DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

Pázmány Péter Catholic University

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences – Institute of Archaeology



Doctoral School of History

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Ecclesiastical Architecture and Art in Egypt between the 5th and 7th centuries

Doctoral (PhD) Dissertation

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Budapest, 2024

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

DECLARATION

This thesis was submitted towards the fulfillment of the requirements for the award of a degree in history and archaeology from Pázmány Péter Catholic University. It is the product of my own original work, unless otherwise mentioned through references, notes, or other statements.

SIGNATURE

Basem Gabra

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Dedication:

To the cherished soul of His Holiness Pope Shenouda III,

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AKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am profoundly grateful to all those who have contributed to the successful completion of my Ph.D. dissertation in archaeology, conducted at the Institution of Archaeology in Pázmány Péter Catholic University in Hungary. This endeavor would not have been possible without the unwavering support and guidance of numerous individuals and institutions, to whom I owe a deep debt of gratitude.

First and foremost, I would like to extend my sincerest appreciation to my esteemed supervisors, Prof. Gawdat Gabra and Dr. Péter Langó. Prof. Gabra, a luminary in the field of Egyptology and Coptic Studies, has been a mentor and a godfather to the discipline. His vast knowledge, guidance, and unwavering support have been instrumental in shaping my research and academic growth. Dr. Langó's expertise, valuable insights, and tireless dedication have significantly contributed to the development and refinement of my dissertation. I am truly fortunate to have had the privilege of working under their guidance.

I would also like to extend my sincere appreciation to Dr. Major Balázs, the director of the Institute of Archaeology, Deputy Dean of Foreign Affairs at Pázmány Péter Catholic University in Hungary. Dr. Major has been a source of constant support and encouragement throughout my academic journey. His exceptional leadership, mentorship, and belief in my abilities have been instrumental in shaping my academic path.

Additionally, I would like to acknowledge the immense contribution of Prof. Miklós Takács. His expertise and passion for the subject matter have been a constant source of inspiration throughout my research. His scholarly insights and thought-provoking discussions have significantly enriched my understanding of the field, and I am grateful for the opportunity to have learned from him.

I would like to acknowledge and express my gratitude to the Coptic Orthodox Church for its invaluable support. The church's commitment to preserving and promoting Coptic heritage and culture has been a source of inspiration for my research. I am deeply grateful for the access to resources, archives, and guidance provided by the church authorities, which have significantly contributed to the depth and authenticity of my work.

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Furthermore, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the Hungarian Authorities for their support and recognition of the importance of cultural heritage. Their commitment to fostering academic endeavors and providing resources and financial support have been instrumental in the realization of my research goals.

Finally, I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to my family, friends, and colleagues who have stood by me throughout this challenging and rewarding journey. Their unwavering support, encouragement, and understanding have been a constant source of strength and inspiration.

Above all, my backbone, and my wings! My beloved wife, and my inspiring children, who support, encourage, and extremely bear me a lot. They are the ones who made me able to sail in the sky of this life and discover its fascinating horizons. Millions of thanks to the heart of this woman, where I live.

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TRANSCRIPTION

Medieval figures and sites names in Egypt usually have at least two names, an Arabic and a Latin one. In order to have a consistent and practical system, the present-day Arabic name of most sites and figures was used. In the transcription of Arabic names to Latin letters, the equivalent of the different Arabic letters is illustrated in the table below: [1]

أ	a	ط	ṭ
ب	b	ظ	ẓ
ت	t	ع	ʿ
ث	th	غ	gh
ج	j	ف	f
ح	ḥ	ق	q
خ	kh	ك	k
د	d	ل	l
ذ	dz	م	m
ر	r	ن	n
ز	z	ه	h
س	s	و	w
ش	sh	ي	y
ص	ṣ	ء	ʾ
ض	ḍ	ة	a

[1] Recommended font is “Times Beyrut Roman”.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The scope of this study is defined by two parameters: the spatial factor and the science of archaeology itself. Coptic archaeology merges the classical heritage of Ancient Egyptians with Egypt's position as one of the frontier provinces of the Roman Empire, along with the role of Alexandria in the Christological debates during the Early Christian era. This research aims to analyze ecclesiastical architecture and art of the critical period of early Christianity, which spans from the 5th to the 7th centuries. This period is characterized by two major events - the Council of Chalcedon in 451 A.D. and the Arab Conquest of Egypt in 641 A.D.

The direct consequence of Chalcedon's decisions in 451 A.D. was the so-called Great Schism of the Apostolic Church. The theological debates between the "Monophysites/Miaphsites" in Alexandria and the "Diophysites" in Rome and Constantinople were overrated as the root of the schism between the Eastern and Western Churches. Persecution from imperialism against Copts resulted in violence from Copts too. To uncover the true reason(s) behind this conflict, I plan to examine the architectural and artistic manifestations of ecclesiastical life during this period and answer whether it was motivated by theological circumstances or political factors. By conducting this research, I hope to shed light on the popular peace that was hidden under the political face of history.

This research is significant because, on one hand, it can be useful not only for the sake of the neglected Coptic Heritage but might be a strong milestone towards building a solid cultural bridge between both the Western and Eastern churches. On the other hand, the rarity of research on this topic is another reason why it's important, which motivates me strongly to approach it. I believe this study will be a brave beginning for more potential research. It will open a significant locked gate to a very critical moment of the past.

Previous works such as Peter Grossmann's achievements in architecture are significantly useful in this study. However, my contribution here is going to be focusing on creating an interpretation of this invaluable work utilizing modern digital archaeological techniques to make the implications of Grossmann's work more understandable to further scholars. As for art, since the study of Coptic art was neglected for a long time, it required me to create a

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theme-based artistic typology for Coptic art. Then, I am utilizing the same digital archaeological techniques to obtain reliable analyses.

After introducing the research methodology and the geographical setting, the dissertation delves into the historical background of the Late Roman Empire and its effects on Egypt as a southern frontier. This chapter also focuses on the circumstances surrounding the significant event of the Council of Chalcedon and its aftermath until the Arab Conquest of Egypt. The following chapter explores the symbolism of Coptic architectural and artistic elements and suggests their roots in various cultures in Late Antiquity.

The next chapter of my work is dedicated to showcasing the architectural typology and discussing the architectural manifestation, which leads to certain implications based on data analysis. Following this is the chapter on artistic analysis, where I present my theme-based artistic typology, followed by discussions and analysis of the character of Coptic art that offer invaluable perspectives, along with my view.

After these two most important chapters, there is an annex that proposes a modern digital archaeological technique for image recognition. This method can be enhanced and developed to be beneficial not only for archaeologists but also for the preservation and management of heritage.

Eventually, a conclusion that displays the results of the study and my statement is followed by the bibliography.

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II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1. Area of Research

The area of this study is defined by two parameters: the spatial factor along with the science of archaeology itself. Dr. Langó Péter, the supervisor of this study, states: “The same iconographic element or the same architectural feature can be understood differently, according to not only the era but also the region. The reason is that each region has a unique cultural heritage, which affects the intended meanings behind utilizing such a characteristic.” Egyptian archaeology, namely Egyptology/Coptology has a unique sense, maybe because it combines its relevance with the classical heritage of Ancient Egyptians with the fact that Egypt was one of the frontier provinces of the Roman Empire. In addition, Alexandria played a distinguished role in the Christological debates in the era of Early Christianity.

This research tends to analyze ecclesiastical architecture and art of a critical era of early Christianity, namely the period between the 5th and 7th centuries. It is the contemporary period of two influential events: the council of Chalcedon in 451 A.D. and the Arab Conquest of Egypt in 641 A.D. Spatially, this study deals with the ecclesiastical heritage of Egypt from this era.

However, the term ‘Coptic’ does not describe only ‘Christian’ Egyptian heritage. It is worth explaining it in light of the definition of the nowadays scholars. Nowadays, specialists in the art and archaeology of the discipline of post-pharaonic Egypt define 'Coptic' archaeology much more broadly, not only to describe Christian archaeology of Egypt but also to encompass works made beginning in the late 3rd century for pagans as well as Christians with whom they shared motifs and taste down through the 4th and 5th centuries and further.[2]

2.2. Research Problem

The direct consequence of Chalcedon decisions in 451 A.D. was the so-called Great Schism of the Apostolic Church. The East was called by the West as Monophysite, while the West was described by the East as Diophysite. The rise of the so-called “Monophysitism/Miaphsism” in the East was led by the Copts of Egypt, the largest easter Christian sect. This can be considered

[2] Gabra & Eaton-Krauss, 2006: xiii.

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as a kind of growing provincial movement in the province of Egypt against the gradual intensification of Byzantine imperialism, soon to reach its peak during the reign of Iustinianus (527-65 A.D.). The theological debates between the "Monophysites" in Alexandria and the "Diophysites" in Rome and Constantinople had been overrated as the root of the schism between the Eastern and Western Churches. However, political clouds are in the air. Consequently, some aspects of the fact have been overshadowed throughout history by purely religious considerations. So far, the Copts believe that the differences overstated at Chalcedon and the doctrinal gap gradually widened between the Sees.

After the deposition and exile of the native Egyptian Patriarch Dioscorus, who was involved in the council of Chalcedon, Byzantines installed a successor in the see of Alexandria in the person of Proterius (452-457 A.D.), a docile friend of Byzantine imperialism, who possessed a brutal military force. The Egyptians immediately responded by electing a rival native patriarch, Timothy Aelurus. Consequently, the united bishopric of Alexandria became split between two lines of patriarchal succession. The Melkite (royalist) line was Greek and originated from Constantinople, who were Chalcedonians. The other was "Monophysite", native Egyptians, non-Chalcedonians.

Moreover, during the wars of Romans with the Vandals in North Africa and the Blemyes in the Thebaid, the Alexandrian populace -as an outcome against the rough persecution from imperialism against Copts- seized that opportunity to assassinate the unguarded Proterius, drag his body through the city streets, burn it, and cast his dust to the winds. Timothy momentarily became the only patriarch.

Therefore, when it comes to bloody conflicts, one must pause a bit and take a closer look at the situation beyond the circle. The implications and manifestations of that post-Chalcedonian so-called verbal schism may raise new hidden facts. Thus, I can illustrate the manifestations of that Great Schism in Egypt, from both clerical and popular aspects, in order to be able to get closer to the real reason(s) behind that conflict.

2.3. Research Questions

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Are there any traces of the so-called Chalcedonian or non-Chalcedonian direction that might suggest an impact on Architectural and Artistic life?

Architecturally, where, and how were the architectural layouts of churches and monasteries at that time in Egypt? Monophysite or not? Influenced by Diophysites or not?

Artistic, what are the iconographic characteristics of the depictions, and architectural sculptures? Sole local Egyptian character existed or did universal influences too exist? And what about the probable theological indications of the influences?

What was the role of imperial financial support in architectural and artistic life?

2.4. Research Aim

By conducting this research, I aim to illustrate, by facts, whether this so-called Great Schism was motivated by theological circumstances or pushed by politicians under certain political conditions. The discussion is worth it so one may realize the popular peace covered under the political face of history!

2.5. Significance

Generally, studying both Archaeology and Art History is not only noteworthy for historical research but also has a great deal of community and economic value. Archaeology has the potential to provide new information on the human past, solidify one's ties to their social or national heritage, and provide economic means to locations across the world.

In this case, on one hand, it can be useful not only for the sake of the neglected Coptic Heritage but might be a strong milestone on the way to building a solid cultural bridge between both the Western and Eastern churches. On the other hand, the importance of this research comes from the rarity of research on this topic, which motivates me strongly to approach it. I believe this study will be a brave beginning for more potential research. It will open a significant locked door to a very critical moment of the past.

2.6. Research Methodology

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2.6.1. Previous Research

In comparison to the activity of research into Pharaonic monuments in Egypt, the interest in research into Egyptian ecclesiastical architecture began late. The first professional architect who paid attention to ecclesiastical architecture in Egypt was Somers Clarke (1912 A.D.).[3] Nevertheless, the well-known historian Butler (1884 A.D.) wrote about the architecture of the churches in Egypt.[4] Yet, Architectural surveys of churches in Egypt conducted by both scholars studied individual places and focused mainly on centralized, self-contained settlements, especially monasteries, and their churches. Further studies also were conducted such as the study of Wādi al-Naṭrūn by Evelyn White and Hauser (1926-1933 A.D.), Bawīṭ by Clédat (1904-1916 A.D.), White and Red Monasteries by Monnert de Villard (1925-1927). Also, numerous sites were excavated by Petrie (1907), such as apparent monasteries in south Asyut, namely Dayr al-Balayza, Dayr al-Ganadla, and Dayr Rifa.[5] However, these invaluable studies were more descriptive rather than typological. Thus, the scholarly arena stayed in need of an overall image of the ecclesiastical architecture in Egypt, based on which further researchers can conduct analytical studies.

In his initial typology, Butler states: "The Coptic builders seem to have had no liking for or no knowledge of the cruciform groundplan…. The result is that in the majority of cases the architecture of the Coptic churches is of a mixed type, half-basilican and half-Byzantine: while in other cases there is a type entirely non-basilican yet not entirely Byzantine. But there is no case, as far as I know, of an architecture unleavened by either of these two elements, however variously they enter into combination with each other and with other elements."[6]

Bishop Ṣamuʾīl and architect Badīʿ Ḥabīb (1962-1981 A.D.) created another typology for the designs of the Coptic churches in Egypt. The element on which the typology focused is the church dome and its shape and location within the roof of the church.[7] In 2002, Capuani made a new typological classification. He divides the churches of Egypt into two geographical zones. The first is the Mediterranean coast and Delta, where the church style is mostly influenced by

[3] Grossmann 2014: 177.
[4] Butler 1884: 6-7.
[5] O'Connell: 169.
[6] Butler 1884: 6-7.
[7] Morgan 2016: A3.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

Byzantine architecture. The second is the Nile Valley, where Capuani suggests that the local cultural impact on the church designs is dominant. He further analyzes church designs chronologically as Bishop Ṣamuʾīl and Badīʿ Ḥabīb did but focused on the ground plan design itself rather than the ceiling design.[8] Maged Nicolas Kamel, in 2004, in his Ph.D. dissertation, updated the church typology in more detail, in which he discussed the sanctuary design and the dome roofing system and its positions.[9]

In this study, I tend to benefit from the typology of Peter Grossmann published in 2002, in which he divided churches into two main types: secular churches, and monastic churches. Then, he classified each into types, based on the type of the ground plan, in chronological order. Depending on his long-term surveys, along with the invaluable works of the previous and temporary scholars, Grossmann could achieve a clear architectural typology supported with a descriptive profile for each type, even for each mentioned church, of course, in the light of the amount and quality of available information.[10]

As for art, the study of Coptic art was also neglected for a long time. One of the reasons for this is that early archaeologists showed no interest in Christian antiquities. They regarded Coptic art as a less important field. Even Champollion (the French scholar who interpreted hieroglyphic writing from the famous Rosetta Stone), while conducting excavations at Madīnat Hābu, discovered a fine fifth-century church there but did not even mention it in his official report.[11]

The first scholar to admit the value of Coptic art and try to preserve it was the French Gaston Maspero. In 1881 A.D., when he was the director of the Egyptian Antiquities Service, he appointed aside one of the halls of the Museum of Antiquities, then in the suburb of Būlāq, for the first collection of Coptic art. By encouraging the Egyptologists to launch serious excavation, he could preserve the remains of the monastery of Saint Apollo in Bāwīṭ and the monastery of Saint Jeremias in Saqqāra. Several scholars published descriptions of Coptic churches, carvings,

[8] Capuani 2002: 41-44.
[9] Nicolas K. 2004: 218-220; Morgan 2016: A6-A8.
[10] Grossmann 2002.
[11] Kamil 1987, 1990: 66-67.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

and craftworks, but the professional focus on dated material, and the fact that no churches of the early centuries survived, automatically imposed certain restrictions.[12]

Efforts have been made to classify Coptic art into eras, but this is relatively artificial. While there are phases of cultural production in every culture, this is only visible from a historical perspective. E.R. Dodds states: “The practice of chopping history, into convenient lengths and calling them 'periods' or 'ages' has . . . drawbacks. Strictly speaking, there are no periods in history, only in historians; actual history is a smoothly flowing continuum, a day following a day.”[13]

Thus, studying Coptic art is still an open topic that needs further efforts to be made. In this study, I tend to conduct a theme-based artistic typology for Coptic art between the 5th and 7th centuries.

2.6.2. Historiography

Copts were not very interested in writing history in a chronological form. The earliest known text attempts to write the history of the Coptic Church is dated to 475 A.D., and it is in Sahidic Coptic. It is titled *The Histories of the Holy Church*. It can be divided into two parts: The first part contains the first seven books and is more or less a translation of Eusebius's Church History. The remaining five books are independent of Eusebius's Church History and record the history of the Coptic Church from Patriarch Petrus I (300-311 A.D.) to the year 475 A.D. because it mentions the return of Patriarch Timothy II (557-477 A.D.) from his exile but not his death in 477 A.D.[14] This work is transmitted in an Arabic translation in a medieval source known as the *History of the Patriarchs of the Egyptian Church*. There is another *History of Patriarchs* falsely attributed to Yūsāb, bishop of Fuwah in the Delta. Actually, it was composed in the 18th century by an anonymous author and preserved in a single manuscript in Dayr al-Suryān in Wādī al-Naṭrūn.[15]

It is surprising that the anonymous author of this work of history did not possess much more information about his own *patriarchs* in the first three centuries than Eusebius, otherwise the

[12] Kamil 1987, 1990: 67.
[13] Kamil 1987, 1990: 65; Dodds 1965.
[14] Moawad 2014: 11-12; Brakmann 1974: 129-142; Crum 1902: 68-84.
[15] Moawad 2014: 12.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

Coptic author would have written his own text and would not have been forced to translate the Greek work of Eusebius. This can be explained by two historical observations.[16]

First, the belief that the end of the world would occur in the near future became widespread among Christians in general in the early Church. This mindset led the early Copts to pay no attention to the recording of history, which would normally be devoted to future generations. Second, the Coptic Church in the first three centuries was part of the universal Church and contrasted with the heretics and their schismatic churches. It had no sense of its own identity as a Coptic (Egyptian) Church since the Christian identity was above the individual Coptic identity, which was not existing so far back then. Politically, Egypt was also only a part of the Roman and later the Byzantine Empire. This ecclesiastical and political dependence in which the Coptic Church found itself at that time probably prevented any attempt to write down its own history.[17]

However, another kind of literature flourished in the 4th and 5th centuries, and this kind of literature took place in monasteries. The monks were interested in the life of their predecessors and tried to record their biographies and sayings. Two factors were behind this kind of literature; first, the Edict of Milan 313 A.D. that granted peace and tolerance for the Church and put an end to the persecution; second, the spread of Coptic monasticism in the 4th century wherein the monk replaces the martyr in the spiritual position as an ideal Christian figure.[18]

From the side of historical literature, the way of writing the historical resources was affected by main historical events. The separation of the Coptic Church from the universal church in 451 A.D. and the Arab conquest in 641 A.D. raised the question of identity among Copts, who became a minority in their own land throughout centuries. This minority feeling influenced their way of writing history and created a tendency among Coptic historians and writers to stress their Coptic identity in their writings and to demonstrate the virtues of the Coptic minority to which they belonged.[19]

Another form of history is found in the chronicle work of John of Nikiou “al-Mudabbir”. He was the Coptic bishop of the city Nikiou in Lower Egypt in the second half of the 7th century. The chronicle of John has high importance because he was contemporary with the Arab conquest of

[16] Moawad 2014: 11-12
[17] Moawad 2014: 12.
[18] Moawad 2014: 15.
[19] Moawad 2014: 17.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

Egypt in 641 A.D. His chronicle is the only account of this event from the Coptic point of view by an eyewitness.[20]

Apart from the above-mentioned sources, there were no later attempts to write the history of the Coptic Church. All the works that will be mentioned below represent rewriting of the above-mentioned sources without offering new material.[21]

After the ecclesiastical schism at the Council of Chalcedon in 451 A.D. and particularly after the Arab conquest of Egypt in 641 A.D., the Copts found themselves accused of a heretical faith by other Christians and of unbelief by the Muslims. Therefore, they began to compile writings to defend their own beliefs and to explain the Coptic dogma to the Melkites and Christian beliefs to the Muslims. These apologies are significant historically as they contain historical evidence for the correctness of Coptic beliefs. The best example of such writings is the book by Bishop Sawīrus ibn al-Muqaffaʿ from the 10th century on the councils (Kitāb al-Majāmiʿ) and his work on the Christian creed (Tafsīr al-Amāna).[22]

In the 11th century, an Alexandrian deacon named Mawhūb ibn Manṣūr ibn Mufarrij decided to collect the biographies of the patriarchs from Apostle Mark to Patriarch Shenuda II (1032-1046 A.D.) and translated them into Arabic with the assistance of another deacon named Mikhaʾīl ibn Badīr from Damanhūr in the Delta. The work of Mawhūb was continued by other known and anonymous authors until the beginning of the 20th century.[23]

The Ayyubid (1171-1250 A.D.) and Mamluk (1250-1517 A.D.) periods were the golden age of Islamic historiography. Most of the notable Muslim historians like Ibn al-Athīr, Ibn al-Jawzī, Abū al-Fidāʾ, al-Maqrīzī, and Ibn Ṭaghrī Birdī flourished in that period.[24]

In the 13th century, the Coptic Abū Shākir Buṭrus ibn al-Raḥīb (1210-1290 A.D.) wrote a historical work. The main purpose of this work was to prove the correctness of the Coptic feasts compared to their dates according to the Melkite Church. The information he mentions concerning the Alexandrian patriarchs is scant and derived from the *History of Patriarchs*. Contemporary to Ibn al-Raḥīb, another author named al-Makīn was interested in world history.

[20] Moawad 2014: 13; Butler 1902: 6-7.
[21] Moawad 2014: 13.
[22] Moawad 2014: 16-17.
[23] Moawad 2014: 12.
[24] Moawad 2014: 14.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

He composed a world history known as al-Majmūʿ al-Mubārak. The work of al-Makīn was continued by al-Mufaḍḍal ibn Abi-l-Faḍā'il.[25]

However, in all the historical and semi-historical writings from Coptic Egypt, we lack the relationship and connection to pre-Christian Egypt. The Coptic historians feel that they were unconnected to their non-Christian ancestors and deal with them in their writings as a foreign side. A good example is the chronicle of John of Nikiou and how he describes Pharaonic Egypt and the exodus of Israel from Egypt.[26]

2.6.3. Architectural Analysis

The methodology of the architectural analysis in this research tends to benefit from the architectural typology created by Peter Grossmann and will employ one of the digital archaeology techniques, namely data analysis using the programming language Python.

To utilize this methodology successfully, I had to overcome two challenges: data collection and data analysis. As for data analysis, executing the process using the library named 'Pandas' in the programming language 'Python' facilitated obtaining reliable, accurate results depending on the input which is the outcome of data collection. Regarding collecting the data, after exploring the architectural typological database, it was easier to find out the specifications of each type, church, or region. Then, my role was to combine the available information to recognize facts and to conclude characteristics and influences. Remarkably, there are no sharp barriers between different types, as the majority of the architectural ground plans and designs combine different influences. However, the digital data analysis technique facilitated solving this dilemma.

2.6.4. Iconographic Analysis

With the guidance of Dr. Péter Langó, and using the resources as well as recommendations of Prof. Gawdat Gabra, an iconographic typology was created by the author. There were certain obstacles. It is worth mentioning that dealing with the dating of the examined artifacts was challenging. In that sphere, on the sidelines of the 12th International Congress of Coptic Studies, Brussels, in July 2022, I have been recommended by Dr. Gertrud J.M. van Loon and Prof. Youhanna N. Youssef to avoid the challenge of seeking artifacts that are dated to a short period

[25] Moawad 2014: 14.
[26] Charles 1916: 27-29; Moawad 2014: 18.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

between two exact dates, to be able to obtain correct, reliable, and realistic results, since it is hard to define certain pieces of art between the very precise period between exactly 451 A.D. and 641 A.D. Elizabeth S. Bolman states: "Egyptian Christian paintings are extremely difficult to date, especially those executed before the medieval period … Art historians have tended to group the bulk of the evidence into a general sixth-to seventh- and sometimes eighth-century period, with little discussion."[27] One more obstacle confronted me in this part of the research. For creating a theme-based iconographic typology, it is almost impossible to find sharp barriers between various types. Indeed, most of the examples combine diverse elements that differ in type, origin, and religious insignia. As an indication, it is worth mentioning the monk Phocas, from the 6th century, who used to take communion in both churches in Kellia, Chalcedonian, and non-Chalcedonian.[28] To overcome the first challenge, I conducted both a typology and analysis of examples, generally, dating between the 5th and 7th centuries. To enhance reliable results for the analysis that can be distorted due to the second challenge, I am employing digital data analysis techniques, using the library named 'Pandas' of the programming language 'Python'.

