyre** was found in his tomb near Rottweil (Germany)



According to this picture, the strings of the **lyre** were plucked.

Are there “conservative” cultures?

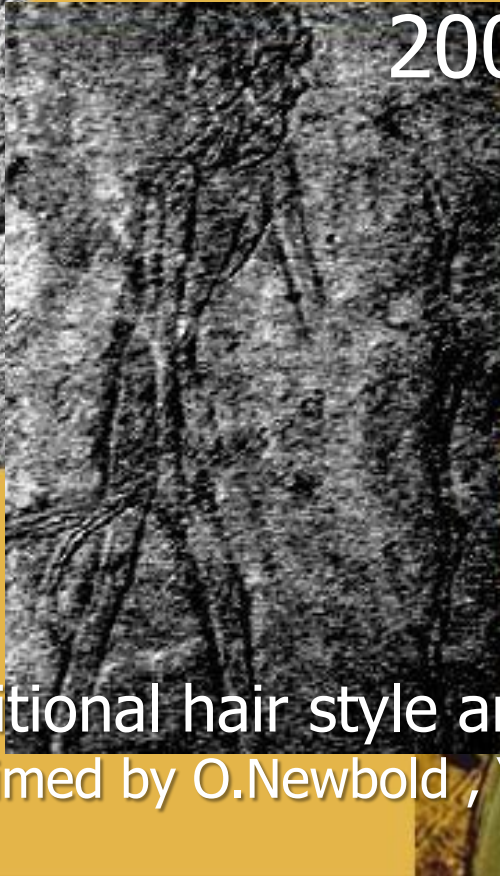
- Today, people in Europe do not know how to play the lyre.
- Some respected “classical scholars” have developed theories about the art of playing the lyre – theories based exclusively on books.
- Information would be needed from a culture which has preserved the art of playing the lyre – a really “conservative” culture which preserves its values.

Are there “conservative” cultures?

4000 years ago: **Medja**



2000 years ago: **Blemmyer**



Today: **Beja**



Is the traditional hair style an indicator of a traditional culture?

This was claimed by O.Newbold , “The Beja Tribes ...”, London 1935, p.145

Learning from the Beja culture:

So these are the facts:

1. Europe lost the classical **lyre**
2. Only pictures and mosaics have survived in Europe and around the Mediterranean
3. N.E. African and “classical” cultures had been in contact during the Roman Empire
4. Conservative cultures of N.E.Africa preserved the instrument which 2000 years ago was called **lyre**
5. **Beja** and Highland cultures such as Ethiopia preserved the techniques of playing the **lyre**.

Learning from the Beja culture:

- At the time of the mosaics (2000 years ago), Egypt was a Roman province, and Romans had contacts with peoples of Egypt – e.g. in Aswan – so the Romans may have seen music performed by the Blemmyes ...
 - (today's Beja were the **Blemmyes**)
- The Blemmyes – today the Bejas - have preserved the art of playing Kithara and Lyre
 - (today's **Basinkoob** was the **Kithara** or **Lyre**)
- String instruments which survived in those cultures provide answers which you cannot find in Europe.
 - (Iconography / Shape / Technique / Tuning / Strings)

Learning from the Beja culture:

- Today's musical practice in the Beja culture answers questions like these:
 - **Do the mosaics show facts, or just the artist's ideas?**
 - (Both of these – not just iconographic stereotypes)
 - **What exactly was the technique – left hand, right hand?**
 - (The left hand plucks, the right hand strums)
 - **How many strings were there?**
 - (Most likely around 6)
 - **Did one string produce one pitch or several pitches?**
 - (Just one. To start a different mode, you must re-tune)
 - **How were the strings tuned?**
 - (Using different mechanisms)

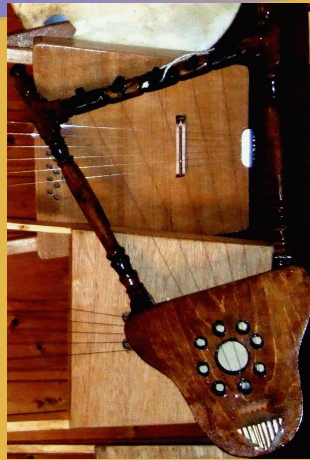
African or European origin?