[27] Bolman 2016 b: 163; Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006: 58-60, 65-67, 72-73; Badawy 1978: 247; Bourguet 1971: 138-141; Wessel 1965: 166-181.
[28] Guillaumont 1969: 8-9.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

III. GEOGRAPHICAL SETTING

Egypt is one of the oldest countries in the world. It has at least 5,000 years of recorded history. Egypt is centrally located in relation to other concentrated population centers in Europe, Asia, and Africa. Egypt occupies the northeast corner of Africa or the land between the Red Sea and the Mediterranean Sea *(fig. A)*. It was suggested that its existence is bound up by the River Nile; without the river, almost all the land would be deserted, and only a few people would live there. In the words of the ancient Greek historian Herodotus, "Egypt is the gift of the Nile.". The country can be divided into five regions: the Nile River Valley (Upper Egypt, Middle Egypt, and Lower Egypt), the Nile Delta, the Western Desert, the Eastern Desert, and the Sinai Peninsula. River floods occur annually. Thus, the Egyptian people learned how to build dams, weirs, embankments, and basins, channeling and storing the river waters to facilitate raising their crops. The Nile Delta lies along Egypt's northern coast, where the river empties into the Mediterranean Sea.

The Western Desert constitutes more than two-thirds of Egypt's total land area. The land is basically a low plateau, mainly sandstone in the south, some limestone in the north, and covered by the Great Sand Sea in its western half. Some underground strata contain large quantities of water that have not yet been fully exploited. Five oases lie in depressions watered by springs: Sīwa, Baḥriyya, Farafra, Dakhla, and Kharga. The Eastern Desert does not resemble its Western counterpart. It consists mainly of elevated and mostly rugged mountains paralleling the Red Sea coast. The western and northern hills contain a lower, limestone plateau. The loftiest of the southern mountains is more than 7,000 feet (2,000 m) above sea level. This region contains the very rare stone called "porphyry" which was minded anciently by Romans.

Many people think of the triangular Sinai Peninsula as belonging more to Asia than to Africa, but its mountainous south is closely related to the Red Sea hills, from which it was separated by the geological faults that form the Gulf of Suez. Southern Sinai is especially renowned for Jabal Katrīn (Mountain of Saint Catherine, the site of the famous Greek Orthodox monastery of that name) and Jabal Mūsa, popularly called Sinai Mountain.[29]

[29] Goldschmidt 2008: 1-7.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

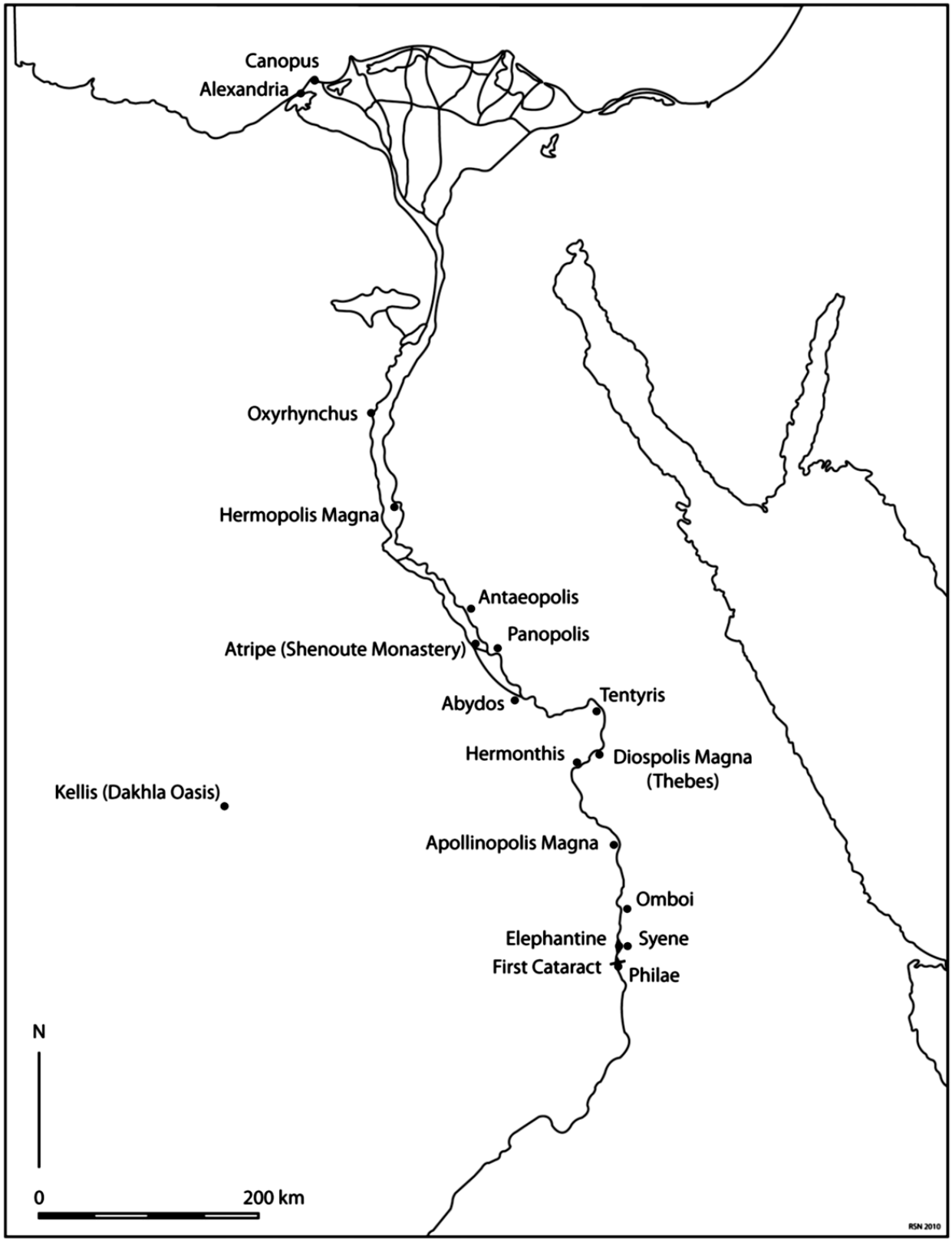


Figure A. Map of Egypt (Boman 1996, fig. 1)

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

IV. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

This period is one of the most important historical curves in the history of Egypt. The importance of this era is that it began with the consequences of the Council of Chalcedon 451 A.D. and ended with the Arab conquest of 641 A.D. The second half of the 5th century and up to the middle of the 7th century is marked by schism which followed the Council of Chalcedon 451 A.D. Actually, the Churches (Orthodox and Catholic) agreed that the schism was verbal and without the political scheming would never have happened. [30] The East was defined by the West as Monophysite, while the West was described by the East as Diophysite. The rise of the so-called "Monophysitism" in the East was led by the Copts of Egypt, the most numerous Easter Christian denomination. This was the outward expression of the growing provincial trends in that province against the increasing pressure of Byzantine imperialism. The theological controversies between the "Monophysites" in Alexandria and the "Diophysites" in Rome and Constantinople have been overrated as the root of the schism between the Eastern and Western Churches. Consequently, the historical factors have suffered, and some aspects of the fact have been overshadowed by purely religious considerations. As I have mentioned, so far, the Copts hold the view that the differences magnified at Chalcedon and after the doctrinal gap widened between the Sees. [31]

INITIATION OF A CONFLICT

Let's discuss the beginnings of the conflict. Back in days to 431 A.D., at Ephesus, Cyrillus I of Alexandria took the lead to confront the heresy of Nestorius of Constantinople that advocated the idea of unity according to will or good pleasure between the two natures and two hypostases within the person of Christ. He used the term "conjunction" rather than Cyrillus's preferred term "union" when speaking about the unity within Christ. Instead of *Theotokos,* he preferred the use of Christotokos! "Birth giver of Christ" which implied that the Virgin Mary gave birth to Jesus, a separate human hypostasis that came to be conjoined with the hypostasis of the Logos at the time of the Incarnation. This Nestorian vision implied that the unity is between two hypostases, one of the divine Logos and the other of a human being. Two different hypostases imply two sons and

[30] Youssef 2014: 25; see more in Bonner 1989; Orlandi 1968.
[31] Atiya 1968: 69-71; see more on Foord 1911; Boak 1921; Amirav 2015; Amirav 2010.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

two activities. This division led Cyrillus to accuse Nestorius of asserting two sons and thus a quaternary rather than a trinity for the Godhead. [32]

A few years later, as a reaction opposing this Nestorian heresy, Eutyches (a presbyter and archimandrite at Constantinople) exaggerated in defending the idea of one nature, but his statement was different from Cyrillus's one; Eutyches stated that "The human nature has melted in the Godhead just as a drop of vinegar melts in the ocean. That is, the two natures have mixed together into one". [33] However, I am not about discussing theological issues, especially since there are some points of views state that Eutyches is not certainly a heretic, and his statements were said to be said by others not him.[34] Nevertheless, this point of view cannot assure that he was not a heretic, particularly since he tended not to reply obviously to the sudden questions at the council of 448 A.D. He did not tend even to discuss or defend his thoughts.[35] Also while the ecclesiastical atmosphere was clouded by the disagreement between the Alexandrian side and his Antiochian counterpart, Eutyches was very biased towards the Alexandrians.[36] However, Eutyches was summoned to the council of 448 A.D., where he was condemned and deposed, due to personal issues between him and his friend and rival Eusebius the bishop of Dorilim, covered by theological reason.[37] It worth to mention that through his baptismal son (who is his nephew) Chrysaphius, chief of staff of the royal court, Eutyches was able to reach the court.[38] Therefore, the emperor Theodosius II interfered by himself later, and summoned patriarch Dioscorus from Alexandria in order to manage an ecumenical council, Ephesus 449 A.D.

Patriarch Dioscorus who controlled the second Council of Ephesus in 449 A.D., deposed the patriarchs of Antioch and Constantinople and acquitted Eutyches. In fact, regarding the theological dispute between the Alexandrians and the Antiochians, the emperor was on the same ideology as patriarch Dioscorus. Apparently, the "Mission and Vision" of the council were defined in advance. Patriarch Dioscorus did neither discussed Eutyches enough around what had been attributed to him of heretic thoughts nor listened to Patriarch Flavianus of Constantinople

[32] Farag 2014: 48-50.
[33] Samuel 1977:14-15; see more in Arnold & Hooghe 1701.
[34] Samuel 1977: 15-16; Jalland 1941: 216, 217.
[35] Samuel 1977: 54-61; see more in Schwartz 1933: 141-552; Schwartz 1929: 34.
[36] Samuel 1977: 48.
[37] Samuel 1977: 50; Schwartz 1933: 124.
[38] Samuel 1977:14-15.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

and Eusebius. Of course, he was not alone, but he was leading the council.[39] Grillmeier states that the second council of Ephesus in 449 A.D. made a mistake by acquitting Eutyches.[40] From another aspect, one of the most harmful allegations against Pope Dioscorus is the omission of reading Leo's Tome.[41] Anyway, Pope Leo I had never given up pressuring the royal court in the sake of revenge. He considered it very humiliating behavior. Pope Leo I wrote two times to Theodosius II expressing his refusal to the council, but Theodosius did not pay any attention to his messages. The situation coincided with the visit of the Western emperor Valentinianus III - with his mother and his wife- to Rome, so he seized the opportunity to influence them stating that by that behavior the See of St. Petrus has been humiliated. But Theodosius II replied that Leo's story about the council is incorrect. However, shortly, in July 449 A.D., Theodosius II died. The following emperor Marcianus, who was crowned after his marriage to Pulcheria (sister of Theodosius II, who had old enmity with Eutyches's nephew), agreed with Leo's vision and decided to conduct the council of Chalcedon in 451 A.D.[42]

We are currently facing the consequences of the previous council of Ephesus 449 A.D. The power of the Egyptian church was challenged two years later when these rulings were repudiated at the 451 A.D. Council of Chalcedon. The Council's decision that Christ possessed two natures, divine and human, but joined in one person, was rejected by the majority of theologians in Egypt, Syria, and Armenia, who believed that this was too similar to the ideas of Nestorius. Instead, they remained faithful to the earlier definition given by Patriarch Cyrillus the "single nature of the Word of God made flesh".[43] As a consequence, the Church in Egypt adheres solely to decisions made at the first three of these ecumenical councils. The decision to depose and exile Patriarch Dioscorus, which was taken at Chalcedon, had severe repercussions not only for the universal Church but also for the Church in Egypt in particular. For the Egyptian side, while differences over doctrine were at the forefront of the schism, other non-theological factors were also relevant. The deposition of their patriarch was viewed as a national humiliation, especially since Egyptian theologians had been extremely active in the universal Church. Resentment at Byzantine dominance and heavy taxation also played their part. It is no coincidence that the three

[39] Samuel 1977: 70-77; see more in Grillmeier & Bacht 1954.
[40] Grillmeier & Hainthaler 1965: 458; Samuel 1977:80.
[41] Samuel 1977: 83; Schwartz 1933: 40.
[42] Samuel 1977: 93- 96; Schwartz 1933: 5-10.
[43] Pacini 1998: 348.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

Churches formed after Chalcedon developed along national lines (Coptic Orthodox, Syrian Orthodox, and Armenian Apostolic) and were all located at the periphery of the Byzantine (or Eastern Roman) Empire. Indeed, Maila suggests that the theological disputes were actually a "thin veil for cultural clashes".[44]

LATE ROMAN EMPIRE

For a better understanding of this particular era, and before illustrating and discussing the narratives, events, and consequences of the council of Chalcedon in this chapter, it is significant to shed the light on the political and cultural circumstances of the Late Roman Empire. In the 4th century, the Church had to solve two problems; one was political and the other theological. The political problem was to determine the relation of the Church to the Empire; the theological problem was to answer the Christological question. By the end of the fourth century, both these questions have not been sufficiently answered, which led to the emergence of new problems in the fifth century.[45]

Empire and Church

Constantius (son of Constantinus the Great) conceived a political idea, the idea of a close union between the Empire and the Church, but of such a kind that the Church should be entirely dependent on the emperor. He wished to control everything under imperial absolutism. In order to realize his idea, it was desirable to produce a unity in the Church itself, which was hard due to the schism caused by Arius's heresy. Constantius' tended to the view that the Son was of like essence (homoiousios) with the Father, a compromise between the homoousios (of the same essence) of Athanasius and the heterousios (of other essence) of Arius. This intermediate formula could not stand. It was merely a trial to avoid difficulty, but Constantius took this approach, despite much opposition, under his own influence. His policy was further characterized by his persecution of Athanasius, whose stability and power in the Church was an obstacle in the way of that designed unification. However, Gratianus and Theodosius the Great completed the union of the Church with the Empire. Their edict in 380 A.D. officially adopted Athanasianism, the creed of Damasus, bishop of Rome; and the councils of 381 A.D. (at Constantinople and

[44] Pacini 1998: 31; See more in Foord 1911.
[45] Bury 1889:184.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

Aqnileia) defined one creed for the universal Church.[46] The historian Peter Brown comments: "The laws of the emperors showed that they took their religious duties with deadly seriousness and that they were open to the petitions of those who did the same." [47] For instance, "In the *Theodosian Code*, extracts from the laws issued from the reign of Constantius to that of Theodosius II were arranged in chronological order. They communicated a rising sense of governmental certainty. There was to be little place, in the new Roman order, for heresy, schism, or Judaism, and no place at all for "the error of stupid paganism."." [48]

The defeat of Eugenius led to a combination between the Church and State, and the penance of Tlieodosius at Milan indicated that if the Church was not to be first, at least it was not to be second. Intolerance signified that period, and heretics were esteemed as guilty and as dangerous as pagans. The last spark of religious freedom was in the law of Valentinianus I in favor of Arians, passed in 386.[49]

Thus, at the end of the fourth century, the Roman Empire was Christian, and at the same time, the Church had asserted its independence. The bishop of Rome, as the successor of St. Petrus, was the head of the Church. His power was increased because of the weakness of the Empire in the West. So, he could confirm his independence, and he was even quite free from Constantinopolitan intervention. On the other hand, the geographical distance from Constantinople played a role in rendering the Patriarch of Constantinople and the eastern churches independent of the bishop of Rome. The oriental and occidental churches tended to separate along with the political systems to which they belonged. Actually, this tendency was the desire of the Patriarch of Constantinople, which in the fifth century became the most important city in the world, to free himself from the jurisdiction of Rome. In order to do so, he counted on the power of the emperor, whose ecclesiastical authority was further increased by the fact that his capital was the Patriarch's residence, whereas the independence of the bishop of Rome was supported by the fact that the emperors resided at Milan or Ravenna.[50]

[46] Bury 1889:184-185; Boak 1921: 462-464, 467; See more in Foord 1911.
[47] Brown 2013: 75; see more in Harries 1999.
[48] Brown 2013: 75; see more in Humfress 2000: 125-147.
[49] Bury1889: 186; Boak 1921: 467.
[50] Bury 1889: 186; Boak 1921: 464-466; See more in Foord 1911.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

As a result, in the West, the ecclesiastical hierarchy was independent in spiritual matters, and afterwards attained secular power. While in the East, the Church and the Empire were closely allied. The Church was directly supported by the emperor. The emperor was the head of the three hierarchies, the Church, the army, and the civil service. And his position depended on the loyalty of all three. The consent of the Church was officially recognized as a condition of elevation to the throne by the introduction of the ceremony of coronation. Leo I was the first Emperor to be crowned by the Patriarch.[51]

Iustinianus strove to secure a united Christian church within the empire. Thus, he did not hesitate to use his absolute power by interfering in both religious and secular affairs. That was formally admitted by the synod of 536 A.D., which declared that "Nothing whatsoever may occur in the church contrary to the wishes and orders of the emperor." The reconciliation with Rome in 519 A.D., which was necessary for the recovery of the West, had refused the Monophysites, who were predominant in Egypt, Syria, and Mesopotamia, especially among the lower classes of society. For the rest of his reign, Iustinianus strove to heal this conflict. But his policy was quite influenced by Theodora, who was personally sympathetic with the Monophysites and saw the danger to the empire in the continued hostility of the eastern peoples. An ecumenical council summoned by him to Constantinople in 553 A.D. accepted a formula of belief, upon which he wanted both dyophysites and monophysites to unite. Pope Vergilius was forced to submit to Iustinianus's will, but the clergy of Italy and Africa regarded the new doctrine as heretical and even condemned it. Iustinianus couldn't reach his desire because the Monophysites refused his view. A final edict, issued in 565, A.D. went still further in its recognition of the doctrines of this sect, but the emperor's death forestalled its enforcement and saved the orthodox clergy from the alternative of submission or persecution.[52]

Territorial Ambitions

Now I can conclude the motivations behind the communal sensitivity which was translated sometimes into aggression and refusal of imperial interventions in religious conflicts. Iustinianus died on 14 November, 565 A. D. and left the empire completely exhausted by the conquest of the western provinces. The domestic conflict between Greeks and Romans, which was gradually

[51] Bury 1889: 186-187; See more in Foord 1911; Török 1988.
[52] Boak 1921: 456-457; See more in Foord 1911; Török 1988.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

increasing, was not to be solved through an official church union. From another aspect, the religious policy caused the expansion of territorial ambitions among the native populations of Syria and Egypt and led to further separation from the empire. Moreover, within the government of the provinces, Iustinianus initiated the division of civil and military authority, which was so marked a feature of Diocletianus's organization. In this way, the way was paved for Diocletianus's approach toward the military districts, within which the military commanders were at the summit of the civil government. Additionally, it was under his reign also that the culture of the silkworm was introduced into the empire by monks, who had lived in China, learned the secrets of this art, and brought some eggs of the silkworm out of the country concealed in hollow canes. Iustinianus monopolized the manufacture of silk goods. The introduction of the silkworm made this trade independent of the importation of raw silk from the Orient.[53] That led to more isolation from the east.

Romans under pressure

From another aspect, the Roman Empire was under political and militaria serious pressure, whether externally or internally, the Western as well as the Eastern Empire. For instance, neither the East nor the West could resist the final arrival in Europe of the Huns from Asia, who wreaked havoc until turned back by the death of their king Attila in A.D. 454.[54]

The barbarians and the local aristocracies they dealt with already had many generations of experience in working with Roman civilians. Their leaders and the local aristocracies themselves were actually a consequence of the achievements of the new empire of Constantius and his successors. The Roman Empire of the fourth century needed loyal soldiers. They often preferred those soldiers who did not share the values and inhibitions of the traditional landowning aristocracy. Soldiers were encouraged to be a class apart, to remain alien and aloof. Thus, the imperial armies had been man-powered by foreigners for over a century. They were recruited from frontiers, where "Romans" and "barbarians" were almost indistinguishable, and even from across the border, drawing directly on Germanic tribes. The success of such barbarians within the Roman armies led to the more recently arrived groups of barbarian warriors, such as Visigoths,

[53] Boak 1921: 457-458; see more in Foord 1911; also see more on the southern frontiers in Török 1988.
[54] Fagan 2003: 156; see more in Foord 1911; Cameron 1993; Török 1988.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

Burgundians, Vandals, and Saxons, who took over Spain, Gaul, North Africa, and Britain in the 5th century.[55]

The period between 395 A.D. and 493 A.D. is marked by the complete decline of the Roman resistance to barbarian invasions, and the occupation of the western provinces and Italy itself by the Germanic troops. The position of Roman and barbarian is reversed. The power passed from the Roman officials to the Germanic kings. It went even further. A barbarian soldier established a Germanic kingdom in Italy. But while the Western empire could not resist the Germanic invaders, the eastern empire was able to resist both foreign invasions and the ambitions of its barbarian generals. This is partly due to the greater solidarity and vitality of the Hellenic civilization of the eastern provinces, and the military strength of the population, particularly in Asia Minor. The bureaucracy played a big role in controlling the generals by the division of the supreme military authority among several masters of the soldiers. The western empire was thus in need of support from the eastern empire. Western emperors on several occasions were nominated, and sometimes given the sanction of legitimacy, by those in the East.[56]

The year of the death of Theodosius the Great (450 A.D.) witnessed the invasion of the Huns, who destroyed Syria and Asia Minor, as well as the destruction of the Balkan peninsula by Visigoths under Alaric. The absence of the eastern troops in Italy prevented the government from offering any effective opposition to either attacker. And when Stilicho came to rescue from Italy, the trial ended with an order from the emperor to Stilicho to withdraw. Alternatively, the emperor sent the troops of the East to Constantinople. This order resulted in the death of Rufinus, who was killed by the returning soldiers at the orders of their commander, the Goth Gainas. The grand-chamberlain Eutropius, who had been an enemy of Rufinus, convinced Arcadius to marry Eudoxia, daughter of a Frankish chief, instead of the daughter of Rufinus. After the fall of Eutropius, Gainas sought to play the role of Stilicho in the East. He was supported by empress Eudoxia, who was against the domination of the chamberlain. But Gainas did not long retain his power. He fought with the empress. In addition, the population of the capital was against him because he was an Arian. Later soon, in a massacre of the Goths in Constantinople, and with the aid of a loyal Goth Fravitta, Gainas was driven north of the Danube, where he was killed by the

[55] Brown 2013: 101-102; see more in Leyser 2000; also see more on the southern frontiers in Török 1988.
[56] Boak 1921: 420-421; See more in Foord 1911; also see more on the southern frontiers in Török 1988.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

Huns in 400 A.D. The influence of Eudoxia was now vital. However, the bishop of Constantinople, John Chrysostom expressed his refusal to the extravagance and dissipation of the society of the court and blamed the empress in particular. Ultimately, Eudoxia was able to have him deposed from his See in 404 A.D., a few months before his death. Four years later, Arcadius died and left the empire to his eight-year-old son Theodosius II.[57]

At the beginning of the reign of Theodosius II (408-450 A.D.), Anthemius was at the top of the government and was successful during the last years of Arcadius. In 414, the emperor's elder sister, Pulcheria, was made regent and took the title of Augusta. She had a strong personality, and she could dominate the emperor who lacked independence of character and power under her influence for many years. In 421, Pulcheria selected a wife for Theodosius, Eudocia, the daughter of an Athenian sophist. After a few years, contrasts arose between the empress and her sister-in-law which led to Pulcheria's withdrawal from the court, after 431 AD. But about 440 A.D., Eudocia lost her influence over the emperor. She was compelled to retire from Constantinople and reside in Jerusalem, where she lived until her death in 460 A.D. Theodosius II loses his full power again. During the reign of Theodosius II, the eastern empire declined as a result of the war with Persia and the invasions of the Huns. The Persian war in 421 A.D., which lasted one year, before their victory, was marked by the persecution of the Christians. A second war against Persians ended with a Persian defeat in 442 A.D. But with the Huns, the Romans were not so successful. In 434 A.D., king Rua, the ruler of the Huns in the Hungarian plain, could force the empire the payment of an annual tribute to secure immunity from invasion. At the accession of Attila and his brother in 433 A.D., this tribute was raised to 700 pounds of gold and the Romans were forbidden to give shelter to the enemies of the Huns. But the payment of tribute did not guarantee a sense of peace with Attila, who was insisting on draining the wealth of the empire and reducing it completely. In 441–443 A.D., the Huns defeated the imperial armies in the Balkan provinces. An indemnity of 6000 pounds of gold was taken by force and the annual payment increased to 2100 pounds. Another harsh raid occurred in 447 A.D. The empire could offer no resistance, so Chrysapius plotted the assassination of Attila, but the plot was detected. Attila claimed to regard himself as the overlord of Theodosius. In 438 A.D., the Theodosian code was published, a collection of imperial edicts which constituted the

[57] Boak 1921: 432-433; Bury 1889: 107-122; See more in Foord 1911; also see more on the southern frontiers in Török 1988.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

administrative law of the empire, and which was accepted in the West as well as in the East. Theodosius died in 450 A.D., without assigning a successor.[58]

Augusta Pulcheria had chosen the new emperor herself. She selected Marcianus, an officer, to whom she got married. Marcianus (450-457 A.D.) proved himself a successful ruler. He refused to continue the indemnity to Attila. It was he who permitted the Ostrogoths to settle as foederati in Pannonia (454 A. D.), which probably affected the power of Atilla until his death.[59]

After the death of Marcianus in 457 A.D., the imperial authority was given to Leo I (457-474 A.D.), an officer of Dacian origin. His appointment was due to Alan Aspar, one of the lords of the soldiers, whose power in the East rivaled that of Ricimer in the West. But Leo did not want to be the puppet of the powerful general, whose loyalty he eventually doubted. To counterbalance the Gothic mercenaries and foederati, the mainstay of Aspar's power, he enlisted the Isaurians, the warlike mountain dwellers of southern Anatolia who had opposed the empire under Arcadius and Theodosius. The emperor's eldest daughter was married to Zeno, an Isaurian, who was appointed commander-in-chief of the soldiers in the Orient. In 470 A.D., however, Aspar was still strong enough to force Leo to give his second daughter's hand to his son Leontius and appoint him Caesar. But the following year, when Zeno returned to Constantinople, Alan and his eldest sons were treacherously murdered in the palace. In 473 A.D. Leo I took his grandson, also called Leo II (473-474 A.D.), Zeno's son, as his colleague and designated successor. The elder Leo's death occurred in early 474 A.D., and the younger son crowned his father Zeno as co-emperor. When Leo II died before the end of the same year, Zeno became the sole ruler.[60]

Under the reign of Zeno (474-491 A.D.), religious challenge played a dynamic role in the political scene. The reign of Zeno was an almost uninterrupted struggle against usurpers and revolting Gothic foederati. In 474 A.D. occurred an outbreak of the latter led by their king Theodoric the son of Triarius, called Strabo or “the Squinter,” who ruled over the Goths settled in Thrace as a master of the soldiers of the empire. Before this revolt was over, the unpopularity of the Isaurians induced Basiliscus, the brother-in-law of Leo I, to plot to seize the throne for

[58] Boak 1921: 433-435; Bury 1889: 123-136; See more in Foord 1911; Török 1988.
[59] Boak 1921: 435; Bury1889: 123-136; See more in Foord 1911; Török 1988.
[60] Boak 1921: 435, 436; Bury 1889: 123-136, 227-233; See more in Foord 1911; Török 1988.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

himself. He was supported by his sister, the ex-empress Verina, and Illus, the chief Isaurian officer in Zeno's service. The conspirators seized Constantinople and proclaimed Basiliscus emperor (475 A. D.). But his heretical religious views aroused strong opposition, and he was deserted by both Verina and Illus. However, the revolts were easily put down by taking the leaders of the revolt and putting them to death (488 A.D.). Zeno re-entered the capital and Basiliscus was executed. Eventually, with the departure of the Goths, the eastern empire was delivered from the danger of Germanic domination. Zeno died in April, 491 A.D.[61]

However, there were still internal and external challenges. Internal: The revolts had not yet been completely put down, and the consequences of the religious issues had not yet been finally resolved. For example, an Isaurian revolt in southern Asia Minor was not put down until 498 A.D., during the reign of Anastasius (491-518 AD). Moreover, despite the justice and efficiency of his administration, the reign of Anastasius was marked by several popular uprisings in Constantinople and also in other cities of the empire. The cause lay in his sympathy for the Monophysite doctrine. In 512 A.D., the appointment of a Monophysite bishop in Constantinople triggered a serious rebellion that almost cost Anastasius the throne. Externally, new enemies appeared on the Danubian frontier in place of the Goths: the Slavic Getae and the Bulgarians, who overran the depopulated provinces of the northern Balkan peninsula. Their devastation was so great, and the imperial troops could not keep them at bay that Anastasius was forced to build a wall across the peninsula on which Constantinople stands to protect the capital. Anastasius also had to contend with a severe Persian war that began with an invasion of Roman Armenia and Mesopotamia by King Kawad in 502 AD.[62]

At that time, the passing of Italy and the western provinces under the sway of Germanic kings was accomplished by the settlement of large numbers of barbarians in the conquered territories. The serious challenge of the Germanic groups was at the top of the scene. The Roman Empire struggled with a severe chain of brutal conflicts, particularly on the frontiers. Not only Germanic groups like Visigoths, Vandals, and Ostrogoths were able to prevent the Roman emperors from sleeping, but also the expansion of the Franks played a harsh role too.[63]

[61] Boak 1921: 436-437; Bury 1889: 250-260; See more in Foord 1911; Török 1988.
[62] Boak 1921: 437-438; Bury 1889: 290-303; See more in Foord 1911; Török 1988.
[63] Boak 1921: 440-446; See more in Foord 1911; Török 1988.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

Iustinianus, the last native Latin emperor, pursued with his imperial policy the goal of winning back the lands of the Western Empire from their Germanic rulers and restoring imperial unity in the person of the Eastern Emperor. Achieving unity of faith throughout the Christian world was no less important to him than political unity: one empire, one church, was his motto. But he left the empire exhausted.[64]

The shaky throne of Phocas (602-610) faltered at this time and fell at the feet of a new usurper of the imperial crown: Heraclius, a Byzantine general of the African armies, who crossed the Mediterranean and deposed his adversary in 610. Meanwhile, Persian armies under Chosroes Parviz invaded the Byzantine Asian provinces of Syria and Palestine. By the time Heraclius ascended the throne (610-41), Chosroes was within sight of the great city of Antioch. In 613 he invaded Damascus, and in 614 he conquered Jerusalem, taking with him the Holy Cross and the Instruments of the Passion, which he presented to his Christian Jacobite queen Shirin in his capital, Ctesiphon. In 619, while one of his contingents was advancing toward the Bosporus, another invaded Egypt, which the Persians held for about ten years. The situation of the empire was pitiful, and all seemed lost. While Heraclitus contemplated fleeing to Carthage, the Byzantine patriarch Sergius placed his church treasury at the emperor's disposal to fight the first war of the cross before the crucifixion. By a bold strategy, Heraclius led his armies across the Mediterranean and landed on the shores of the Gulf of Alexandretta in 622, where he intercepted the Persian armies. The following year he sailed across the Black Sea to Trebizond and from there surprised the Sassanid headquarters at Ganzak. Thus, the Persians were forced to withdraw from Egypt in 627.[65]

After illustrating the circumstances of the decline of the Late Roman Empire, it is undoubtedly obvious that the empire was facing critical and serious challenges, particularly on the frontiers, which consequently reflected on the internal affairs of the empire. Religious conflicts were a huge obstacle in the face of such an emperor who wanted to save the throne and widen the empire. These religious struggles led to rebellions, which exhausted the army and negatively affected the imperial cultural influence, especially in the provinces on the borders of the empire, such as Egypt, Syria, and Armenia. That is why those conflicts took the domestic form of

[64] Boak 1921: 447; See more in Foord 1911; Török 1988.
[65] Atiya 1968: 75; Török 1988.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

conflict between the people of such a province and the empire itself. Not only due to that reason but also due to the heavy taxes that were obliged to the people of those provinces, particularly within their dissatisfaction with the imperial policies, which has been understood as disrespect to their nationals.

In light of this background, I am about to review the Chalcedonian council and its consequences in more detail.

COUNCIL OF CHALCEDON 451 A.D.

Undoubtedly Emperor Marcianus inherited the ecclesiastical unrest which typified the church during the reign of his predecessor and, like Theodosius II, Marcianus saw it as his duty to lend his imperial authority to try and restore ecclesiastical unity. The Council of Chalcedon, convened in 451, was in many crucial aspects a direct continuum of the previous two church Councils, discussed above. On this occasion, the adherents of the two-nature Christology sought to overturn the outcome of Ephesus II 449.[66] In the previous council, Pope Dioscorus was the chairman and the person controlling the proceedings. However, at Chalcedon, things changed: control over the proceedings was entrusted to the hands of an imperial official, Anatolius (magister militum per orientem). The superiority of the imperial administration, but also the symbiosis between church and empire came to the fore most ostentatiously and theatrically.[67]

On September 1st 451 several ecclesiastical delegations arrived at the city of Nicaea in order to participate in the council, but imperial orders were changed to continue their way to Chalcedon. The reason behind that change was the attack of Huns in Illyricum. Thus, Marcianus changed the location from Nicaea, which is about 60 miles away from the capital, to Chalcedon, which was nearer to the capital, in order to be able to control the council while he was proceeding with his rule's duties. Because he wanted to manage the council against Eutyches.[68]

The council was conducted at the church of St. Euphemia. In the first session on 8th October, the seats of the imperial officials were settled directly in front of the altar. On both the right and left sides, the seats of the participating delegations were settled. On the left side, the Roman

[66] Amirav 2015: 37-38; see more in Amirav 2010; Price & Gaddis 2007; Davis 1990.
[67] Amirav 2015: 41; see more in Amirav 2010; Price & Gaddis 2007; Davis 1990.
[68] Samuel 1977: 99; Jalland 1941: 288; see more in Davis 1990.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

delegation, then Anatolius the bishop of Constantinople, then Maximus the bishop of Antioch, then the rest of the delegations from East and Pontus and Thrace. On the right side, Dioscorus the patriarch of Alexandria, Juvinal the bishop of Jerusalem, then the rest of the Egyptian delegation in addition to the delegations of Illyricum and Palestine. In the middle, the Holly Gospel was placed.[69]

Shortly, once the participants had seated, the delegate of Rome Paschasinus requested to exclude Dioscorus according to the orders of the bishop of Rome. In the beginning, the imperial officials did not agree. However, after the debates, the Romans requested Dioscorus leave his seat and to seat on the seat of condemnation in the middle. Both Romans and Eusebius accused Dioscorus, but they couldn't convince the imperial officials until then. The Roman delegates said that Dioscorus conducted the council without permission from the Pope of Rome, while Eusebius said that he humiliated him and oppressed Flavianus.[70] *V. C. Samuel* argues that these condemnations are incorrect, particularly since the emperor Theodosius II was who ordered to conduct the council, and that these condemnations supposed to be against a council not against a person, and continued: Pope Leo I planned with his disciples in the East to split Dioscorus from his partners and considering him responsible lonely for the decisions of the council of Ephesus.[71] Returning to the council events, as a reply; Dioscorus requested to read the faith first, but the imperial officials refused his request saying that because the accusations against him are personal ones, then they should be investigated before the problem of faith. Then, the reports of sessions of the council of Ephesus II were allowed to be read, which also contained the reports of the session of the Council of 448.[72]

Once Dioscorus had rejected his being accused alone, without his partners in the council, another accusation emerged when the eastern team confirmed that only Dioscorus is responsible for the decisions of the council, concerning the narrative of "the blank papers". They said that they had been forced to sign blank papers, in which Dioscorus wrote down his decisions later. Dioscorus defended that each delegate wrote his report by his own notary writer and asked them to check if

[69] Samuel 1977: 100; Bright 1893: 48; Schwartz 1933: 64-65.
[70] Samuel 1977: 102; Bright1893: 48; Schwartz 1933: 65-67.
[71] Samuel 1977: 103; see more in Amirav 2010.
[72] Samuel 1977: 103-104; see more in Amirav 2010.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

all copies are identical to his reports or not. However, no one paid any attention to his defense.[73] Also later when he tried to clarify his appoint of view about Flavianus's situation, they ignored his speech.[74]

Regardless of the five pause days ordered by the emperor, the third session had been conducted headed by Pachasinus on 13th October. Neither imperial officials nor the six accused bishops attended the session. In addition, a few numbers of attendees were present.[75] In this session, they discussed both the claim of Eusebius against Dioscorus and the Roman accusation that Dioscorus neglected Leo's Tome in Ephesus. At the end of the discussion, they decided that Dioscorus must be arrested, and his teachings must be deprived.[76] Three times, the meeting summoned Dioscorus to appear in front of them. The first time, Dioscorus said that he was under Judicial detention and could not move without permission from authorities. The second time, he conditioned the attendance of the imperial officials to accept the summons. The third time, he said he was sick and could not go to the meeting, especially when he knew from them that the rest of the six accused persons would not attend because he was lonely condemned. Dioscorus argued that they are all involved with him, so they should attend too.[77]

When the delegates returned to the meeting holding the refusal of Dioscuros, the meeting concluded that Dioscorus deserved to be isolated. The meeting depended on certain points for the sake of the decision; (1) the acquittal of Eutyches, (2) disobeyed Pope of Rome, (3) did not allow Leo's Tome to be read in Ephesus council 449, (4) the council wanted to be tolerant with him, but he deprived Pope Leo, (5) he did not obey the summons of the council. Based on that, Pope Leo stripped Dioscorus of all episcopal dignity through the present council.[78] After he had been condemned, Dioscorus was detained by the imperial guard under a kind of house arrest, then they exiled him to the island of Gagra in Paphlagonia, near the south of the Black Sea where he died a few years later.[79]

[73] Samuel 1977: 105-107; Schwartz 1933: 62-76; see more in Price & Gaddis 2007.
[74] Samuel 1977: 117-118; see more in Price & Gaddis 2007.
[75] Samuel 1977: 124; Schwartz 1933: 199-204.
[76] Samuel 1977: 125-127.
[77] Samuel 1977: 128; Schwartz 1933: 207, 220-222.
[78] Samuel 1977: 134; Schwartz 1933: 224-225.
[79] Atiya 1979: 12.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

In fact, Dioscorus accepted the phrase "from two natures" instead of "two natures".[80] Nevertheless, apparently, his style was different from his preceding, Pope Cyrillus in terms of dealing with politicians. In this sphere, Peter Brown states: "Throughout the fourth and fifth centuries, the patriarchs of Alexandria, the master-politician Cyrillus (412–444) and the fatefully over-confident Dioscorus (444–451), rode the tide whose strength, in Christian piety, Athanasius had already sensed." [81] However, with all sincerity, one may say that Pope Dioscorus was paying the price of his previous unsuccessful decisions of Ephesus council 449 A.D. In that council, as I illustrated, Dioscorus did not discuss Eutyches enough before acquitting him, as well as he did not listen to Flavianus and Eusebius well before condemning them. Consequently, the same way almost was practiced against him in Chalcedon 451 AD. He had not been heard, decisions also were previously taken under political pressure, the only difference here is the name of the emperor, in Chalcedon he was Marcianus instead of Theodosius II of Ephesus.

In this way, the Copts lost their leadership in Christendom. Chalcedon of course was not recognized by them, and from that moment, there were two parallel lines of succession from St. Mark, the one a Melkite obedientiary to Byzantium, and the other nationalistic of native Coptic stock. Thus, a new wave of merciless violence was initiated, with disastrous results until the Arab Conquest.[82]

POST-CHALCEDONIAN CONSEQUENCES

Foundation of the Coptic Orthodox Church

The council of Chalcedon in 451 AD signaled Byzantine determination to exert authority in Egypt, while Egypt would not compromise. Their refusal to endorse the Chalcedonian doctrine eventually led to the separation of the Egyptian church from both the Byzantine and the Western (Latin) churches so far. After the council of Chalcedon, the way was paved for the Coptic church to establish itself as a separate entity. The main center of learning for the Coptic church became the monastery of saint Macarius in Wādi al-naṭrūn. No longer even spiritually linked with

[80] Samuel 1977: 80.
[81] Brown 2013: 118.
[82] Atiya 1979: 12, see more in Butler 1902.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

Constantinople. Theologians began to write more in Coptic and less in Greek. Coptic art developed its own national character, and the Copts stood united against imperial power.[83]

Cyril and Dioscorus lived at the same time as Shenoute the Archimandrite, who was highly influential in the 5th century. After Dioscorus was removed from his position, several patriarchs were appointed by the government, including Proterius who was appointed by the Byzantine authorities and was killed in 457. The Coptic Church only recognized Timothy, also known as Aelurus, as Patriarch (455-77). His biography in the *History of the Patriarchs*. Timothy played a vital role in reorganizing the Coptic Church. His opponents, such as Leo I and Iustinianus, accused him of being an opportunist and intruder, while others, such as Zacharias Scholasticus, considered him a saint. Zacharias Scholasticus was a representative of Cyrillian Theology and served as a priest in Alexandria. Emperor Leo I exiled him to Gangra after Timothy's consecration, but he returned when Basilicus usurped the throne of Zeno in 475. Zeno attempted to threaten Timothy, but he was already old. Timothy wrote in Greek, but his writings only survived in Syriac and Armenian. His letters revealed that Isaiah Bishop of Hermopolis and the priest Theophilus began preaching the Euthychian heresy, claiming that Timothy agreed with them. Timothy became such an important figure that two texts were attributed to him relating to the consecration of the Church of St. Pachomius and the Church of the Virgin Mary.[84]

Peter Mongus succeeded Timothy. He was an archdeacon during the Council of Chalcedon. He was consecrated when the Alexandrian Chalcedonians consecrated the conciliatory Timothy Salophaciolus. Peter condemned the Council of Chalcedon and supported the *Henoticon* issued by Emperor Zeno as a compromise between the two parties: Chalcedonian and non-Chalcedonian.[85]

In Egypt, laypeople also played an important role, indicating that Greek culture was not just limited to Alexandria but was also widespread in the interior of Egypt. Nonnos of Panopolis was a prominent poet in the 5th century. Cyrus of Panopolis was another well-known figure who arrived at a Christmas feast in Constantinople between 440 and 450. When the people asked him to speak, he delivered perhaps the shortest Christmas sermon ever recorded: "Brethren, let the

[83] Kamil1987, 1990: 38-39.
[84] Youssef 2014: 25; Orlandi 1968: 89-90.
[85] Youssef 2014: 25-26.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

birth of God our Saviour Jesus Christ be honoured with silence, because the Word of God was conceived in the holy Virgin through hearing also. To him be glory forever. Amen."[86]

Attempt to contain the discord

The new attempt to solve the religious problem was known as **Henoticon** (the Act of a union). In their earlier leanings, both the emperor Zeno and the patriarch Acacius of Constantinople were distinctly Chalcedonians. But the rebellion of Basiliscus proved to both beyond doubt the strength of the Monophysites and the significance of calming them. Therefore, it was necessary to find a formula that would be acceptable to them instead of the Chalcedonian formula. In fact, Petrus Mongos and Acacius, the architects of the Henoticon, aimed at taking the Church back to pre-Chalcedonian theology, and in 482 A.D., without great difficulty they prevailed upon Zeno to approve the new attempt. The text of the Henoticon recognized the decisions of the first three ecumenical councils, Both Nestorius and Eutyches and their followers were categorically anathematized. Christ was declared to be of the same nature as the Father, while He combined the human nature still. The Henoticon was phrased carefully to avoid explicit mention of one nature and two natures. An anathema was imposed on 'all who have held, or hold now of at any time, whether in Chalcedon or in any other synod whatsoever, any different belief'. Although Chalcedon was not completely denied, the terms of the Act of Union provided a big step toward Monophysite thinking. The immediate result was a rapprochement between the churches of Alexandria and Constantinople, while Rome was extremely unhappy about the whole arrangement.[87]

It is worth mentioning that Emperor Zeno began his royal rule by canceling the resolution of Emperor Basiliscus and sending the non-Chalcedonian bishops into exile, he later became amicable to the church of Alexandria, in particular to the monks of this church especially after his daughter Hilaria (Hilarius) disguised in a monk's uniform and led an ascetic life. Nobody knew anything about her until she had healed her only sister from sickness. The emperor then, gave generously to the monasteries in Egypt. In that proclamation, Zeno ignored the Council of

[86] Youssef 2014: 26; Grillmeier 1987: 90-91.
[87] Atiya 1968: 71-72; Boak 1921: 470.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

Chalcedon and the Tome of Leo. In the meantime, he took the positive side to confirm the unity of the nature of our Lord Jesus Christ without reference to any text.[88]

The Pope of Alexandria signed this proclamation and explained to the clergy and people of Alexandria the theological concept it contained. Some had asked that the Henoticon be clear regarding the anathema against the Tome of Leo and the decisions of the Council of Chalcedon and the assurance of the one nature of Jesus Christ. In fact, the Henoticon did not return to the persecuted non-Chalcedonians their rights. It only allowed them the freedom of practicing their spiritual and ecclesiastical activities without being obliged to accept the resolutions of the Council of Chalcedon. Thus, they welcomed it, not for the theology it contains, but because it gave them the freedom to work regardless of the clear tendency it has towards the thought of those who believed in one nature. This Henoticon provided an opportunity for the four main Sees of the East to unite. The See of Rome did not deal with that issue. At the Council of Chalcedon, held on October 22, 451 A.D., the Roman delegates expressed their position by saying that the East should accept Rome's view or withdraw and leave Rome alone. The Fathers of the Council did not remain idle but expressed their displeasure. On July 28, 484 A.D., Filex III of Rome convened a synod of 27 bishops and excommunicated Pope Petrus of Alexandria and Patriarch Acacias, but they did not pay attention to the call. Despite the death of Acacias in 489 A.D., Pope Petrus III in 490, and Zeno in 491, Emperor Anastasius I (491-518 AD) held fast to the Henoticon. The patriarchs of Constantinople had to sign it when they were ordained. This was true until the death of the emperor in 518, during which time St. Severus of Antioch (512-518) emerged as one of the most famous theologians on the subject of one nature. The Church of Alexandria lived in peace with the other churches of the East and maintained an affectionate relationship with Emperor Anastasius. This lasted until the enthronement of Iustinianus, when the troubles began again.[89]

Persecution and consequences

According to the Coptic Synaxarium, “The emperor and empress were irritated at this, and the empress commanded to smite St. Dioscorus on his mouth, and to pluck out the hair of his beard.

[88] Boutros 2007: 5; Budge 1928: 204-205.
[89] Boutros 2007: 6; Atiya 1968: 72.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

He took the hair and the teeth that were knocked out and sent them to Alexandria saying, “This is the fruit of faith.”.”.

Then, Pope Dioscorus was exiled to the island of Gagra, where he passed away in A.D. 456. However, his above-mentioned message to Alexandria was the beginning of new hard times for the Copts.

Emperor Marcianus installed a successor in the See of Alexandria in the person of Proterius (452-457 AD), a docile friend of Byzantine imperialism, through brutal military force. Moreover, after electing the next man on the Alexandrian See (Timotheus) by Egyptians, Emperor Marcianus ordered the exile of Timotheos and his brother to the very same island of Gagra where Dioscorus had been exiled. The Egyptians felt more outraged at this imperial arrogance. As their anger mounted in proportion to the tyrannous treatment, they decided to put an end to this tug of war. During the wars with the Vandals in North Africa and the Blemmyes in Thebaid, the Alexandrian populace seized that opportunity to assassinate the unguarded Proterius. They crowded around the palace of Proterius, who became panic-stricken and fled to the baptistery of his church, where dragged his body, through the city streets, burnt it, and cast his dust to the winds.[90]

The opposition to Chalcedon in Egypt was largely led by the monks, who represented the Copts and voiced their resentment of oppressive foreign (Byzantine) rule and Greek cultural hegemony centered in Alexandria. After 451, there were essentially two Churches in Egypt, often with two opposing patriarchs, one Greek and one Coptic. The united bishopric of Alexandria was split between two lines of patriarchal succession. The Melkite line was Greek and assigned from Constantinople and obeying Chalcedon. The other, described as “Monophysite”, was native and stood fast by the national cause of the Egyptian people while repudiating Greek hegemony and the Chalcedon formula.[91] However, a chain of brutal behavior from both opposing sides marked the whole period.