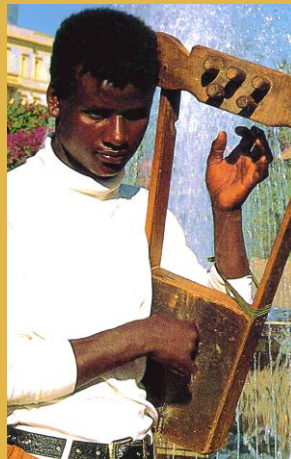
African or European origin?



N.E.-Africa today: Box-shape



Red on the map:
where these are found



N.E.-Africa today: Box-shape



Red on the map:
where these are found



N.E.-Africa today: Box-shape



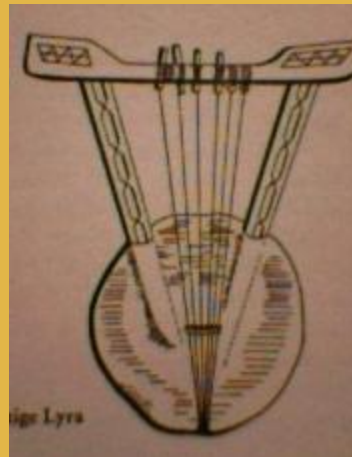
Red on the map:
where these are found



N.E.-Africa today: Bowl-shape



Red on the map:
where these are found



N.E.-Africa today: Bowl-shape

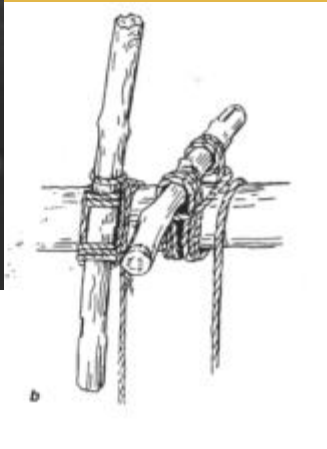


Red on the map:
where these are found

Techniques for tuning the strings



■ Cloth



■ Sticks

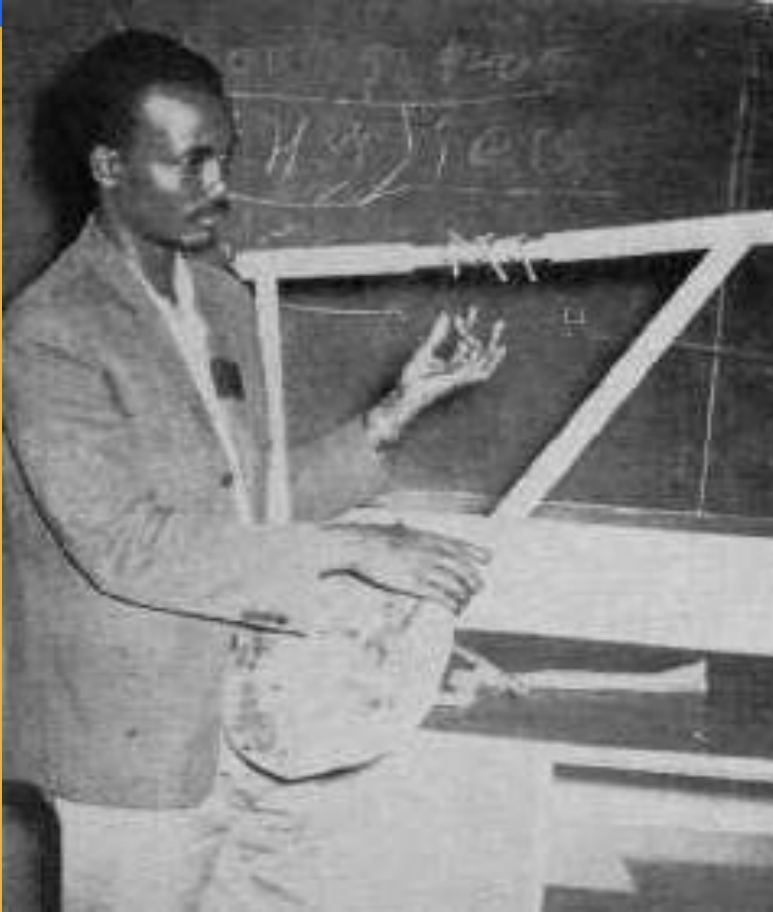


■ Screws

N.E.-Africa today: Two techniques

- Today and in the past, two techniques are used:
 - 1 Plucking
 - 2 Strumming
- Both techniques are used for both kinds of instruments, **box-shaped** and **bowl-shaped**