When Iustinianus (527-65 AD) entered the church with Bishop John the Cappadocian, some Chalcedonians cried out against St. Severus of Antioch and demanded his trial, while others

[90] Boutros 2007: 4; Atiya 1968: 70-71.
[91] Atiya 1968: 70; Gabra & Tim 2002: 4.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

applauded in response to the earlier disapproval. The emperor then called a council to settle the matter. When the pope of Alexandria learned of the emperor's intention, he did not go to the council. The emperor ordered him to be arrested and sent into exile. An army of soldiers forcibly entered the church while the people gathered in support of their pope. The matter developed into a battle between the armed soldiers and the unarmed assembly. The soldiers killed many of those present, arrested the pope, and sent him into exile. The emperor installed a foreign patriarch named Apollinarius. Later the pope returned, but he hid and fled from one city to another fleeing from Iustinianus.[92]

Iustinianus dealt with Pope Theodosius (the 32nd pope) in the same way. He ordered him to approve the decisions of the Council of Chalcedon and promised to appoint him Pope for all of Africa. The pope considered these promises devilish and refused to sign. The emperor then summoned him, received him with great acclaim, and tried him six times, but the pope refused. Thereupon the emperor had him imprisoned in Constantinople, consecrated a foreign patriarch (Paulus El-Tanisi), and sent him with a retinue of soldiers. The foreign bishop stayed for a whole year without anyone from the congregation praying with him except the ruler and the soldiers. Often, he heard slogans like "Down with the traitor! Down with Jude the alien!" so he asked the emperor to dismiss him. The Pope remained in prison for 28 years until he died in 567 AD.[93]

The emperors used to interfere in theological discussions and resorted to violence in dealing with them. But Iustinianus believed he could restore the unity of the Empire by condemning the "Three Chapters (Tria Kephalaia)". In 553 A.D., the Council convened in Constantinople confirmed the anathema of the "Three Chapters." It also confirmed the anathema of the emperor against the Origenists and the writings of Origen. But this council failed and did not achieve what it aimed at, mainly because this council did not give comfort to the people of Alexandria while their legitimate pope spent most of his pontificate in a prison in Constantinople. Even when Paulus al-Tenaisy, the foreign patriarch, died, another named Apollinarius was consecrated by order of the emperor. This man entered Alexandria in the uniform of a military commander and gave orders to the people to assemble in the church. Then he took off the military uniform and put on the priestly clothes and read the imperial decree. At that time, loud cries of protest

[92] Boutros 2007: 7; see more in Budge 1928; Atiya 1968.
[93] Boutros 2007: 7; see more in Budge 1928; Atiya 1968.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

were heard when the foreign patriarch ordered the soldiers to use force, and many were martyred. People called that day "The Massacre." Some historians assert that Iustinianus acted in good faith, but what happened to the Copts provoked them against Byzantium. [94]

Emperor Iustinianus died on November 14, 565, and was succeeded successively by Iustinianus II (565-578), Tiberius (578-582), Mauricius (582-602), and Phocas (602-610). They all followed the line of Iustinianus I and supported the foreign patriarch who represented the Byzantine authority and not the Egyptian Church. Tensions between the Egyptians and the foreigners were rather low during the time of Iustinianus II and Tiberius, while the legitimate pope could not enter Alexandria. However, as soon as Emperor Mauritius sat on the throne of Constantinople, tensions increased, leading the Egyptians to rebel against the emperor. Three Egyptians, Mina and his two brothers Abūskhayrun and Jacob led a revolution that triumphed over the Roman forces. The emperor then instructed the foreign patriarch Eulogius to negotiate a reconciliation with the leaders, and with a deceitful plan, he was able to arrest and behead them. This picture shows the ecclesiastical, psychological, and national situation of the Copts. They were under pressure from Byzantium, which interfered with their faith and deposed their legitimate popes.[95]

Emperor Phocas was so much more repressive than other emperors that the bishops were forced to flee from the cities to the deserts to hold their services and minister through letters. Nevertheless, Pope Anastasius, the son of a noble family in Alexandria, was consecrated during his reign. The ruler was unable to send him away from Alexandria, and the pope met the threats with indifference. He managed to consecrate a large number of priests and recapture some churches from the Chalcedonians. The foreign patriarch Eulogius sent a message to Emperor Phocas informing him that the pope had held a council condemning the Council of Chalcedon and excommunicating its followers. As a result, the emperor ordered the ruler to seize the church from "Cosman, Damien, their mother and sister" and to increase the pressure on the Egyptians. The ruler entered the church accompanied by Eulogius and a battalion. The congregation revolted and many fell dead, forcing the Pope to retreat to the desert of Shiheet.[96]

Persians invade Egypt 619 AD

[94] Boutros 2007: 8; see more in Budge 1928; Atiya 1968.
[95] Boutros 2007: 9; see more in Budge 1928; Atiya 1968.
[96] Boutros 2007: 9; see more in Budge 1928; Atiya 1968.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

The Persians migrated to Egypt. They loved destruction for destruction's sake. They destroyed the monasteries and expelled the hermits, then invaded Alexandria, where the king announced his desire to meet with all the inhabitants of the city to lay the groundwork for mutual understanding. There were about 800,000 people that his army massacred that day. The Egyptians remained under the persecution of the Persians, who were themselves Sun worshippers, but oppressed the Egyptians and Syrians and ordered them to adopt Nestorianism. When they refused, they fell victim to their brutality. This continued until Emperor Heraclius (610-641) came and expelled them from Egypt in 627 AD.[97]

End of Byzantine Rule

Egypt was returned to Byzantium, but Heraclius learned nothing from the severe lesson. Not merely he revived Iustinianus's policies in Egypt but intensified them. He appointed a Melkite patriarch of the whole of Egypt, with extensive religious, military, financial, administrative, and judicial powers. Later in AD 631, this position was occupied by "Cyrus", later known in the Arab sources as al-Muqawqaz, who reached Alexandria and set to work on his plans without mercy. For ten years, he was one of the worse hectors in the Egyptian history. He used the Cross and iron mace against the native resistance.

Arab Conquest 641

"This religious civil war enervated the country and left it weak and exposed when, in 641, a small Arab army invaded Egypt and quickly conquered it, bringing a sudden end to the Byzantine era in Egypt." [98]

On December 12, 639, ʿmr ibn al-ʿāṣ arrived in Egypt with an army of about 4,000 horsemen. They intended to capture the fortress of Babylon in Egypt, north of present-day Cairo, in order to advance up the Nile to Alexandria. The army was reinforced to 8,000 to 12,000 men in June 640. The Arab and Byzantine armies met on the plain of Heliopolis, where the latter were defeated and retreated to Babylon. After a six-month siege, the fortress fell on April 9, 641. The Arab army then moved to Alexandria, which surrendered, and a peace treaty was signed in November

[97] Boutros 2007: 10; Atiya 1968: 75.
[98] Gabra & Tim 2002: 4.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

641, giving them control over most of Egypt. Babylon became the Arab capital and was renamed Al-Fusṭāṭ (present-day Old Cairo). [99]

Jean Maspero regards that the secret behind the Arab Victory over the Byzantine army lies in the following reasons:

1. Emperor Iustinianus had concealed the system of unified leadership in Egypt lest the army commander might lead an independence movement, so he abolished the civil unity previously kept by the Romans. This resulted in Egypt being ruled by five dukes directly appointed by the emperor. Everyone had his own independent civil and military authority, and none cared to support the other.

2. The army was burdened by police duties and by helping the tax collectors and interfering in the church disputes for the benefit of the empire. There was no combat army or a military leader in Egypt. Most of the soldiers were from the simple inhabitants of Egypt who never practiced any military training or worked under a true leadership.

3. The spirits of the Byzantines declined after they learned about the Arab victories over the Persians.

4. The orientalist Alfred J. Butler thinks that there was not a single Copt in the battlefield and that it is wrong to assume that the Copts were at that time capable of assembling or negotiating with the Arabs. [100]

The harsh truth is that by the Arab Conquest, from now on, Egypt enters a new phase of isolation from the Christian world. Copts are again under a foreign rule, but the new conquers could melt in the Egyptian country, sometimes by enticement and sometimes by intimidation. Consequently, the conquers, through centuries, from 641 AD so far, became natives or upper.

However, it is worth mentioning different scholars' comments in that sphere, such as Török László, who reports: "It must be added, nevertheless, that the Muslim conquest was not

[99] Boutros 2007: 11; see more in Butler 1902; Budge 1928.
[100] Boutros 2007: 11; see more in Butler 1902; Budge 1928.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

particularly destructive and, initially, the conquerors left the institutions of local administration intact. Greek as the official language of administration continued to be in use into the eighth century. The structure, economic position, and way of life of the old landowning elite did not change at once with the arrival of a new elite in Alexandria nor in the cities of the countryside."[101]

Not only Török, but also in Alan Bowman's words: "politically speaking, domination by the theocratic Islamic Caliphate was more strikingly different than anything that had happened in Egypt since the arrival of Alexander the Great almost a thousand years earlier."[102]

Undoubtedly, with the help of this quite detailed historical background, the archaeological and artistic analysis of the period between the 5th and 7th centuries is going to be more obvious. Historical events, ups, and downs, and social circumstances may be extremely helpful in reaching a better and clearer archaeological understanding of this period.

[101] Török 2005: 110.
[102] Bowman 1986: 53; Török 2005: 110.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

V. SYMBOLISM IN COPTIC ARCHITECTURE AND ART

Utilizing certain architectural and iconographic features can symbolize intended meanings or reflect cultural influences. Like inscriptions, architectural and iconographic symbols compose a visual language to read. Architecturally, Severin describes architecture as “play, symbol and festival’’.[103] Read explains architecture as “a representation of a meaning in a mode of symbolic discourse... where there is no discourse, there is no architecture”.[104] The word ‘discourse’ itself indicates the very special character of Early Byzantine art in general, and Coptic art in particular, in terms of the relation between iconography and the seer, namely the believer. Religiously, throughout the centuries, metaphors have been used in religion to help people with their limited minds as creatures to gain an understanding of their unlimited Creator, God. Symbols are of great importance in Christianity. The Lord Jesus explained many subjects to people in a metaphorical manner.

Symbolism is usually based on human visions and thoughts. These symbols varied not only in terms of type and origin but also religiously. From the aspect of type, symbols are diverse lingually or calligraphically, numerologically, and naturally, in addition to colors and coloring. Coptic iconography can also say more about the origin of impact. Moreover, since Coptic civilization was a part of the wider scope of the Christian and Byzantine world, religion (Christian or pagan) also affected its art significantly.[105] Hereunder I adopt symbols classified according to the origin, and each is categorized according to type.

LOCAL SYMBOLS

Mythical

The Ship: Symbols were often used in the funeral ceremonies of the ancient Egyptians. A common symbol was the "Sokhis ship" that carries the good souls to the other life. Its mystical meaning was that of a life journey that simply continues after death. This means that they believed in immortality. [106] Almost by the late 7th century, Coptic churches were mostly built in the shape of a ship, symbolizing Noah's Ark; just as people were saved from the flood in Noah's

[103] Gadamer & Severin 1986.
[104] Read 1965.
[105] Thomas 2010: 1058-1060; Guirguis et al., 2020.
[106] Malaty 1977: 85.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

Ark, the Church of God alone can save people. In this area, St. Cyprian says: “No salvation can be achieved for anybody outside the church”. [107]

Nimbus or halo: It symbolizes holiness. The circle also represents the eternal and everlasting love of God. Christ’s halo was commonly depicted as a cross-based halo. [108] Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that in ancient Egyptian art, besides the existence of statues of gods such as the goddess Sekhmet, with the sun disc over the head, there is a portrait of Anubis with the sun disc appearing behind his head representing a rare and important link in the development of the ‘‘aureole” of the Saints depicted in Coptic icons in Egypt. [109]



Figure 4. a. Coptic Trefoil Cross (Ramzy, 2014, p. 4)

Coptic Crosses: The cross is mainly symbolic of the Church being under the authority of the Crucified Lord. The most common type of cross in Coptic churches is the Trefoil Cross. This is what is called the Coptic cross, which was a local development of the short Greek cross. Coptic crosses often incorporate a circle in the middle that represents the eternal and everlasting love of God, as shown through Christ's crucifixion, Christ's halo, and resurrection (*fig. 1. a*). Coptic crux ansata is another common form, [110] where the Copts availed themselves of the resemblance between the Egyptian Ankh, the sign of ‘life’ in hieroglyphics. It is a cross shape with a loop above the crossbar, which was the Egyptian sign of eternal life. The cross replaced the upper part of the cross with the crown worn by Roman victors. Sometimes it is also flanked by Greek crosses, or another cross is set inside the loop, which is surrounded by palm branches that symbolize victory, peace, and paradise (*fig. 1. b*). [111] The conversion of Ankh into a Christian cross suited the new belief that Jesus is life (John 11:25 & 14:6). [112]



Figure 1. b. Coptic Relief of the Coptic Crux Ansata from El-Badary, Assiut, 6th Century (Coptic Museum in Cairo; Ramzy, 2014, p. 4)

[107] Malaty 1977: 86-88.
[108] Guirguis et al., 2020.
[109] Guirguis et al., 2020; Atalla 1998.
[110] Ramzy 2014: 6-7; Doresse: 1960.
[111] Ramzy 2014: 4; http://www.coptic-cairo.com/museum/selection/stone/stone/stoneshow.html (Accessed 2023.04.29)

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014



Figure 5. Fayum Mummy Portrait (125-150 AD) from the Egyptian National Museum in Cairo (Ramzy, 2014, p. 4)

Coptic Faces: A common opinion among historians of iconography is that icons have been originated in Egypt. It is believed that they had developed from the ancient Egyptian tradition of adorning mummy cases with portraits of the dead. [113] Fayum mummy portraits, or the so-called *Faces of El Fayum* (*fig. 2*), from the 2nd century AD, are believed to be the origins of iconography in Egypt. They show some Graeco-Roman influence but with distinctive ancient Egyptian characteristics, displaying enlarged heads with eyes and ears larger in proportion than the rest of the face with a smaller mouth. These features are not due to a lack of artistic sense or talent but rather were intended to symbolize the spiritual relationship with God and the devotion to prayer. [114]

Lingual or Calligraphic

Calligraphy of verses from the Holy Bible is used. This is an inherent habit from the time of the Ancient Egyptians, who used inscriptions of their language on the walls of their temples. One can find Biblical verses in many positions in the church, such as above church doors, on the iconostasis above the Royal Gates of the sanctuary space, or within icons.[115]

Natural

Fish: Coptic art was influenced by both the Ancient Egyptian culture and the Graeco-Roman one when it employed fish as a subject in Coptic art.[116] The fish was an esteemed theme in Egypt ever since the predynastic era. It is linked with the Nile and with the legend of Osiris. It also symbolized rebirth. But its appearance grew more strongly in early Christian iconography and passed readily into Coptic art, where fishes appear in abundance. The fish was used as a symbol

[112] Guirguis et al., 2020; Raftery 1965.
[113] Ramzy 2014: 4; Gough 1973.
[114] Ramzy 2014: 4; Wahba http://www.coptic.net/articles/CopticIcons.txt (Accessed 2023.04.29)
[115] Guirguis et al., 2020: 535.
[116] Guirguis et al., 2020: 538; Del Francia et al., 1991.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

of Christianity during the time of Roman persecution;[117] one fish refers to Christ and many fishes refer to the Christians.

Rams: Ram's heads recall the use of the symbolic animal of the god Amon Raʿ in ancient Egypt, but in Coptic art, the ram is also one of the symbols of Jesus Christ.[118]

Subjects

It is remarkable that harsh paintings like the 'Last Judgment' or 'Heaven and Hell' were so common in churches all over the world except for in Egypt, where these subjects were treated in a simple manner similar to that of Ancient Egyptian figures of 'Soul Weighing' and similar mythological legends. [119] Copts depicted archangel Michael weighing souls in a balance, which is an influence from ancient Egyptian art when the jackal Anubis and the Falcon are weighing the heart of the deceased in the scales of justice in the last judgment, namely the depictions of māʿit. [120]

Magical Symbols

Although magic does not cope with Christian teachings, the Copts had inherited some magical symbols that were used by their predecessors, such as the drawing of '*Alabsaderia*' (a devilish woman used to refer to evil souls) and '*Aberzelia*' (the charm against the magic of the evil woman), both appeared in St. Apollo's monastery in Bawīṭ. [121]

GRAECO-ROMAN SYMBOLS

Lingual or Calligraphic

Alpha and Omega: (α) and (ω) are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. They were related to the cosmos, the signs of the zodiac, and the 24 hours of the day. In Egyptian alchemy, they are linked to the good genius, *Agathodaimon*. During the Graeco-Roman period, these letters were transferred to Christianity to symbolize Christ as the beginning and end of life (Revelation 1:8; 21:6; 22:13). They were depicted mostly in the funerary stelae. These symbols used to be combined with a Chrismon (the Greek letters chi and rho, forming the monogram of

[117] Ramzy 2014: 4; Cannuyer & Hawkes 2011.
[118] El-Gendi 2012: 11; Badawy 1949: 16.
[119] Ramzy 2014: 4; Gabra & Alcock 1993.
[120] Guirguis et al., 2020: 541; Malaty 1977.
[121] Ramzy 2014: 3; Qādūs & al-Sayyid 2002.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

Christ) and the ancient Egyptian figure of *Ankh*. E. Breccia also records the presence of these letters flanking an *Ankh* on some Coptic apses. A wooden lintel from Anba Apollo monastery at Bawīṭ shows these letters on an *aedicula*(shrine) that encloses a cross in a shell.[122]

Christ Monogram: It is the first two letters of the word 'Christ' in the Greek alphabet. They are 'X' and 'P' (Chi & Rho). One finds it, as mentioned above, on hangings, illuminated scripts, and in tombs, combined mostly with an ankh cross, Greek cross, or alpha and omega *(fig. 142)*.[123]

IKHTHOS: Fish is a popular subject in the Holy Bible, as it is mentioned in many biblical scenes including some miracles. The spelling of the word fish in the Greek language (ΙΧΘΥΣ) forms the initial letters of the faith affirmation phrase 'Ιησούς Χριστός, Θεού Υιός, Σωτήρ', translated in English into 'Jesus Christ Son of God the Savior'. In the early Christianity, the fish symbol was used among Christians to recognize one another as believers affirming their belief. [124]

Natural

Conch shell: For the Greeks, it was associated with some sea divinities, rising from waters, namely 'Aphrodite'. Thus, Copts used it as a symbol of rebirth and regeneration as the one coming out of the water of the baptistery *(fig. 141)*. [125]

Dolphin: As a Graeco-Roman influence, the dolphin appears in their legends as the savior of the shipwrecked. When the dolphin was utilized in Coptic art, it symbolized salvation from sins. Rarely, it symbolized Lord Jesus Christ, when it was depicted bearing a cross. [126]

Eagle: The eagle played a slight role in ancient Egyptian art and religion. Its importance began with the influence of Hellenistic and Roman art and grew in the Coptic period. The symbolic interpretations given to the eagle, especially in funerary art, are various and controversial. It was considered a symbol of Christ or Christ's resurrection. It was seen as capable of rejuvenation (Psalm 102:5), and its wings offer protection (Deuteronomy 31:11). Additionally, the eagle is related to archangels and clericals (Papyrus 9, Pierpont Morgan Library). Eagle's ability to soar high enables it, in the popular imagination, to be a messenger between Earth and Heaven. These

[122] Ramzy 2014: 5; Del Francia et al., 1991.
[123] Guirguis et al., 2020: 535.
[124] Guirguis et al., 2020: 535.
[125] Guirguis et al., 2020: 539; Del Francia et al., 1991.
[126] Guirguis et al., 2020: 539; Del Francia et al., 1991.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

protective qualities made the Copts choose the eagle's figure for their funerary stelae. [127] In the chapels of St. Apollo monastery in Bawīṭ, eagles are depicted several times. [128] They appear also on keystones, doors, and lintels as exhibited in the Coptic Museum, in Cairo. [129]

Further Greek and Hellenistic symbols that were widely used in Coptic churches included the olive for peace, the tree for the cross, the ox for power and patience, and the dove for the free soul that has peace and purity. [130]

Flora

Acanthus: It was sometimes used in capitals of columns as a direct Graeco-Roman influence. [131]

Mythical

Nimbus or halo: The sun disc appeared behind the head of some gods during the Graeco-Roman occupation. [132]

The ship: Both Greeks and Romans also utilized the ship to indicate the above-mentioned same meaning Ancient Egyptians used it for.[133]

BYZANTINE/CHRISTIAN SYMBOLS

Mythical

Halo or Nimbus: A circle of light surrounding the head of Christ, the Virgin, the angels, and the saints is a well-known iconographical feature throughout Christian art. It originated in the luminous crown of certain pagan divinities, particularly solar gods. It symbolizes holiness. [134]

Shapes and forms

Shapes and forms were employed in both the interior and the exterior of the church building and can be interpreted to symbolize certain meanings and different theological concepts. They are utilized in ornamentation or architectural elements or even on the scale of the spaces and sub-

[127] Ramzy 2014: 5; Lucchesi-Palli 1978.
[128] Ramzy 2014: 5; Clédat 1904-1916.
[129] Ramzy 2014: 5; Strzygowski 1904.
[130] Ramzy 2014: 5-6; Strzygowski 1904.
[131] Guirguis et al., 2020: 540.
[132] Guirguis et al., 2020: 541.
[133] Guirguis et al., 2020: 541; Malaty 1977.
[134] Guirguis et al., 2020: 540-541.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

spaces of the church building in both the exterior and interior. This category of signs is a derivative of the category of meaning in the architecture of crypto-numerological, [135] as the projected meaning from the shape mostly comes from the number of its sides. Examples of employing certain geometrical shapes or forms to give symbolization are as below:

Triangle: It was commonly utilized in funerary stelae *(fig. 142)* as a symbol of the Holy Trinity. [136] In addition, it was probably behind the triconch sanctuary design proposing the same symbolization *(fig. 41)*.

Cube: The altar is almost cubic in shape. This shape refers to the tomb of Jesus Christ, [137] s it is considered during the liturgy the abode of the sacrificial body of Christ, in addition to its understanding with the tombs of martyrs with reference to the verse from the Holy Bible: ‘‘I saw under the Altar, the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held” (Rev. 6: 9).

Hexagon: According to the Coptic tradition, the baptized person experiences death in the baptismal font when he is submerged in the baptismal water three times, then practices rebirth when he is out. Lord Jesus Christ was crucified on the 6th day and died on the Cross. According to the Holy Bible verses that read: ‘‘Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” (Roman 6:3–4). Accordingly, the theological concept of co-death and co-burial with Jesus, as expressed in the Holy Scripture, is signified by this shape. [138] However, there are no hexagonal baptismal fonts like those that were in Syria. [139] This shape was mostly used in wooden carvings.

Octagon: Some baptismal fonts (laqqān) were in an octagonal shape, which can symbolize regeneration and rebirth. It is a conception of co-resurrection with Lord Jesus Christ, who died and stayed in the grave for three days, then rose victoriously from the dead on the 8th day. [140] Also, some domes covering the sanctuary area of some churches are supported by octagonal

[135] Guirguis et al., 2020: 535-538; Thomas 1994.
[136] Daly 2006: 99–102.
[137] Guirguis et al., 2020: 536; Ramzy 2014:1–12.
[138] Guirguis et al., 2020: 536; Malaty 1977.
[139] Guirguis et al., 2020: 536; Butler 1884.
[140] Guirguis et al., 2020: 536; Malaty 1977.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

drums. This can be interpreted as eternity [141] because the dome symbolizes heaven. [142] So, the same metaphor is emphasized. Further, octagonal geometrical carvings often appear on iconostases of wood.

Circle: Although the circle is a shape, unlike the previous polygons, one may not assume that its symbolic meaning is a derivative of a certain number, unless it is assumed that it has an infinite number of sides. Thus, it symbolizes infinity in terms of numerology. Hence, in terms of Christian symbolism, it represents ‘‘God” eternity and everlasting, as the circle has no beginning and no end. An example may be the circular upper window in the eastward wall over the main apse, which is existing in some Coptic churches, [143] illustrating Jesus as ‘‘I am the light of the world” (John 8:12). Also, circular baptismal fonts signify that the only gate to eternity is through being baptized in Him (John 3:5). Eventually, the plan of the church may be in the form of a circle. Semi-circular arches, lintels of openings, and sometimes vaults are derivative of the circle signifying the same meaning. Domes connote heaven. This theme is emphasized in many instances by the scenery painted on the interior surface of the dome. [144]

Natural

Dove: It is found in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. In the Old Testament, in the story of Noah, the dove with the olive branch signifies peace and reconciliation after the flood. In the New Testament, however, the dove in the Epiphany scene represents the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:16). It is also worth noting that the Virgin Mary is called the good dove in the liturgy and in church praise as a symbol of her meekness, innocence, and purity. [145]

Ostrich eggs: It is a symbol of resurrection. But there is another explanation given to A. Butler by a priest, stating that the ostrich is notable for the continual care with which she watches her eggs. So, the egg is reminding the devotee that their thoughts should be fixed irremovably on spiritual matters.[146] Usually, one or three are hanging from the iconostasis, mostly close to the Royal Gate.

[141] Guirguis et al., 2020: 536.
[142] Guirguis et al., 2020: 536; Ṣamuʾīl & Ḥabīb 1996.
[143] Guirguis et al., 2020: 536-537; Malaty 1977.
[144] Guirguis et al., 2020: 536-537; Ṣamuʾīl & Ḥabīb 1996.
[145] Guirguis et al., 2020: 539; Shenouda III.
[146] Guirguis et al., 2020: 539; Butler 1884; Ramzy 2011.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

Fish: Fish is a biblical subject as it is associated with many miracles, and in each, it symbolizes a certain theme following the context. For instance, in both the miracles done by Jesus Christ: feeding the five thousand with five loaves and two fish (Matthew 5: 13–21) and Catching a large number of fish (Luke 5:3–10), fish represents the concept of blessings and that of the power of the Son. Moreover, the majority of the disciples were fishermen, so when Lord Jesus Christ was calling them to be his disciples; ''he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." (Matthew 4: 19). This provides a metaphor for associating believers and fish. Therefore, this draws on the theme in the icons of Epiphany in River Jordan, with Jesus Christ submerged and fish all around Him. Hence, all believers shall be baptized and thus reborn with Christ in the living water of the baptismal font, in addition to Tertullian writings in the second century: ''But we, little fishes, after the example of our (ΙΧΘΥΣ) Jesus Christ, are born in water, nor have we safety in any other way than by permanently abiding in water". [147]

Flora

Grapevine clusters and leaves: Jesus Christ said about Himself: ''I am the true vine." (John 15:1,5). Also, each Christian is considered a branch in the true vine: ''Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me" (John 15:4). Hence, it was used in various locations such as icons or stone *(fig. 141)* and marble inscriptions or wooden elements such as the iconostasis. [148]

Wheat spikes: They were used as ornaments in wooden carvings on different elements such as iconostasis or cladding. They symbolize Jesus Christ as per the verse: "And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." (John 6:35).[149]

Materials

Wood: It is associated with the Cross, Noah's Ark, and the Tree of Life. So, it symbolizes salvation or redemption. [150]

[147] Ramzy 2014: 6; Guirguis et al., 2020: 535; Malaty 1977; Raftery 1965: 193-204; Cannuyer & Hawkes 2011.
[148] Guirguis et al., 2020: 539.
[149] Guirguis et al., 2020: 539-540.
[150] Guirguis et al., 2020: 540.

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Stones: Sometimes, masonry that is left exposed within the exterior or interior of the Coptic Church buildings is referred to as the congregation, referring to the verse: ‘‘Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.” (1 Peter 2:5). This metaphor is extended to start from the Old Testament, as per the verse: ‘‘The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner.” (Psalm 118:22), which is a symbol of Jesus Christ as explained in the New Testament: ‘‘And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.” (Ephesians 2:20). This is symbolic that all the members of the congregation are members in Christ's body, as the church is metaphorically referred to in the bible as the body of Christ. [151]

Christian subjects

The sources of the signs and symbols are not only limited to the Holy Bible, but to other sources as well such as the Apostolic Tradition, liturgy, and the creed. Additionally, some scenes can only be interpreted through parts of the liturgy, hymns, synaxarium, hagiographies, or daily prayers or offices (Agpeya). The subjects are utilized all over the church to deliver certain meanings. This is not limited to scenes on icons, but it also extends starting from the form of the space of the church itself as a volume, to reach detailed objects of decorations such as details in wooden carvings or stone inscriptions, or bas-reliefs. [152]

Subjects from the Old Testament

Noah’s Ark: According to the Book of Genesis, all the people that mounted Noah’s Ark were salvaged from death by the great flood. Since Antiquity, there has been a tendency to construct Coptic churches in the form of Noah’s Ark to remind believers of this symbol of salvation. Usually, it is the roof shape that determines that the church is in the form of an ark.[153]

Different scenes from the Old Testament have been depicted on icons or mosaic niches, or murals in the sanctuary space. [154] These figures are meant to appear in this space to act as prefiguration of the sacrament of the Holy Communion. Examples of these scenes are the

[151] Guirguis et al., 2020: 540.
[152] Ramzy 2014: 4-5; Guirguis et al., 2020: 542-544; Hondelink 1990.
[153] Guirguis et al., 2020: 542-544; Guirguis 2010.
[154] Ramzy 2014: 4-5; Guirguis et al., 2020: 542-544; Hondelink 1990.

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sacrifice of Abraham (Genesis 22) (Christ sacrificing His Own Blood), Cleansing of Isaiah's lips by one of the cherubim (Isaiah 6:7). Thus, it is worth stressing that the use of icons is not for cosmetic purposes, but a moralistic role. Also, zones of depictions are chosen in accordance with a certain philosophy of thinking.

Subjects from the New Testament

Enthroned Jesus Christ: It represents the Pantocrater (a Greek word that means all-sovereign, ruler of all) [155] : ''Heaven is my seat and earth the footstool for my feet" (Acts 7:49, Isaiah 66:1). This is the scene in the apse of the church *(figs. 57, 62, 64)*, and sometimes it is the drawn on the interior of the dome [156] and sometimes the footstool is depicted as the earth.

Ascension: Other than the event of the Ascension of Lord Jesus Christ (Luke 24:50–53), some scholars add another layer of meaning that changes the dimension of time to interpret it as the second advent of Lord Jesus Christ on the last day. [157]

Mother of God: Influenced by the Christian debates, Copts used to depict Virgin Mary (Theotokos) frequently. She is depicted usually in the middle of apostles, saints, and angels and mostly holding Christ, the child, and sometimes suckling Him.

Angels: In the verses of the cymbals that are sung during the incense-raising prayers that precede the liturgy says: "Hail to the Church, the house of the angels". This is also expressed in art through icons of angels or on wooden carvings wrapping the interiors and in other positions.

However, more different themes and events, such as Nativity and Good Shepherd (Psalm 23) exist. These scenes related to heaven and the divine nature are located in the eastward part of the church, as this part is considered heaven on earth. [158] Also, icons of heavenly creatures as the angels or the four creatures of the apocalypse, symbolizing the four Evangelists were depicted.

[155] Guirguis et al., 2020: 542-544; Steffler 2002.
[156] Ramzy 2014: 4-5; Guirguis et al., 2020: 542-544; Malaty 1977.
[157] Ramzy 2014: 5-5; Guirguis et al., 2020: 542-544; Hondelink 1990.
[158] Ramzy 2014: 4-5.

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VI. ARCHITECTURAL ANALYSIS

CONTEMPORARY LANDSCAPE

By the period between the 5th and 7th centuries, Egypt was fully Christianized. The urban as well as rural landscape was dominated everywhere by the churches and monasteries built during the 5th and 6th centuries. Changes in Alexandria's urban landscape were tangible. In the case of Hermopolis Magna (Ashmunein), by the second half of the 5th century, the city center was dominated by the monumental episcopal basilica complex erected on the site of pagan temples, which were closed only shortly before the building of the Christian cathedral.[159]

The Monophysite and Diophysite patriarchs of Alexandria competed with each other in asceticism and holiness. By the beginning of the 5th century, the patriarchs already had enormous financial resources. By the late 6th century, the Monophysite patriarchs of Alexandria were among the wealthiest men in the empire. In the early 7th century, the patriarchs Anastasius (605-616) and Andronicus (616-622) came from aristocratic families associated with the civic government. The famous Chalcedonian patriarch John the Almoner (609-619) came from a Cypriot landowning family and was appointed patriarch by his half-brother, the governor of Egypt.[160]

Although this has not yet been archaeologically documented, literary evidence from the 6th century points to a process that can also be observed in other provinces of the East, namely the emergence of large villages with self-governing institutions.[161] As far as the social and economic situation of Egyptian towns and villages is concerned, the early Byzantine period was not a period of general decline. From the publication of the University of Michigan excavations at the large village of Karanis in the Fayum, it appears that the known settlement did not decline in the 5th century, as previously thought. Rather, it remained prosperous until the 6th century. This is evidenced by imported fine pottery and amphorae from the site. While papyrological evidence suggests that urban life at Oxyrhynchos retained some of its Hellenistic-Byzantine features in the early 7th century, the main position of urban life clearly shifted from the agora to the church at

[159] Török 2005: 99; Wace, Megaw & Skeat 1959; Török 2006: 245-257.
[160] Török 2005: 99-100; Haas 1997.
[161] Török 2005: 100; Bagnall 1993; Liebeschuetz 2000: 207-237.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

this time.[162] Documents from the 6th and 7th centuries also show that the large estates belonging to the "pious houses," i.e., the ecclesiastical institutions, and the "glorious houses," i.e., the great aristocratic families, were still in operation. Both the church and the landowning elite, with their estates scattered over several *nomes*, were engines of vertical integration in the land.[163] The following architectural typological database illustrates the architectural features in detail and is followed by analytical discussions and results.

This typology relies mainly on the work of Peter Grossmann. I tend here to explore the excavated monasteries and churches that date to the period between the 5th and 7th centuries. Grossmann divided them into secular churches and monastic churches. In each type, he divided them into subtypes according to architectural features *(fig. x)*. My main interest is to interpret these architectural features with reference to the evolution process in the previous and following centuries. Not only that but also observing the architectural changes in the light of political circumstances that implied economic consequences. I compare here, for example, between the architectural trends in both; the so-called Chalcedonian communities and the non-Chalcedonian sites, where interestingly, one may find both together in the same site or nearby, even dated to the same time frame. I focus also on the condition and richness of such an edifice. The purpose or function of such a building is also to be considered. My interpretation of these details requires an accurate, reliable method of data analysis to make the implications of Grossmann's work more understandable to further scholars. Therefore, I tend to collect all the above-mentioned details and more and utilize a data analysis method using the programming language Python. By calculations of details of as many models as possible, I can find the common features and occurrences. Adopting this approach, I can discover facts that can prove the assumption of this research about the fact of tolerance practiced between the two groups, which is represented in architectural exchanges and the innate evolution.

[162] Török 2005: 104-105; Husselman & Peterson 1979; Pollard 1998: 147-162; also see more in Haas 1997; Krüger 1990.
[163] Török 2005: 105; Bagnall 1993: 316.

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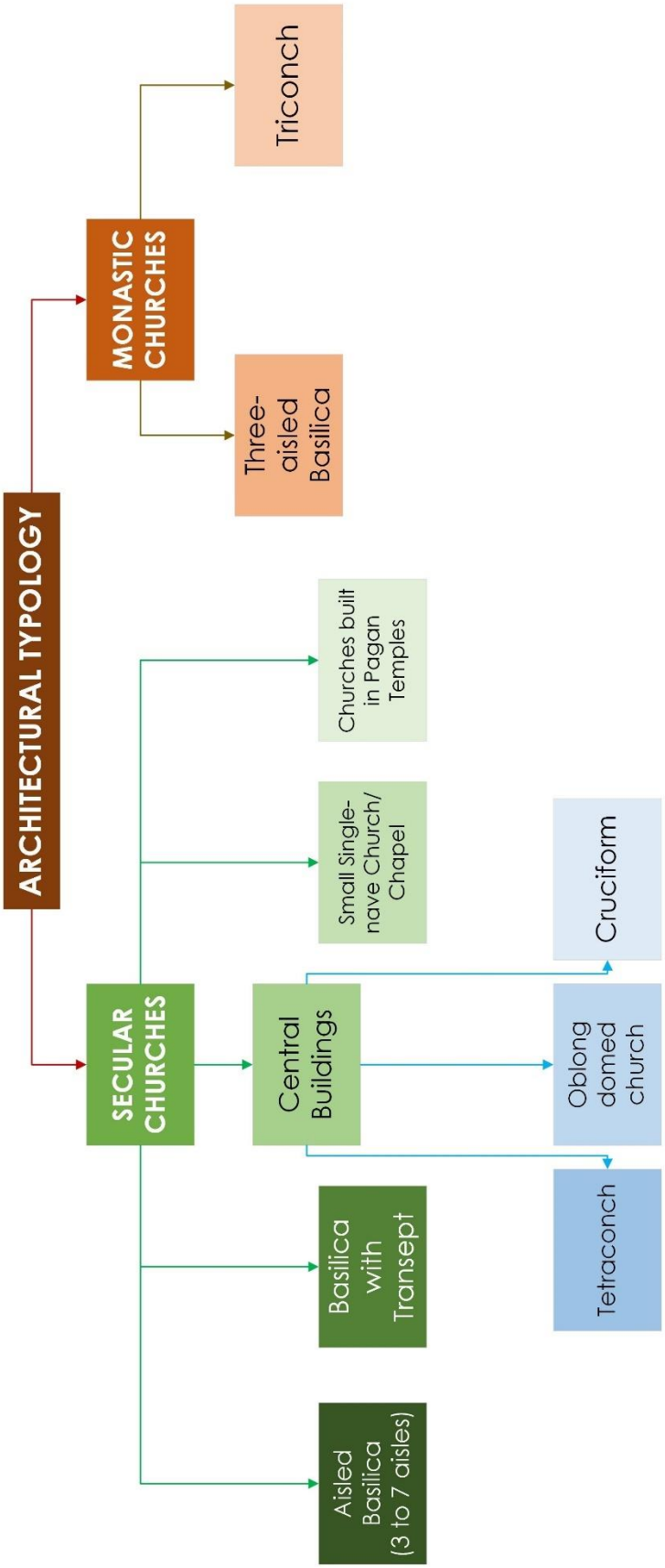


Figure x. Architectural Typology (Typology by P. Grossmann, Diagram is produced by B. Gabra using Visio)

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TYPOLOGICAL DATABASE

Secular churches

Aisled Basilica

Three-aisled churches (2 aisles and nave)

The north basilica- Abū Mīna

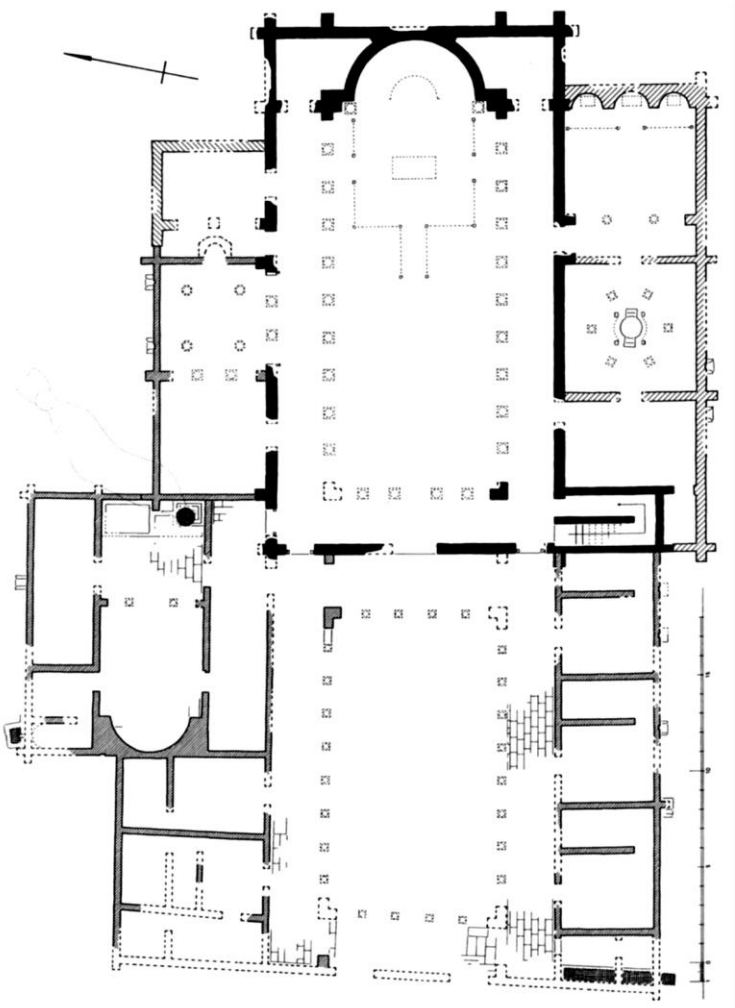


Figure 3. Ground plan of the north basilica- Abū Mīna (Grossmann, 2002, p. 632)

First, it is worth mentioning that the complex of the north basilica is not a simple building erected by a provincial architect, but one is rather inclined to assume that the plan of this church was designed in a capital planning office. That is because it is an extremely regular building, well balanced in its spatial proportions, divided into a clear ratio of 1: 3: 1 in the naos and distinguished by a very careful construction. It is also evident that the Patriarchate of Alexandria was involved in the construction of this church. There is a text edited and translated by J. Drescher, which speaks of the completion of a memorial church of St. Menas under the Monophysite Patriarch Damianos (578-607), [164] which can only have meant the northern basilica. It is assumed that the northern basilica, which was connected to a residence, belonged to the anti-Chalcedonian Church, which was considered heretical by the Imperial Church because of its location outside the city walls and bearing in mind that at the time of the construction of the church, Christianity in Egypt was mainly divided into two camps: The official Chalcedonian Church, which dominated the pilgrimage center of Abū Mīna and represented the dyophysite confession, and the anti-Chalcedonian Monophysite Church, which was pushed underground but could not be negated

[164] Grossmann 2002: 410; Drescher 1946: 73-96.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

and was therefore granted the right to exist outside the urban settlements, as in other cities of the Empire. This assumption is supported by the close resemblance of the building to the Upper Egyptian construction as well as by the later addition of a baptistery suitable for mass baptisms, which offered Monophysite baptismal candidates who wished to be baptized in the area of St. Menas the possibility of having this wish fulfilled within the framework of their own church. [165] Outside the enclosing wall of the pilgrimage center of Abū Mīna, but close to the northern access road, lies the northern basilica (*fig. 3*), which also belongs to the larger urban churches from the early Christian period. It is somewhat smaller than the other churches of the city, but otherwise has some special features that could not be proven in the other churches of the city. Like the Upper Egyptian churches, it has a western ambulatory and a sanctuary divided from the beginning into three individual rooms with a large central apse and two basically rectangular apse side rooms, each of which small side chambers inserted into the spandrels behind the rounding of the apse are connected. The apse itself was flanked at the entrance by two large, indented columns, which served to enrich the architectural design and replaced the usual corner pilasters. In the interior, the apse contained provisions for the installation of a synchronous. In front of the apse, the presbytery was surrounded by *cancelli* with clear traces of the central altar and the remains of a *prostoon* leading to the central ambo in the naos area. Whether the church was equipped with galleries is uncertain in view of the weak construction of the building with relatively narrow walls, but it cannot be ruled out. In any case, the existing stairway is located in a favorable position for the ascent of the galleries at the right, southern end of the west aisle of

[165] Grossmann 2002: 410-411.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

the naos, which at least speaks for the existence of galleries. Later, a multi-room baptistery was added to the south side of the church, which also included a chapel with three adjacent apses. In all the apses, traces of altars were observed, as well as the remains of a continuous barrier. Two chapels, also younger, are located on the north side. The church is connected to an atrium, which is otherwise rare in Egypt, and which was developed here with its adjoining rooms into a kind of residence. Representative rooms with a west-facing apsidal hall, which probably served as a triclinium and had a kitchen with a large storeroom as well as a latrine, are located in the eastern part of the north side, while to the west of it and along the entire south side several type rooms are lined up, where on certain occasions ecclesiastical dignitaries could spend some time. A communal latrine divided into two sections was located at the west end of the south side. According to the ceramic findings, the northern basilica belongs to the 6th century but may have been completed only under Damianos (578-607). It was not rebuilt after its destruction by the Persians in 619. [166]

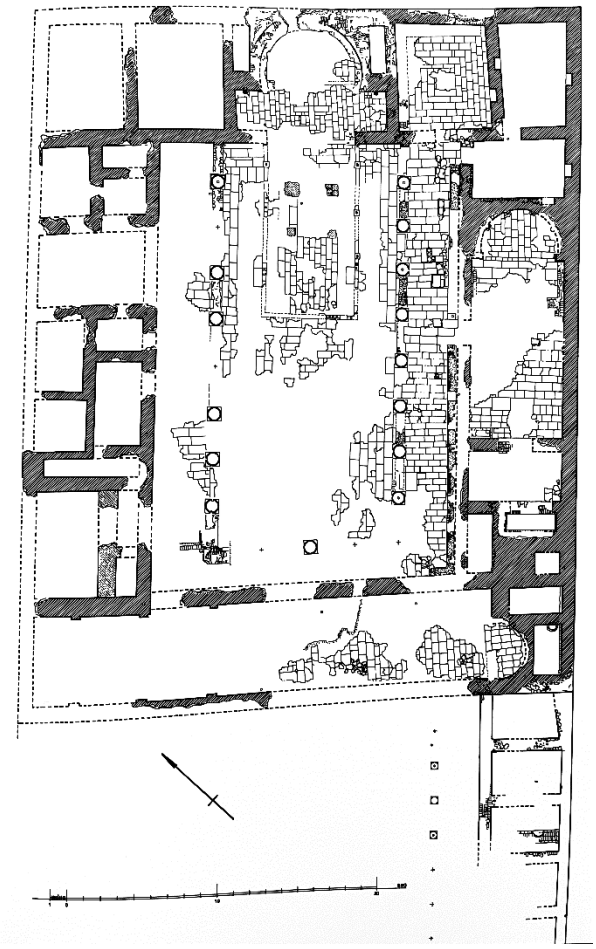


Figure 4. Ground plan of Antinopolis (Shaykh ʿibāda) – church D3 (Grossmann 2014, p. 181)

Before the church was built, there was a cult place on the same site, surrounded by barriers and bounded by a semicircle at the east end. An area fortified by floor slabs at the eastern end contained carvings. A larger fortification hole right in the middle could have accommodated altar traces. [167]

Antinopolis (Shaykh ʿibāda) – church D3

[166] Grossmann 2002: 409- 411.
[167] Grossmann 2002: 411-412; P. Grossmann & Jaritz 1980: 216-222.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

In the small church d3, there are six reused large Attic column bases of white limestone above all the north side of the naos. One can see also sections of the stylobate, which bends to the south at the western end of the colonnade, indicating the location of the western ambulatory. Likewise, the northern exterior wall of the church can be traced (with interruptions) along its entire length. Of the western exterior wall, a piece of the exterior gateway is visible at the northern end. Westward, at the front northwest corner, there are traces of -perhaps- a former exonarthex. The last column base in the east also marks the eastern end of the northern colonnade. Because of the extremely small distance to the still recognizable rest of the eastern wall of the naos, it is unlikely that the colonnade was connected to this wall. Rather, as usual, a row of columns running southward would have followed here, bounding the east ambulatory against the central nave. Much less can be seen at the sanctuary of the church. Only the position of the apse is clear, but its inner curvature, as in church d2, is so weathered that its inner edge can no longer be determined at any point. Therefore, as in the case of the latter, the course of the inner rounding in this case (*fig. 4*) is only estimated. However, the lateral outer edges of the apse are clearly visible on both sides, so that the axis of the church can be determined. The width of the central nave, which can be calculated from this, was about 11 m. Also, in church d3, the apse is provided with a porch. The width of the porch is expressed in the angular shape of the northern apse annex. Because of the extraordinary width of the porch, the front opening was probably equipped with intermediate supports or was narrowed to the width of the apse. The lateral outer wall of the northern apse annex is not in line with the northern wall of the naos. The