- Both techniques will be illustrated:

First Technique: **Plucking**



- The **left** hand plucks, each finger is assigned 1 string
- The **right** hand holds the instrument

Second Technique: **Strumming**



- The **right** hand beats full chords
- The **left** hand stops those strings which are not supposed to give a sound

First Technique: **Plucking**



- Ethiopian musician:
- The **left** hand **plucks**
- The right hand holds the instrument

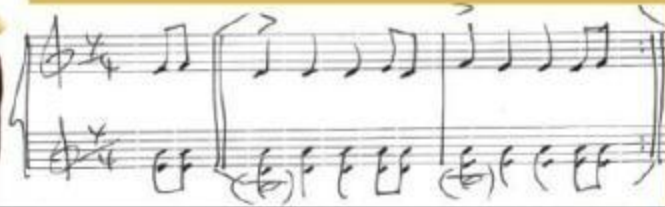


Second Technique: **Strumming**

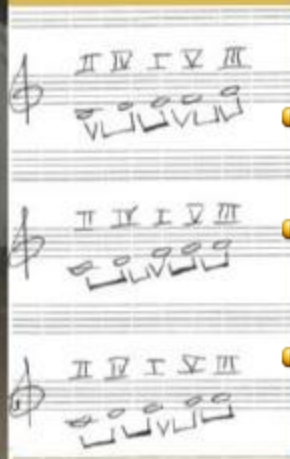
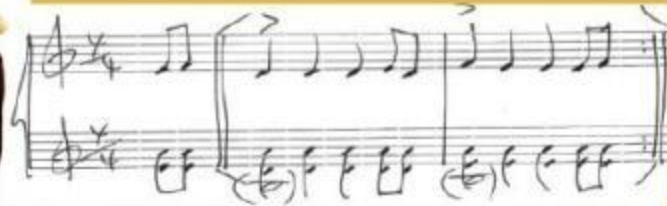


- Ethiopian musician:
- The **right** hand **strums** all strings
- The left hand stops the silent strings

Second Technique: **Strumming**



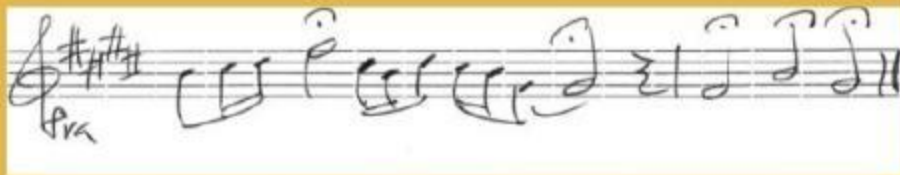
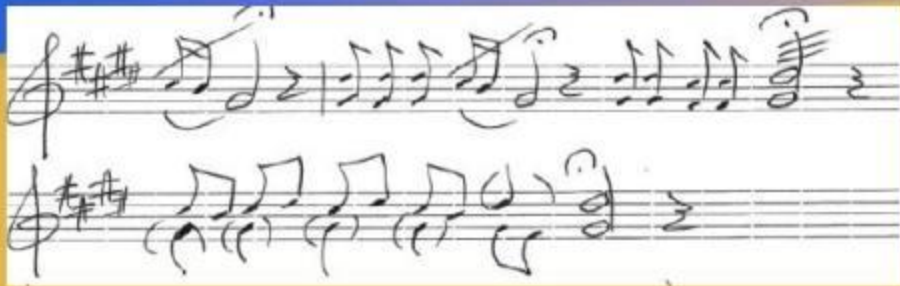
Second Technique: **Strumming**