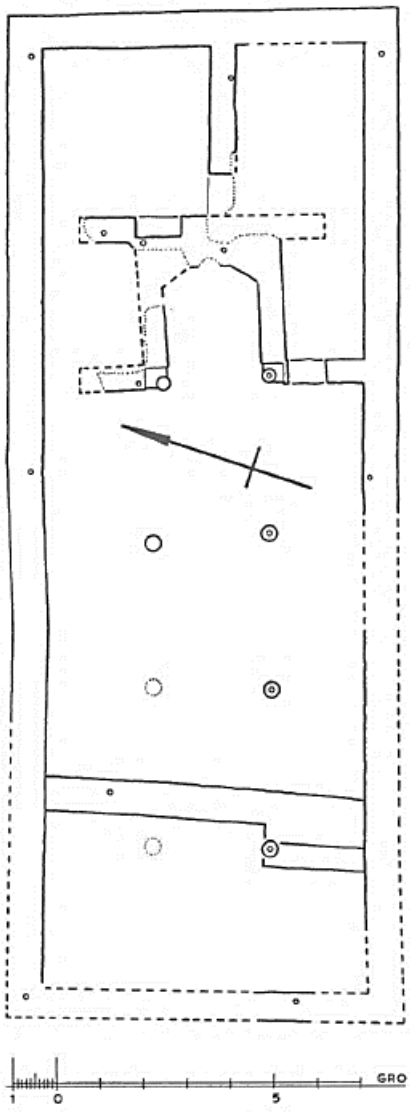


Figure 5. Ground plan of church CHF87-Madīnat Mādi (Narmuthis) (Grossmann 2002, p. 647)

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

angle between the junction contains a couple of additional rooms. This building is dated to the 6th century. [168]

In the two churches, d2 and d3, the whole central section of the eastern transverse aisle was transformed into a forechoir of the apse with a large central opening to the nave, replacing the rather weak construction of the former primary triumphal arch which rested only upon a central pair of eastern columns. The arch did not rest anymore upon two high columns but formed a large opening in a wall, which was a much more elegant and, from a technical point of view, also safer solution than the simple use of two free-standing columns. It is surprising that this new solution didn't become common in the ecclesiastical architecture of Upper Egypt in further developments. [169]

Churches of Madīnat Mādi (Narmuthis)

Three-aisled churches

In their structural form, they are admittedly all quite provincial and, in some cases, can even be described as disproportionate. The oldest church is probably the very narrow northern church (CHF87), which is located at the northern edge of the village. Because of its spatial proportions and the sanctuary, which is composed of several individual rooms, it may still be counted among the buildings of the 4th century *(fig. 5)*. However, all churches from Narmuthis date generally to the 5th and 6th centuries. It is a narrow, elongated three-aisled church with very widely spaced columns without any spatial emphasis on the nave. It was therefore certainly a flat-roofed building. The entrance seems to have been located at the west end. Remarkable is the sanctuary, two rows of rooms deep, consisting of a front group of three rooms, of which the very deep central room with indicated rounded slopes in the rear corners probably housed the altar. The entrance to the sanctuary was flanked by set columns. The apse side rooms were entered directly from the side aisles of the church. Through rear doors, they led further into the rear Rooms, which themselves were also in communication with each other. [170]

[168] Grossmann 2002: 432-433; Mitchell 1982: 171-179.
[169] Grossmann 2014: 180.
[170] Grossmann 2002: 419-420; Bresciani 1984: 1-15.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

The church CHA84 *(fig. 6)*, located in the center of the city, with a wide central nave and a waiting room, probably a narthex, in front of the naos in the west, is significantly more advanced in its spatial arrangement. The three-room sanctuary contains a central apse flanked by columns at the entrance and two small rectangular side rooms. Remains of the barriers surrounding the presbytery were not found. A row of rooms on the south side is conspicuous. All rooms can be entered from the interior of the church. The narthex does not cover the entire width of the church but jumps back slightly at the right end. A corresponding wall is also led on the left side, but the northern outer wall of the church also has a continuation to the west, so that here at the level of the narthex a very narrow outer space is created, which is perhaps to be seen in connection with the lateral narthex entrance. The southern part of the narthex is occupied by a staircase leading upwards (optionally to the roof). At the same time, this area had a cellar, as indicated by a deep-set arched passageway and the remains of a door in the southern outer wall, but these cellar rooms do not seem to have been initially accessible from the narthex. The latter was only made possible by the installation of another flight of stairs, the upper flight of which was separated from the narthex area by a partition wall built of fire bricks. Whether these underground rooms, which had their own external entrance, were tomb rooms could not be clarified, but it is conceivable. The walled courtyard to the west of the narthex is of more recent origin. Probably the building can be assigned to the 5th century. [171]

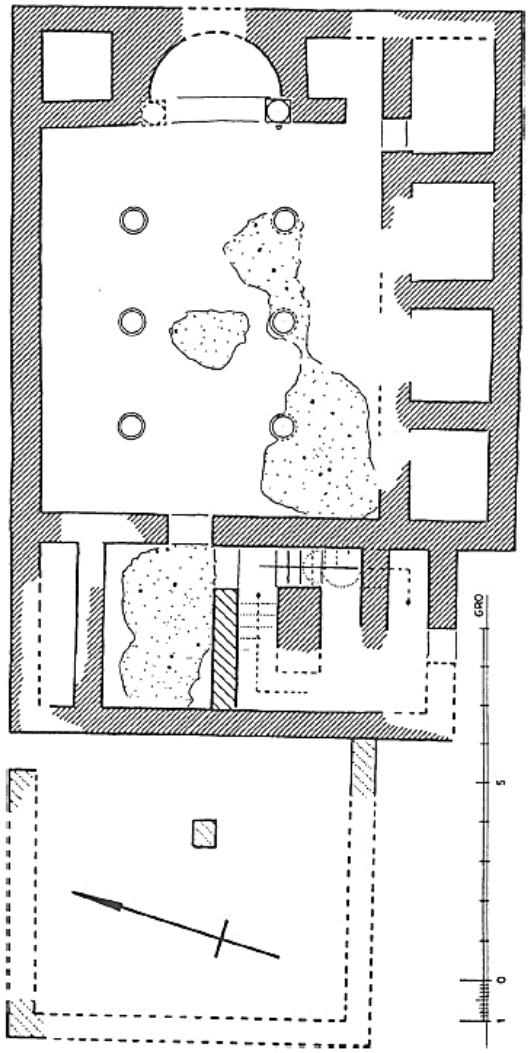


Figure 6. Ground plan of church CHA84-Madīnat Mādi (Narmuthis) (Grossmann 2002, p. 648)

[171] Grossmann 2002: 419-420; Bresciani 1984: 1-15.

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The small church CHE87 *(fig. 7)* is very unfavorably proportioned with three aisles of almost equal width but not symmetrically arranged. That the central nave was elevated can therefore be safely excluded. The church has a sanctuary composed of three oblique rooms, whose central room, equipped with several wall niches, is opened to the naos by a triumphal arch supported by flanking column supports. The opening itself was closed by wooden *cancelli* more than 1.40 m high, the traces of which are still clearly visible on the floor as well as in the flanking columns. The southern third of the barriers was occupied by an asymmetrically arranged single-leaf door. Traces of a remarkably large altar, placed on four wooden *stipites* at the back and six at the front, can be found at a distance of about 1.0 m in front of this opening. Further to the west, at about the level of the first pair of pillars (counted from the east), there is another recess on the floor that looks like the base of a reading desk. The remains of barriers could be observed only at the level of the second pair of columns. The side rooms of the sanctuary have

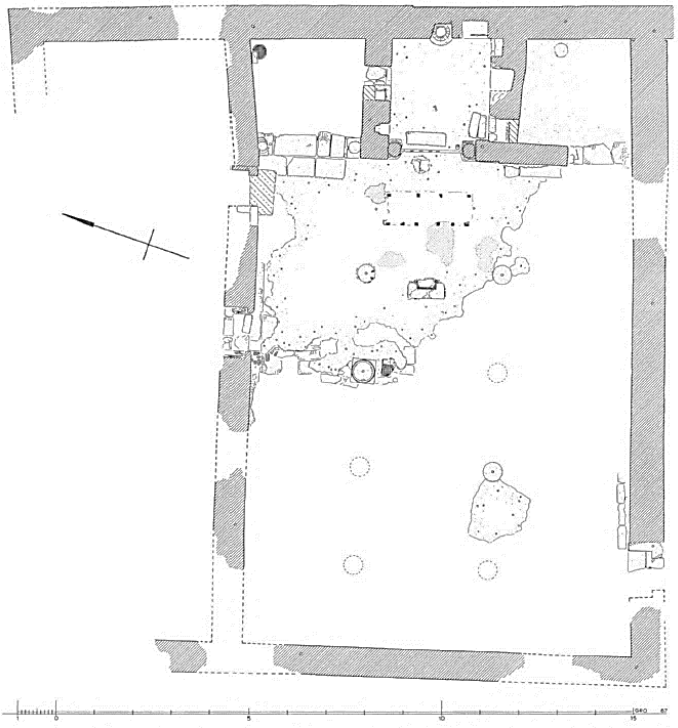


Figure 7. Ground plan of church CHE87-Madīnat Mādi (Narmuthis) (Grossmann 2002, p. 649)

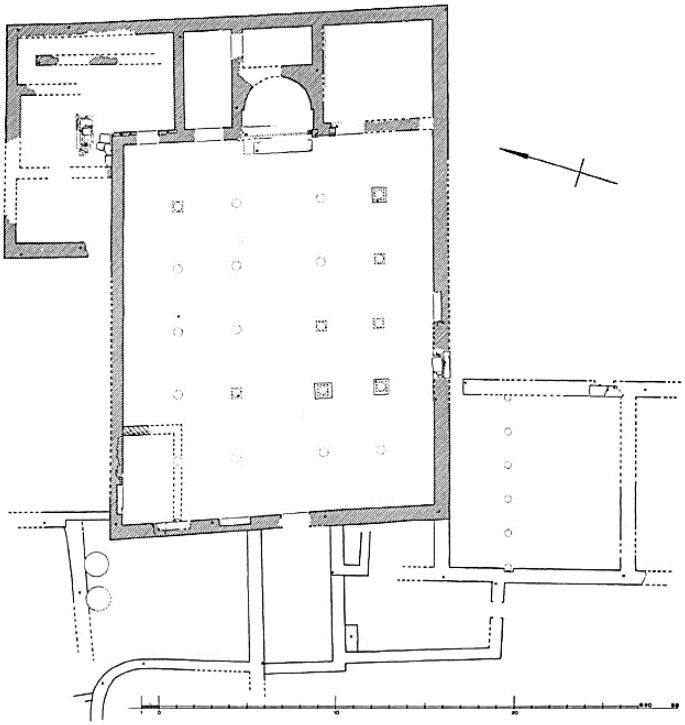


Figure 8. Ground plan of church D-Madīnat Mādi (Narmuthis) (Grossmann 2002, p. 650)

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a simpler design. The northern side room also has a wide entrance flanked by columns corresponding to the width of the room. The passage to the central room was later narrowed. In the north, there is a long room, about 4.7 m wide, extending over the entire length of the church, which was entered through two doors from the northern aisle of the church. Its purpose is unknown. [172]

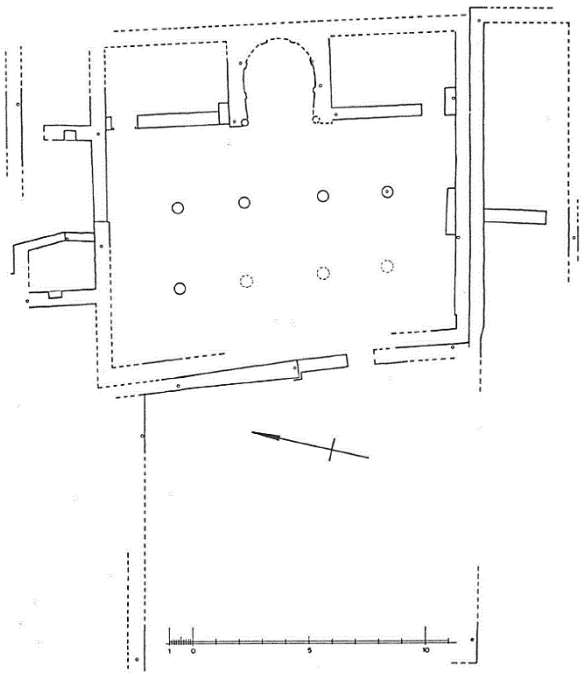


Figure 9. Ground plan of church H-Madīnat Mādi (Narmuthis) (Grossmann 2002, p. 651)

Five-aisled churches

In addition to several churches with three aisles, two churches with five aisles and one church with seven aisles were found in Narmuthis. The five-aisled church D *(Fig.8)* is the most proportionally balanced church building in Narmuthis. It is a slightly diagonal building without a narthex with an angular extension in the northeast corner. The naos contains a division into five aisles with a slightly accentuated, i.e., only flat-roofed central nave. According to the state of preservation, the side walls have wide shallow wall niches in some places, which were probably originally included in all the walls. The sanctuary consists of a deep row of rooms, the center of which is dominated by a very small apse with a slightly wider apse porch in front. The entrance to the antechamber was barred. The wooden remains of the *cancelli* that were found consist of small boards that can be inserted into each other, as they were also used for the wooden barriers that belonged mainly to the Fatimid period. In front of it was a wide stone slab marking the entrance. Therefore, the altar must have stood inside the vestibule. The other rooms of the sanctuary are of different sizes, and all are entered directly from the naos. The room behind the apse has access from the northern apse annex. The determination of the angular group of rooms at the northeast corner is unclear. [173] The second five-aisled church H *(fig. 9)*, located near the dromos of the temple of Narmuthis, seems to have resulted from the reconstruction of an

[172] Grossmann 2002: 420-421; Bresciani 1987: 7-10.
[173] Grossmann 2002: 421-422; Bresciani 1988: 1-11.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

older building. It is still highly buried and could therefore only be explored by a survey photograph. It is three bays deep and contains a central nave that is only very weakly emphasized in width. The apse of the church is not much wider but extraordinarily deep. It is flanked at the entrance by narrow columns set into the soffit corners and has a circumferential ring of flat wall pilasters along the interior wall. The apse side rooms are symmetrically arranged wide rooms and can be entered directly from the naos at the outer end. [174]

Seven-aisled churches

Finally, very unusual is the wide seven-aisled church G, but only laid out over a depth of four bays, of which so far only the central group of rooms of the sanctuary could be uncovered *(fig. 10)*. This consists of a rectangular central room, which presumably supported a barrel vault and was open to the full width towards the naos. The actual opening, however, was barred and formed as a *tribelon* by two set columns. Other columns were placed on the opposite sides of the naos opening (probably the southern column is no longer in its original place). In the eastern rear wall of the central space, which is to be considered as the apse porch, there is a shallowly curved, not very deep apse, in the opening of which two columns forming a *tribelon* were also set. The side walls of the apse have two rectangular cavities, which are to be regarded as secret chambers and were probably entered from the neighboring rooms. The altar may have been located in the area of the apse porch. Possibly an Attic base located there, now displaced, served as a substructure for the altar. The arrangement of the other rooms of the sanctuary could not be clarified satisfactorily so far. It seems that some older building remains were also built in. The nave of the church was, as far as can be seen above the ground, divided into seven aisles,

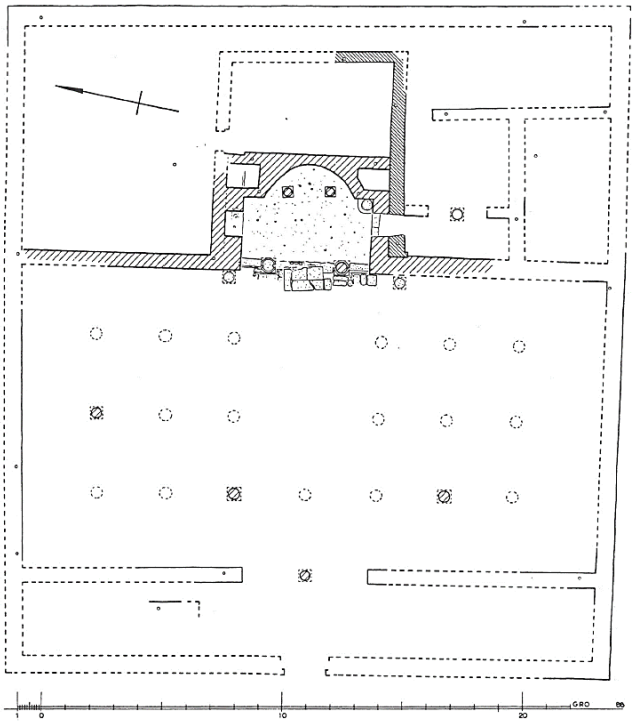


Figure 10. Ground plan of church G-Madīnat Mādi (Narmuthis) (Grossmann 2002, p. 652)

[174] Grossmann 2002: 422; Bresciani 1988: 1-11.

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whereby the central nave corresponded to twice the width of all the other aisles. Here, therefore, an elevation of the central nave may be expected. Furthermore, the distribution of the columns in the naos shows a pronounced west aisle and probably also an east aisle. To the west of the nave there is a narrow, elongated transverse space, the central part of which is the narthex. From it, one could enter the naos through a wide passage, interrupted only by a central column. The northern part of the transverse room seems to contain remains of a staircase. Where the narthex was bordered in the south cannot be seen. [175]

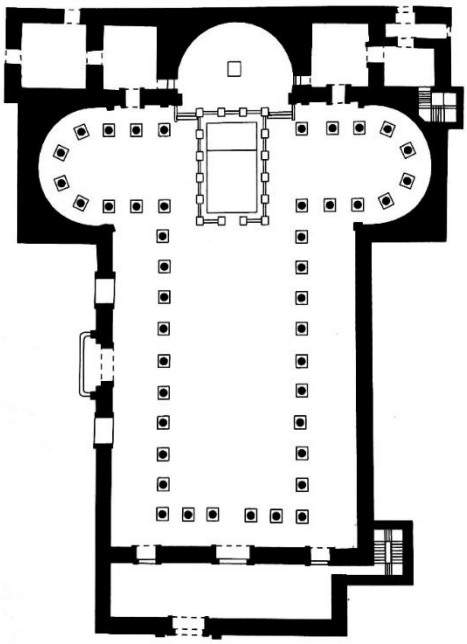


Figure 11. Ground plan of the basilica of Hermopolis Magna-(Al-Ashmunein) (Capuani 2002, p. 176)

Basilica with transept

The Basilica of Hermopolis Magna (Al-Ashmunein) *(fig. 11)*



Figure 12. Ruins of Hermopolis Magna church (Gabra & van Loon 2007, p. 251)

This basilica has a nave separated from the side aisles by two rows of columns, which generally also enclose the transept. A common feature of the transept was that its northern and southern ends were either rectilinear or semicircular. In Middle Egypt, in Menia region, about ten kilometers northwest of Mallawi, are the ruins of the city of Hermopolis. At this ancient historical site, the imposing remains of a large basilica from the Christian era have survived. Its dimensions (sixty-six meters long and forty-six meters wide at the transept) prove that it was certainly the episcopal church of the city. It was built in the first half of the fifth century, probably between 410 and 440 A.D., on the

[175] Grossmann 2002: 422-423, 121-122.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

remains of a temple from the time of Ptolemy III (247-222 B.C.) and belongs to the churches with one nave, two aisles, a western aisle, and a transept. The nave is lined with granite columns crowned with precious Corinthian capitals *(fig. 12)*. In addition, the colonnades of the side aisles enclose the three-nave transept and frame the altar, which stands in front of the apse in the center of the transept. The circular shape of the ends of the transepts must have given the building a particularly impressive appearance, and it was the only known example of this type in Egypt until the discovery of the Basilica of al-Hawariya at Maryūṭ, west of Alexandria. The church complex had two large gates: the first, at the west end, led from the atrium through a narthex into the basilica; the second, on the north side, was an impressive entrance preceded by a propylaeum with four columns. Other propylaea with four columns marked the entrance to the large atrium that led to the basilica. The number of rooms attached to the church is unusual; the room in the northeast corner has a baptismal font embedded in the floor. Therefore, the other rooms next to it could be additional preparation rooms for the baptistery, but its shape is no longer recognizable in detail. There was a series of staircases connected to the church from the outside. There was also a ramp at the western end of the north side, intended for church visitors. The narthex, an entrance porch known in Egyptian church architecture but of which there are few examples, was located on the west side and was connected to the naos of the church by three doors. The main entrance of the church seems to have been on the north side. The door frame and the preceding steps are much richer in their formal design than the corresponding members on the west side. Moreover, this northern entrance

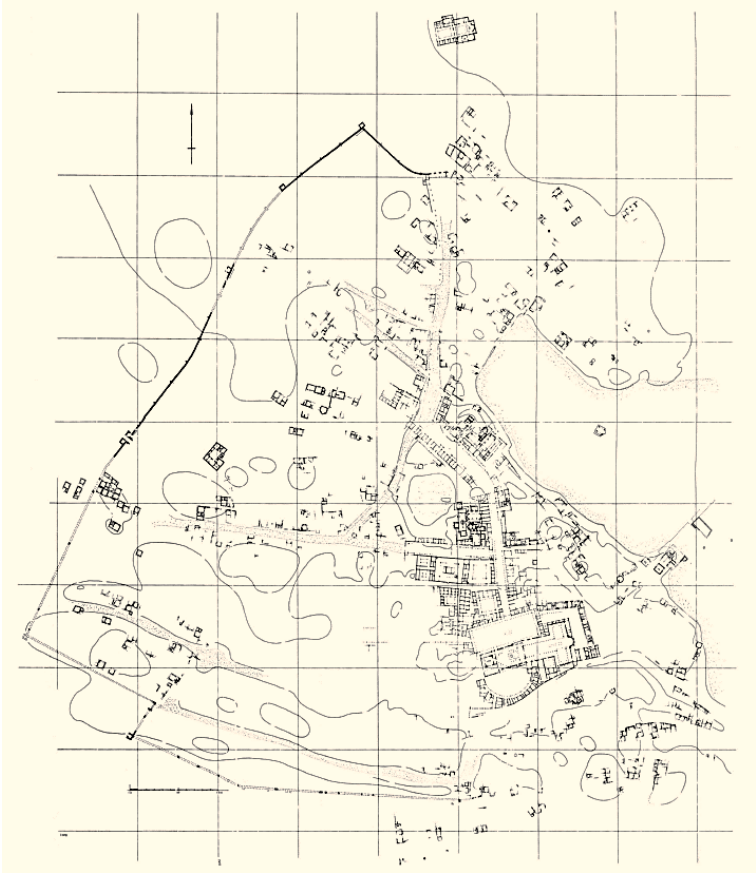


Figure 13. Ground plan of Abū Mīna complex (Grossmann 2002, p. 623)

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is connected to the previously mentioned northern *propylaea* of the church district. This church is a significant building, entirely in the Hellenistic tradition. [176]

Great Basilica – Abū Mīna

The eastmost building of this three-part complex *(fig. 13)* is called the Great Basilica because it was then the largest church in Egypt. It is designed on an impressive scale and built with precious materials. It has been used to receive the multitudes of pilgrims who flocked to the saint's tomb. It goes back to the end of the 5th century, precisely to the time of the emperor Zeno. The basilica was modified and enlarged later at the beginning of the 6th century. [177] The Great Basilica of Abu Mina is the last extension of the Small Basilica and was added in the last quarter of the 5th century to the east of the so-called older eastern annex. It is a transept basilica with two aisles and a nave. This design is relatively rare in early Christian architecture. Measured by the roofed span of the central nave, the most difficult part of the building from the engineering point of view, it is the largest church ever found on Egyptian territory and at the same time, the best preserved among the buildings of the city of Abu Mina. [178] The dimensions of the church are 75 m in length (including the narthex), and 27 m in width for the nave and side aisles, and 51 m with the transept. [179]

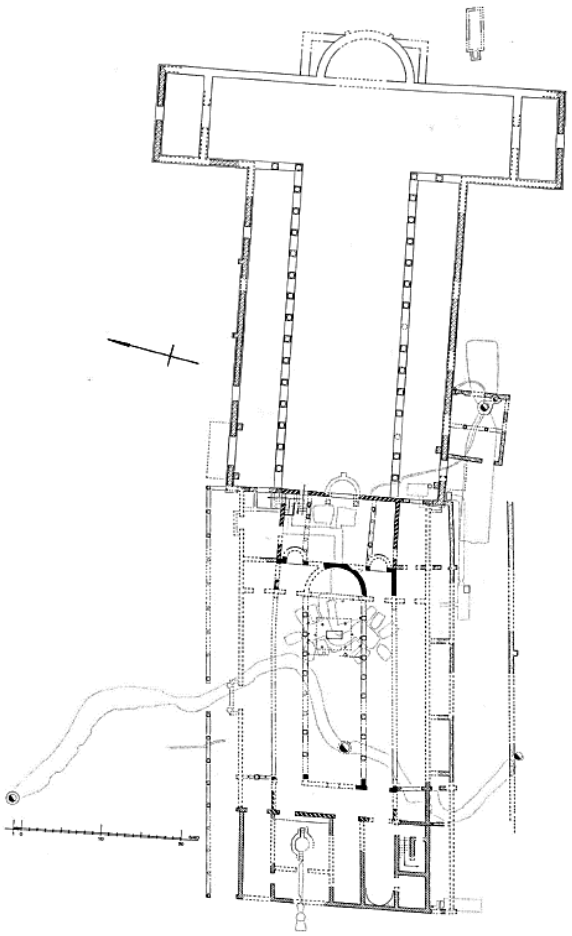


Figure 14. Ground plan of the Great Basilica – Abū Mīna (Grossmann 2002, p. 626)

[176] Grossmann 2002: 441-443; Capuani 2002: 176.
[177] Capuani 2002: 50.
[178] Grossmann 2002: 405-406; Grossmann & Kosciuk 1992: 31-41; Grossmann 1995: 149-159.
[179] Capuani 2002: 51.

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Also, in this building, two phases of construction can be distinguished. The first, somewhat simpler version, dates from the last quarter of the 5th century and consisted of three aisles connected at the east end with an initially single-nave transept *(fig. 14)*. The apse, with its outer curvature interrupted only by two small projections, clearly protruded from the structure on the east side. Lateral *pastophores* flanking the apse were not planned. Rooms that could replace their function were added at the ends of the transept, but of these essentially only the foundations have survived. Remains of the rising suggest that the center once contained two external side entrances. Already during the construction works it turned out that the apse of the church had not been founded stably enough so it had to be encased rectangularly on both sides with heavy supporting templates. It is not certain whether this construction was completed. But a large part of the building certainly existed. Thus, all columns, which were largely uniformly dimensioned *spolia* of torn buildings from Alexandria, were already erected. Thus, the insufficiency of the apse foundations may have become apparent only when the cupola was erected, because the repair measures undertaken indicate that the apse was in danger of falling apart towards the outside. [180]

The enlargement of the Great Basilica, in the course of which the preceding single-nave transept was converted into a three-aisled transept, was probably carried out at the turn of the 5th and 6th centuries. For this purpose, the former transept was extended on both long sides, and its lateral outer wall foundations found a new use as stylobates of the transept colonnades. The nave was thus shortened by the width of the west transept side aisles, while the original apse was fully removed and moved eastward by the same dimension. In addition, it was somewhat larger than the previous building and now had very strong foundations from the beginning, going down deep into the ground. The windows were set between the outer supporting bases, which were raised to five and were much stronger. *Pastophoria* was not initially present here either but was added soon. It is doubtful whether they were part of the program from the beginning, especially since the two doors - as can be seen from the position of the door hinges and the condition of the opening reveals - look more like exterior entrances to the transept than interior doors for the pastophoria. All the other changes are more recent. They include two aedicula niches with free-standing columns at the ends of the transept, which took the place of the side entrances

[180] Grossmann 2002: 406; Grossmann & Kosciuk 1992: 31-41; Grossmann 1995: 149-159.

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apparently contained here in the first phase, as well as two arched walls erected in front of them above high columns, which give the ends of the transept an exedra-like finish. Likewise, the side staircases were added later. This fact, as well as their more accidental, for the public traffic rather unfavorable position, indicates that the church was not provided with galleries. In the area of the crossing, there are the remains of the marble cancelli that surrounded the presbytery, in the center of which there was once the altar surmounted by a ciborium. Other cancelli flanked a *prostoon* that extended almost to the center of the nave, which was intended to keep access to the ambo, located in the middle of the church, clear when the church was full. Later, at the back of the presbytery and in front of the apse, a *synthronon* was added, originally placed on column supports, which was probably occupied by several ecclesiastical dignitaries of the same rank on high feast days. The underground burial chambers in the apse are original. They have to be considered privileged tombs for members of the higher clergy. The third one with a descent in the opposite direction to the west was added later. In connection with the somewhat younger Iustinianus construction of the crypt church, the Great Basilica was also provided with a complete marble incrustation. In front of some of the columns of the church, there are flat rectangular pads built in quarry stone material, slightly protruding forward at the top, at the corners of which vertical wooden posts were erected and held together with a lower wooden frame. In many cases, they were also surrounded by additional barriers. Presumably, these were display places (reliquaries) for the bodies of sacredly venerated men, as they can still be found in a somewhat modernized form in

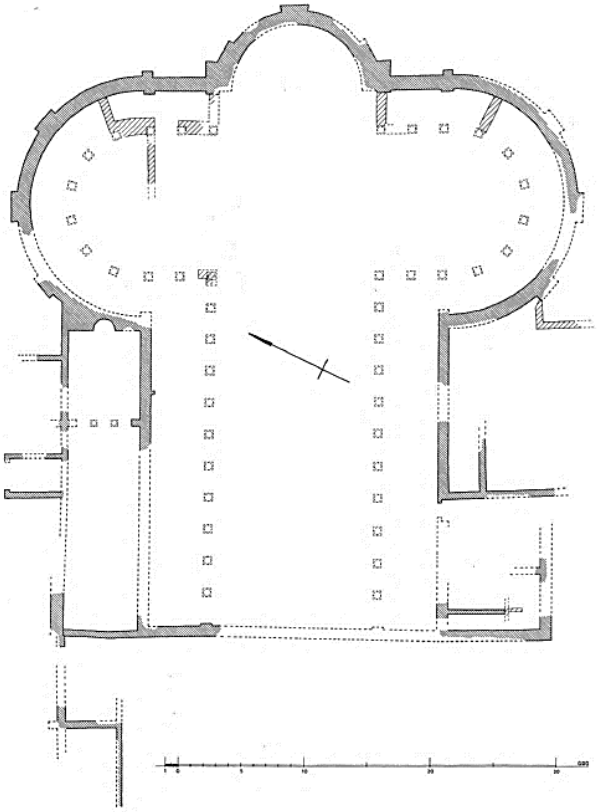


Figure 15. Ground plan of Marea (Ḥawwāriya) – transept basilica (Grossmann 2002, p. 616)

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Coptic monastery churches. There are no traces of sloped, excessively thick walls. Nor is there a western ambulatory. Furthermore, the *pastophoria* on both sides of the apse was added later. [181]

The structure of this basilica is derived from that of the Constantinian basilica of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople, which is the source of all cruciform martyries and the basilica-with-transept design, which forms the arms of the cross. This building must have been designed and built by the imperial architects of Constantinople. The character of its plan and the richness of the used materials indicate that the basilica was erected at the emperor's command. Multicolored marbles covered the limestone masonry. Capitals with two tiers of acanthus crowned the shafts of the columns, and splendid mosaics most probably adorned the concha of the apse. [182]

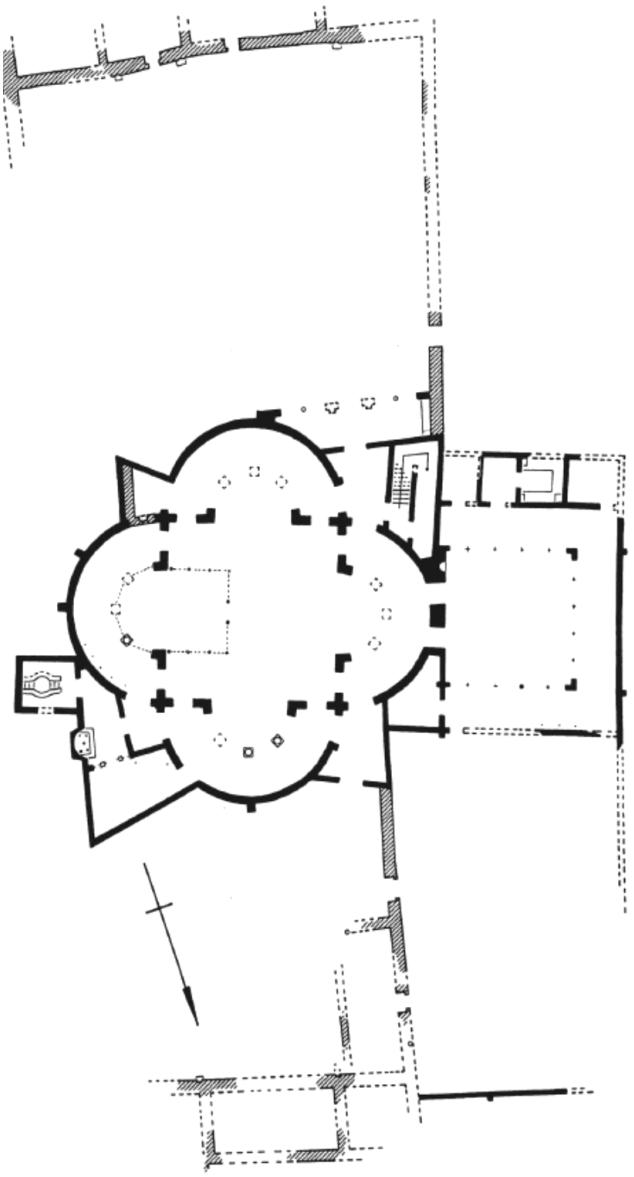


Figure 16. Ground plan of the tetraconch sanctuary of St. Mīnās (Grossmann 2002, p. 697)

Marea (Ḥawwāriya) – transept basilica

A little further inland, near the Bedouin village of Ḥawāriya on the southern shore of Lake Mareotis, which today has disintegrated into several small settlements, the remains of an extensive city complex can be recognized, which according to *opinio communis* is identified with the city of Marea already mentioned by Thucydides. In the harbor area of this city, the remains of a large transept building have been preserved *(fig. 15)*, the transept ends of which are rounded as in the large basilica of Hermopolis Magna. Because of the considerable width of the transept (only about 2 m narrower

[181] Grossmann 2002: 407-409; Schläger 1965: 122-125; Grossmann, Jaritz & Römer 1984: 131-154.
[182] Capuani 2002: 51.

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than the aisle of the nave), the ground plan of the church is of a very squat shape, an impression that is reinforced by the apse, which is hardly emphasized in depth. Nevertheless, also this church with a clear nave span of about 12.85 m is to be counted among the large Egyptian churches. A west aisle is missing as in almost all churches in the area on the Mediterranean coast. There is also no narthex. The colonnades are connected to the west wall of the church on both sides of the nave with short pilasters (antennas), as was customary in the general architecture of the empire from time immemorial, in contrast to the Egyptian custom, and was also necessary from the point of view of the architecture. The outer walls of the transept are significantly stronger than the side walls of the nave, which probably seemed necessary because of their curved course. In addition, these walls are provided with wide external supports. The apse walls also contain corresponding external reinforcements. *Pastophoria*, as so often in the Mediterranean area, was not foreseen from the beginning. They were added later by bricking up the inner ends of the eastern transept side aisles. Otherwise, the church has several side rooms of different sizes on either side of the nave. The room at the east end of the north side is provided with an apse and has a vestibule entered through a *tribelon*. Chronologically, the building probably dates from the 6th century. [183]

Central Buildings

Tetraconch

The Sanctuary of St. Mīnās (Dayr Abū Mīnā)- The East Basilica *(fig. 16)*

The fabled city of Saint Mīnās is situated in Maryūṭ (Mareotis), which lies in the desert southwest of Alexandria.[184] About one and a half kilometers east of the sanctuary-town is the remains of a church whose plan is especially interesting. The building dates from Iustinianus's time, which was in the middle of the sixth century. It is a tetraconch, and each apse is semi-circular, accented by three columns on the inside and curvilinear masonry on the outside. The central room, intended to support the weight of the roof, probably a cupola, has four massive pillars. On its west side, the church is flanked by an atrium with porticoes on the north, west, and south sides. A room with a baptismal font occupies the northeast angle. The edifice was probably a monastic church. This hypothesis is plausible because of its location outside the sacred

[183] Grossmann 2002: 393-394.
[184] Kamil 1987,1990: 120.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

complex and of the large number of monastic cells (about one hundred) discovered in its surroundings. [185]

This church was erected above an earlier mudbrick basilica which might have been destroyed by the time of erecting this one. In comparison to the typical Iustinianus tomb church of Abū Mīnā, this new building is considerably more modest, but it represents the type of a four-conical complex much more clearly. Several irregular rooms in the northeast corner of the church belong to the baptistery of the church. It is possible to distinguish between an outer vestibule with surrounding benches, an inner vestibule with an altarpiece and a baptismal room provided with a deep piscina. The latter projects eastward out of the building. The piscina itself sits exactly above the piscina of the former building, so its location was fixed from the beginning. However, it does not lie in the middle of the room but is pushed all the way against the east wall, so the eastern steps cannot be used at all. The staircase to the roof is located in the diagonally opposite the southwest corner of the church. [186]

Although the tetraconch architectural style of this church was very rare in Egypt it was common throughout the Byzantine Empire, especially in Asia Minor and Syria. Thus, the tetra-conch church type represents the imperial Byzantine architecture in Egypt.[187] Moreover, the presence of

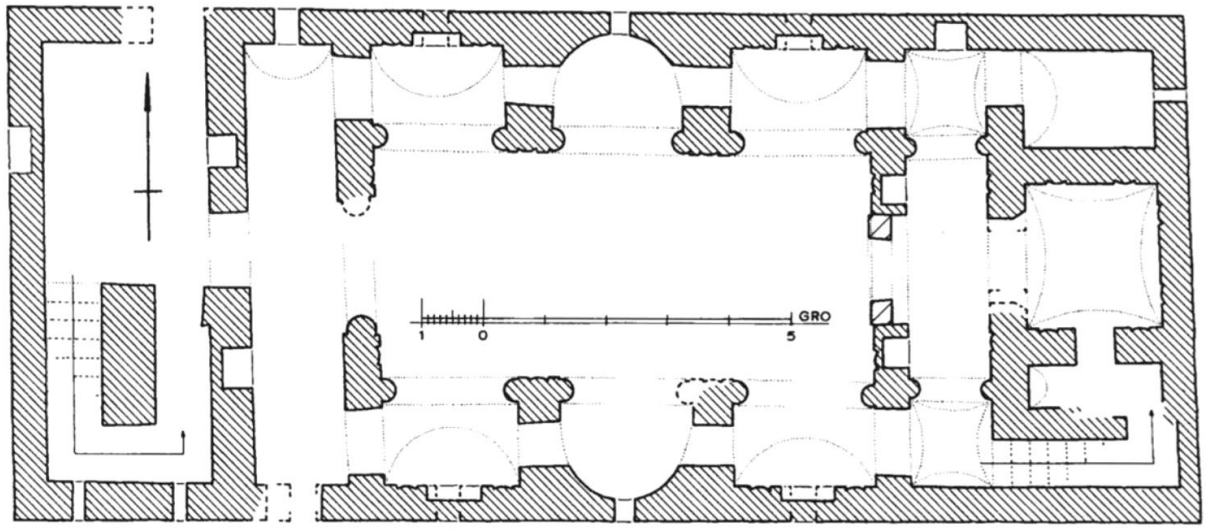


Figure 17. Ground plan of Al-Ḥayz (Baḥarīya Oasis) – the so-called Saint George church (Grossmann 2002, p. 682)

[185] Capuani 2002: 53.
[186] Grossmann 2002: 490-491; Grossmann & Jaritz 1980: 222.
[187] Grossmann 2002: 37.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

square or rectangular courtyards, surrounded on all four or at least on three sides by pillar or column portraits is familiar in Hellenistic architecture, but are also found in numerous palaces of the Roman Empire. [188]

Al-Ḥayz (Baḥarīya Oasis) – the so-called Saint George church

The naos of this church is the simplified form of a tetra-conch complex, in which only the side conches are actually provided with an inner rounding, while the conches in the longitudinal axis were omitted or mutated into rectangular spatial units. The central nave is surrounded by oblong pillars, which are formally shaped as contracted columns, with corner supports shaped in the manner of heart-bundle columns. As in the Iustinianus construction phase of the tomb church of Abu Mina, the side aisles are interrupted in the area of the side conches. However, while in the crypt church free passageways were preserved between the columns, in al-Hayz separate narrow passages were made through the conch walls. The remaining side aisle compartments were decorated with small niches and upper windows. It is an elongated building with a narthex, a naos divided by elongated pillars into several different spatial units, with a western ambulatory, the *khurus*, and finally a three-room sanctuary *(fig. 17)*. In addition, on the north side, there was a once-covered external portico. The *khurus* closing the naos on the east is divided into three sections by transverse arches starting from half-columns. It communicates with the central nave through a wider triumphal arch, and with the side aisles through narrower openings. Later, the triumphal arch was narrowed using inserted embrasures. The sanctuary, which adjoins the *khurus* on the east, is divided into three parts as usual. Because of a wide staircase placed at the southern end, the middle sanctuary did not come to lie in the axis. Otherwise, the sanctuary has a square floor plan and on the right side, there is a narrow, low annex (*sottoscala*) under the staircase. The northern annex is entered directly from the *khurus* and has a window in the eastern wall. The gallery of the church can be entered both from the described staircase on the south side of the sanctuary and from a staircase next to the narthex. From the northern gallery, one could reach the roof of the northern external portico at the same time. Contrary to the *opinio communis*, this church cannot be dated before the middle of the 7th century because of the present *khurus*. [189]

Oblong domed church

[188] Grossmann 2002: 105.
[189] Grossmann 2002: 466-467; Abū al-Makārim- ed./ tr. Evetts 1895, 1969: 258.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

Oblong domed church – *Khnum* temple, Elephantine

In the pronaos of the temple of Khnum at Elephantine, the ruins of a small oblong building equipped with angle pillars have survived *(fig. 18)*. The central space is square and was in all probability covered with a simple pseudo-monastic vault similar in shape to a dome, as was more frequently used in provincial buildings in Egypt. Remarkably, the gallery was only executed in full width on the north, west, and south sides. The eastern part of the church with the three-room sanctuary was kept narrower, the side walls of which extended into the naos area up to the height of the front pair of pillars, while beyond them the side walls of the naos continued eastwards. On the north side, the wall in question extended to the preserved remnant of the front barrier wall of the temple pronaos, so that a small but deep niche of space open to the west was created here. On the south side, the outer wall in question extended to the level of the east wall of the sanctuary and could have accommodated a stairway. In terms of the liturgical use of space, the entire area of the east aisle was openly assigned to the presbytery, as is also the case in numerous basilicas. Traces of the *stipites* of the *cancelli* were found at the level of the converging inner legs of the eastern angle pillars, while the side doors were accommodated in the narrow passages to the sides of the pillars. On Egyptian territory, this small church in the pronaos of the temple of Khnum on Elephantine is the only example of an oblong building with angle pillars that have been attested so far, but

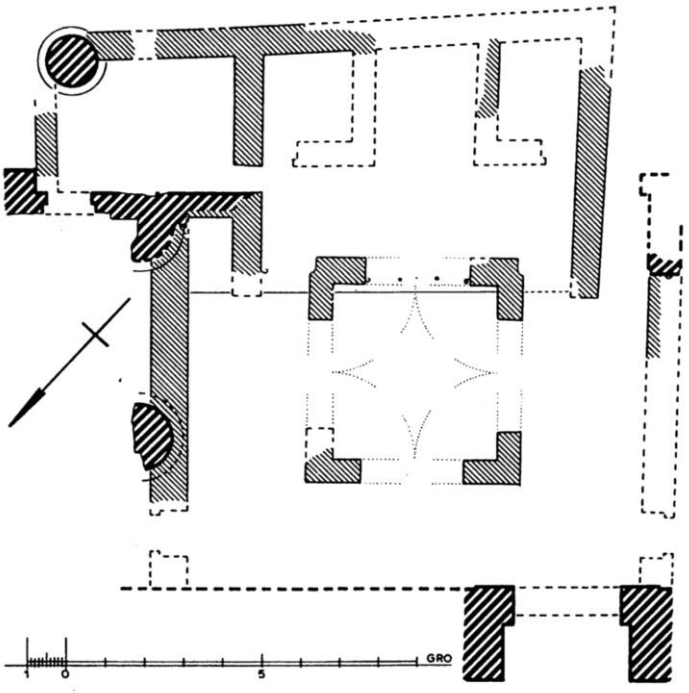


Figure 18. Ground plan of Oblong domed church – Khnum temple, Elephantine (Grossmann 2002, p. 677)

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there is no doubt that there were once more of them. The type also played an important role in the medieval architecture of Nubia, where a not insignificant number of examples of this type survived until the construction of the Nasser reservoir. [190]

The eastern church- Philae

The eastern church on the island of Philae is an asymmetrical four-aisled pier basilica. Unfortunately, there is no architectural record of it that meets modern requirements. The existing plans were made by L. Borchardt in March 1896. After that, the building was soon flooded, so a number of peculiarities of the ground plan can no longer be satisfactorily explained. Also, on the occasion of the transfer of the temple complexes of the island to the neighboring island of Agilkiya, the church was unfortunately not considered worthy to be moved on this occasion or to be at least temporarily drained for a more detailed examination of the construction. The strange ground plan of the church *(fig. 19)* results from the irregularities of the available building site, whereby the responsible builders did not take the trouble to compensate for these irregularities at least for the interior design by an appropriate arrangement of the side rooms. Only on the west side, a part of the irregularly extending plot was used for such side rooms. On the south side, on the other hand, apparently, they did not want to do without the full use of the triangular side zone, so here the

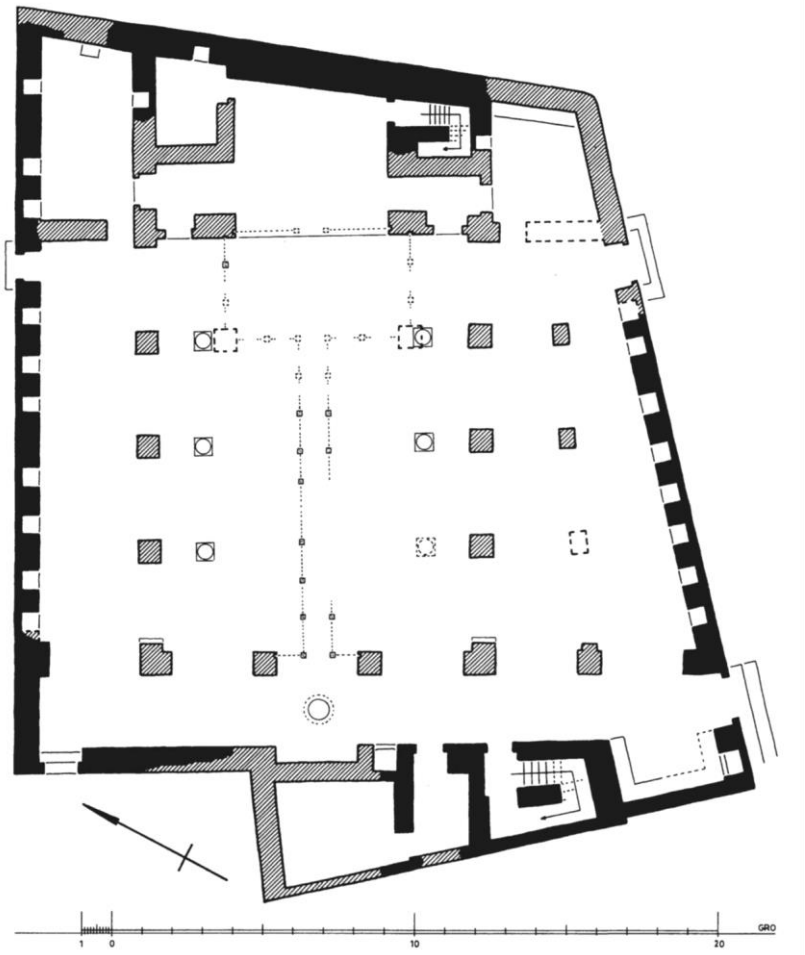


Figure 19. Ground plan of the eastern church- Philae (Grossmann 2002, p. 678)

[190] Grossmann 2002: 460-461; Grossmann 1980: 75-86.