There are 3 modes for tuning the strings II IV I III V

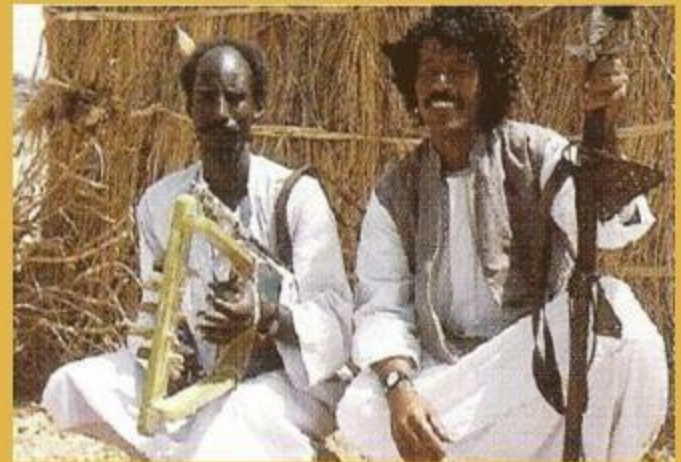
- Beesaay (Heroic)
- Shambar (Love)
- Dawarbaay (Nature)

Both Plucking and Strumming



لك تحيات ببلد دی

W-haash-ii-yook-da salaam a-bari
the-land-of-youSg-for peace 1SgPres-have
"I have peace for your land"



(colophon records 2001)

Second Technique: Strumming



- Fadil Kujal, a Bishari musician (N. of Aswan)
- He **strums** the *basinkoob*

Will lute or keyboard replace the basinkoob?

The basinkoob has a precious history – as has been shown.
Will it **get lost** – as it **got lost** in Europe?



- **Lute**
- 7 tone scale
3/4 notes
- **Keyboard**
- Western scales
Fixed pitches
- **Basinkoob**
- 5 tone scale
different modes

Frame	Item
1, 2	Exhibition, Archeological Museum, Rottweil 2005
5, 6	Collection of instruments, Archeological Museum, Rottweil 2006
7	Manley, Historical Atlas of Ancient Egypt
8	Die Zeit, Encyclopaedia vol. 1, Nofretete
9	Exhibition, Archeological Museum, Rottweil
11 12	DTV Atlas Music
13	DTV Atlas World History
14, 15, 16	Roman mosaic, Rottweil
17 18	DTV Atlas World History
19	Peutinger's Map
20	DTV Atlas World History
21	Ministry of Education, Addis Abeba, History brochure
22	Exhibition "Alamannen", District Archives, Baden-Wuerttemberg
24	Newbold, O.B.E., 1935, "The Beja tribes of the Red Sea Hinterland", Hamilton (ed.), Faber
28	Orix in East Africa, Mosaic of Basinkoob with Orix horns
29	Tortoise shell carving on Basinkoob bowl
31, 32, 33	Traditional Ethiopian paintings of instruments
35	Different tuning mechanisms, Basinkoob
37, 38	Ashenafi Kebede, University of Florida
39, 40	Basinkoob teacher at Yared Music School
43	Colophon records, 2001
44	Foto, Fadil Kujal
45	المصري الطرق أحدث: Cairo: العود الكرسة كتاب, 1995, عاي صفر