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southern side aisle had to be divided into two narrower aisles tapering to the east. Not convincing is also the renunciation of the straightening of the eastern end. The existing not inconsiderable irregularities in the sanctuary area could easily have been avoided by a different design of the staircase, for example in a single-run design. [191]

The scheme of the construction, at least in idea, is that of a three-aisled pillared basilica with a west ambulatory. But it is obvious that here, as can be seen above all from the arrangement of the barriers, an east aisle was once also intended. The apse was replaced by a room shape roughly corresponding to an upside-down "T", remotely reminiscent of the shape of a tri-conch. The front transverse arms of the room were also entered through their own doors, like the side conchs of a tri-conch. According to the diary notes of L. Borchardt, the left door had a lintel crowned with a tympanum. The spandrels behind the transverse arms, however, were not formed as lateral appendages to the lateral *pastophoria* also present here but were separated as separate rooms and had their entrances from the center. The southern room is the already mentioned staircase. The sanctuary was elevated by a step made of black stones, probably basalt. On the right side, there were remains of an opus sectile floor made of granite, quartzite, porphyry. [192]

The formation of the presbytery intervening in the area of the central nave was remarkably rich. Grooves to the front are conspicuously not symmetrical, and in the sides of the front, reveals of the central triumphal arch indicate that the presbytery projected into the area of the nave, but at the same time the triumphal arch opening itself was barred. On the north side, even a remnant of a stipe has survived in *situ* from the cancelli. Unfortunately, it is unknown how far the presbytery extended into the area of the central nave. To complement it, I should point out two other rows of posts that belonged to the lateral boundary of a *prostoon* extending to the western end of the nave and that were certainly connected to the presbytery. However, the lateral *cancelli* of the presbytery could not have been simply extended by themselves to the beginning of this *prostoon*. It must be remembered, however, that probably also this church, as was common in Upper Egyptian church construction, was provided with an east aisle, in which case two indented pillars or columns must be added, to which the lateral enclosure of the presbytery referred, and at whose height perhaps the front end of the presbytery must be added. Unfortunately, there are no

[191] Grossmann 2002: 461; Lyons 1896: 32; Grossmann 1970: 29-41.
[192] Grossmann 2002: 462.

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observations from the excavators of that time that could be related to two such internal supports. Nevertheless, with a corresponding regular addition of the *prostoon* stipites to the east, one arrives at the same height. [193]

The *prostoon* itself extended to the west up to the level of the western row of columns of the nave, the central nave of which was also barred against the central area of the western ambulatory by corresponding cancelli. The latter was of special importance, which was also emphasized by a niche-like recess in the rear wall. In the center of this part of the room there was a circular indentation in the floor, apparently widening towards the bottom, of as yet unclear purpose. This church can be dated to the 5th century and is thus considered monumental evidence of the simultaneous presence of pagans and Christians in the population of the island. However, according to the workpieces picked up in this church, which is mainly barrier plates, this can hardly be the case. The slabs show a decoration that can hardly be imagined before the end of the 6th century. The building may therefore have been erected at the earliest around the turn of the 6th to the 7th century. [194]

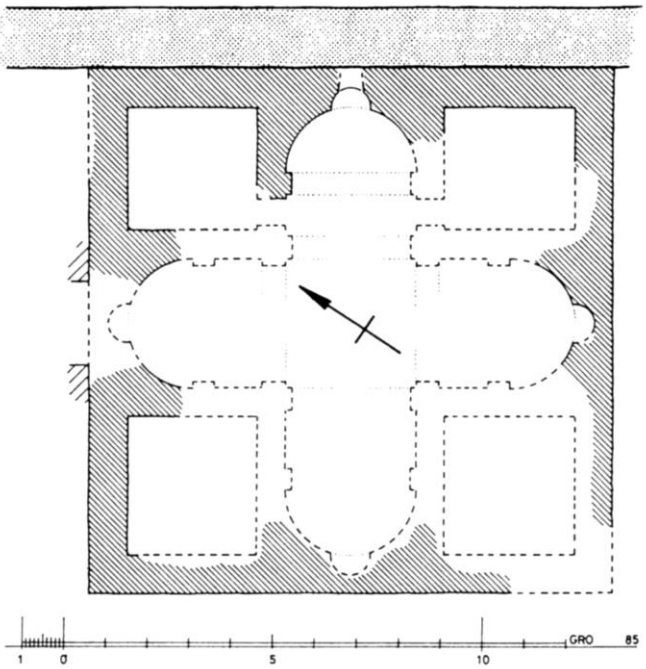


Figure 20. Ground plan of Dayr ad-Dīk – north basilica of Antinoopolis Philae (Grossmann 2002, p. 657)

Cruciform

Dayr ad-Dīk – north basilica of Antinoopolis

[193] Grossmann 2002: 462-463; Clarke 1912: 90.
[194] Grossmann 2002: 463-464; Lyons 1896.

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The small, still highly buried mud-brick building *(fig. 20)* on the north wall of Dayr ad-Dīk, north of Antinoopolis, close to the river, is one of the rare examples of a cross-shaped church, which, on the other hand, is documented several times in the early Christian Byzantine area as a burial church on larger church complexes and was probably adopted as a type from there. It is a square building with an inscribed inner cross and square filling spaces in all four corners. In contrast to the examples in Asia Minor and Greece, the arms of the cross are divided by transverse arches and bulged out at the ends in the manner of conches, which is probably due to constructional reasons. The apex of each conch contains a small semicircular conch niche. The entrance seems to have been on the north side, where younger additions are interrupted for access. [195]

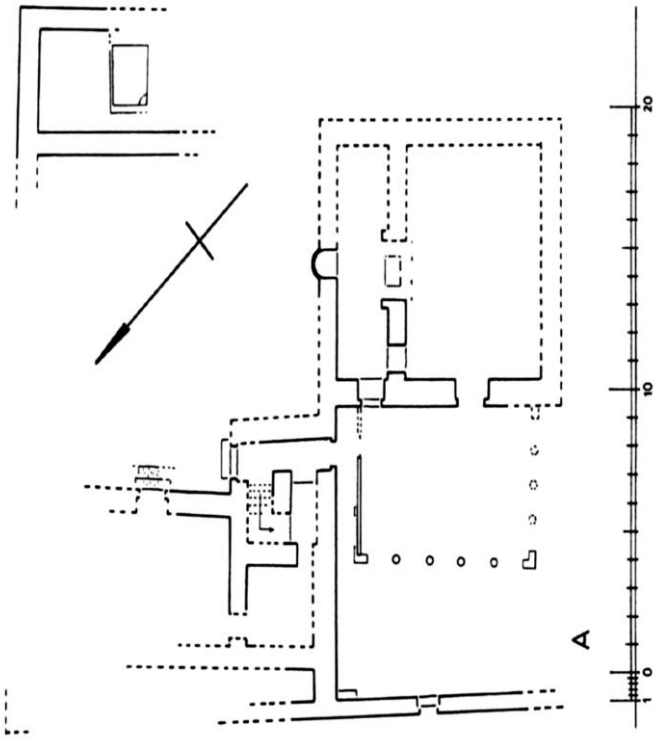


Figure 21. Ground plan of single-nave chapel (B church)- Abū Mīna complex (Grossmann 2002, p. 637)

Small single-nave churches/chapels

The chapels in Abū Mīna complex

[195] Grossmann 2002: 429-430; Grossmann 1986: 21-28.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

The most clearly structured burial chapels were found in the area of Abū Mīna, the pilgrimage center at the tomb of St. Menas. All of them are private churches, each of which was built in connection with a family burial place. In many cases, they are also connected with a residential house, which served either as the residence of the priest in charge or for the occasional stay of the founder of the church and his family. The chapels are modest buildings but executed as fully liturgical churches. They each have a secular area clearly separated from the sanctuary by barriers. In a central niche of the sanctuary or in front of it, traces of the location of an altar have also been found in several cases. On the other hand, a front row of columns, representing a front triumphal arch and separating an eastern ambulatory from the secular area, was nowhere present, in accordance with the building tradition in the north of the country. The entrance to the burial chamber was usually located in the secular area of the chapels. [196]

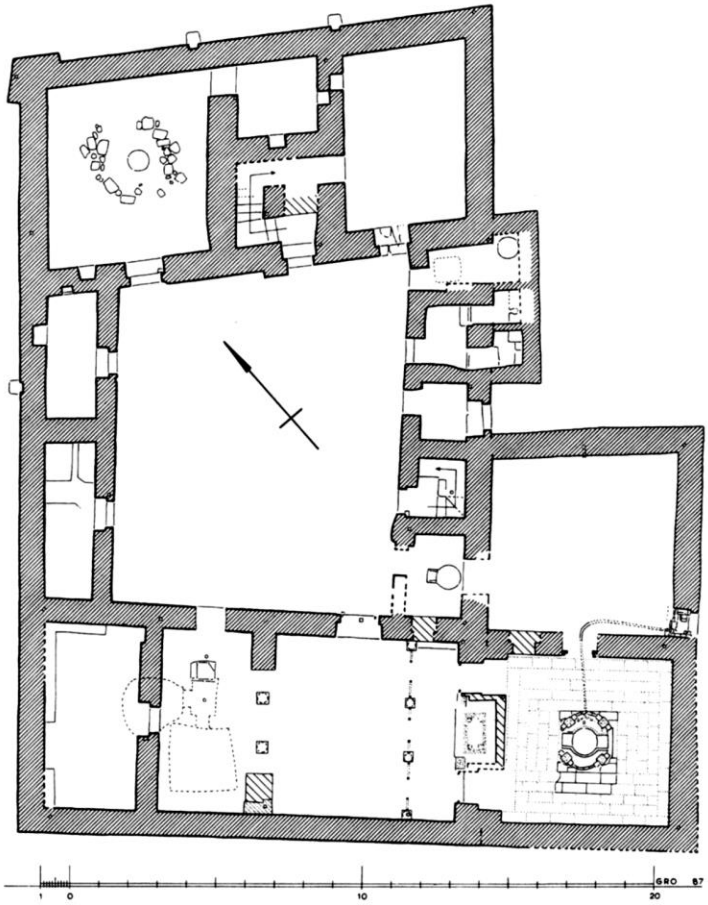


Figure 22. Ground plan of single-nave chapel (church with baptistery)- Abū Mīna complex, West (Grossmann 2002, p. 636)

A characteristic example is the small church to the east of the Great Basilica, probably belonging to the second half of the 6th century *(fig. 21)*. It consists of an approximately square naos, rather wide than long, which was entered through a normal door from the north. In the sanctuary, which adjoins it to the east, all the usual individual rooms have been combined into one continuous transverse room, whose partition wall against the naos has a larger opening in the middle and a smaller one at the northern end. In addition, the sanctuary could be entered directly from the outside through its own door on the north side. It contained an apse in the center of the eastern

[196] Grossmann 2002: 333-334; Müller, Wiener & Grossmann 1967: 465.

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rear wall, but this was so small that it may have had only a symbolic meaning without any spatial function of its own. The altar was located in the passageway of the central sanctuary opening and was built over a flat platform with a painting imitating a marble covering. In front of it, protruding into the naos area by about 0.35 m and with a clear distance of 0.50 m from the altar pedestal, were the traces of the wooden barriers that delimited the area where the lay people could stay from the presbytery area. The entrance to the underground burial chamber was unusually located in the northern part of the sanctuary, consisting of a narrow stairwell, usually covered with a wooden shutter, in the southern wall of which a small opening, walled up again after each burial by an upright stone slab, led to the burial chamber located approximately under the axis of the building. The chapel was located in the middle of a walled area which, apart from the usual residential house, also included a wine press. The latter probably served to provide financial security for the estate, as required by Iustinianus's ecclesiastical legislation to ensure regular liturgical celebrations. [197]

Much richer is the church, a small building complex, also dateable to the second half of the 6th century, in the north-western sector of the city, near the north-west gate of the enclosure *(fig. 22)*. It had a square naos, from which a narthex was subsequently separated to the west, which also contained the normally covered entrance to an underground burial complex. An additional

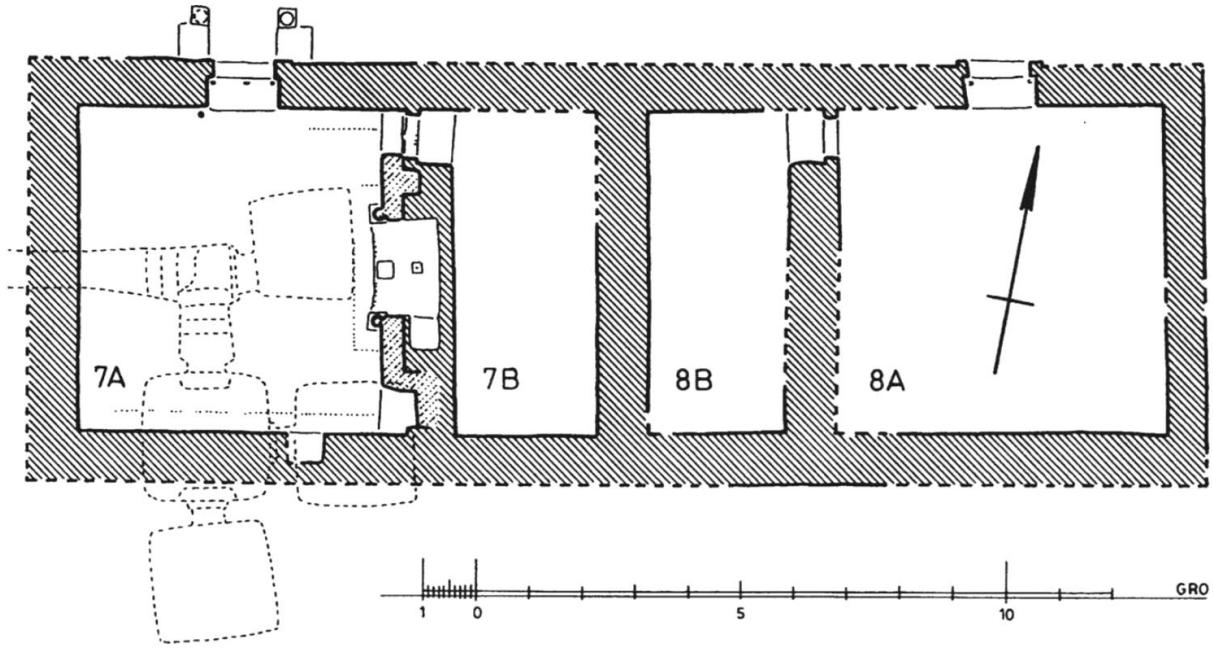


Figure 23. Ground plan of single-nave chapel (church with hypogea)-Abū Mīna complex (Grossmann 2002, p. 700)

[197] Grossmann 2002: 334-335; Grossmann et al. 1991: 479-482.

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room to the west was surrounded on two sides by benches. It was probably not so much a substitute for an atrium as a meeting room, which was not usual in this case due to the private ownership. The sanctuary of this chapel was separated from the laymen's area by a wooden barrier that ran in a straight line across the room. In the middle, it widened into a wide, rectangular altar room that penetrated deeply into the rear wall, in whose floor surface, raised by one step, imprints of a rectangular box altar could be seen. The front opening reveals were probably flanked by separately erected full columns, which are missing today. They carried a front arch that continued into the room to a half-dome decorated with a shell. On either side of the chancel, two lateral passages provided access to a larger rear room, which in the center accommodated a baptismal piscina lowered into the floor and surmounted by a ciborium. The room with the piscina and an antechamber was added at a later date. The original end of the chapel was at the level of the rear wall of the chancel. This older building phase also had a baptistery with a somewhat simpler piscina with steps on one side only. It was housed in the northern side room of the sanctuary. There were entrances on the west side and on the south wall from the sanctuary. The other buildings on the property included a kitchen and latrine, a block-like dwelling house, a workshop (mill), and several storerooms, which were grouped

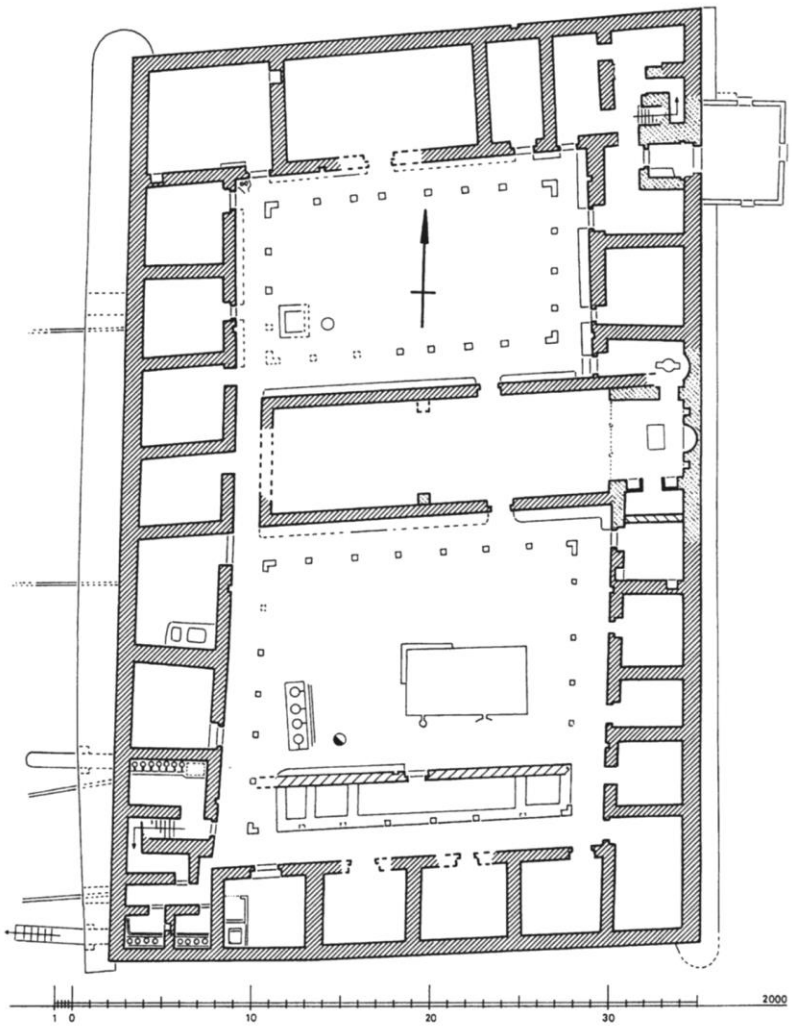


Figure 24. Ground plan of single-nave chapel-Marea (today Ḥawwārīyya) (Grossmann 2002, p. 617)

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

together with the chapel around an inner courtyard. [198]

Chapels with real hypogea accessible via stairs have been observed in the Abū Mīna area in two cases so far. An example is the monk's chapel in the eastern area *(fig. 23)*, which was later converted into a burial chapel. This chapel was entered by a descent of stairs on the western outer side and consisted of two staggered storeys with an upper single chamber and a lower, not quite complete cubiculum. Another wall shell was added to the eastern partition against the rear side room to create the necessary depth for a small rectangular altar space. There was a *stipes* for the position of the altar, on which an altar was probably fixed. The former rear side room of the chapel was converted into an apse side room. Finally, a rich *prothyron* was added in front of the entrance. Finally, a rich *prothyron* was added in front of the entrance. This chapel also belongs to the second half of the 6th century. The same applies to a chapel in the eastern part of the city of Abū Mīna. It, too, originated from a former dwelling house, albeit with a more complicated ground plan, whose main room was converted into a chapel. On the south side, the descent to an underground tomb with several rooms has been preserved. [199]

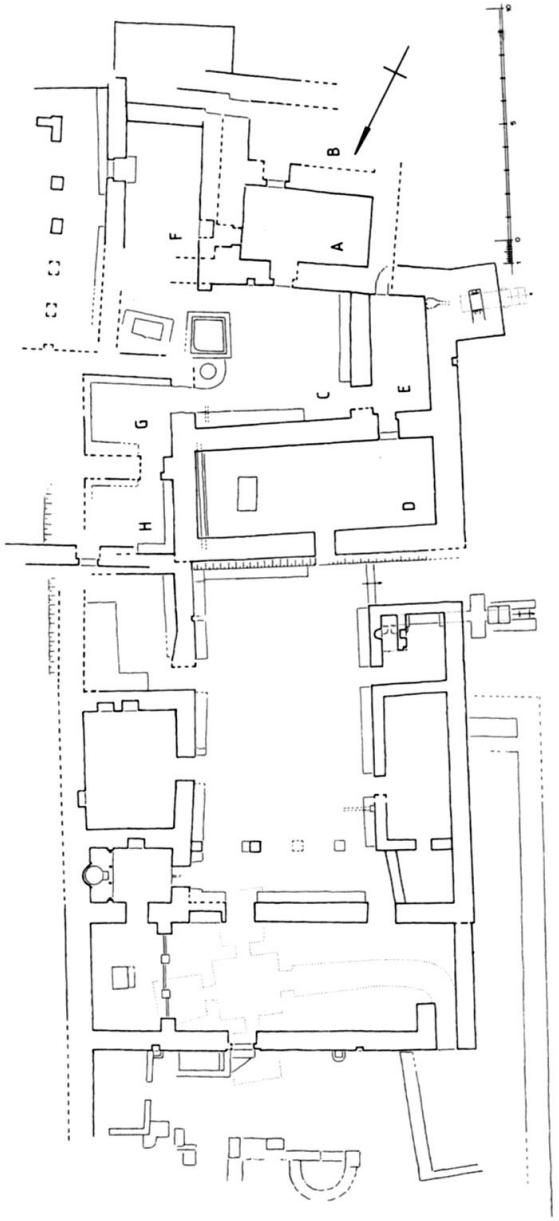


Figure 25. Ground plan of single-nave chapel-Marea (today Ḥawwārīyya) (Grossmann 2002, p. 618)

Small single-nave chapels are also included as side rooms or auxiliary structures in public buildings. In the southern urban area as well as on the outskirts of the old city of Marea (today

[198] Grossmann 2002: 335; Abd el-Aziz Negm 1993: 129- 137.
[199] Grossmann 2002: 336, 337; Müller, Wiener & Grossmann 1967: 467; Abd el-Aziz Negm 1993: 129- 137.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

Ḥawwāriyya), two buildings with larger courtyards were uncovered, which are presumably to be interpreted as charitable institutions such as old people's homes. The small chapels attached to them have their own baptistery. Obviously, unbaptized persons were also admitted to these houses. [200]

Single-nave chapels of Marea (today Ḥawwāriyya)

A single-aisle church, arranged between two courtyards was found to the south, in the central part of the present village of Ḥawāriyya, in a complex of buildings *(fig. 24)* known as a *villa rustica*. Both courtyards of this building are surrounded in the manner of peristyles with circumferential porticoes and outer sequences of rooms. The only entrance is on the east side of

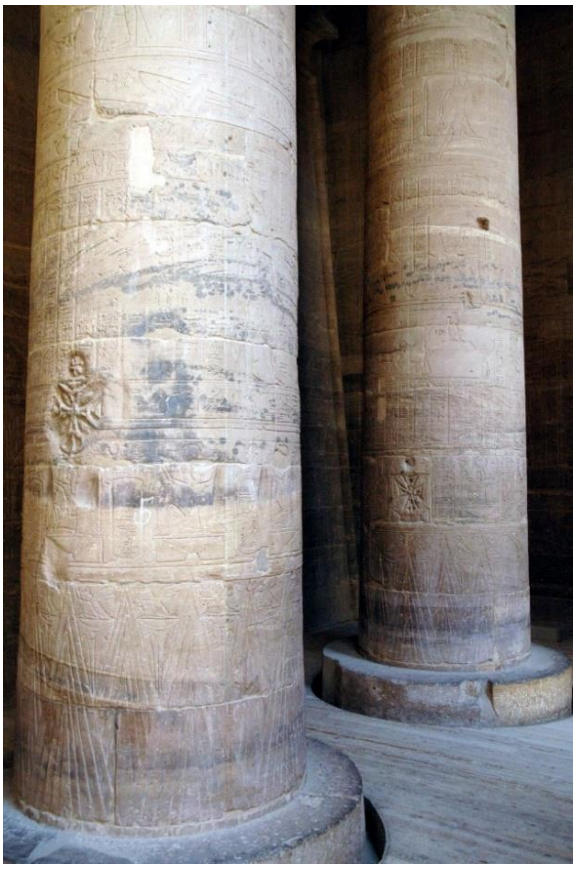


Figure 26. reused columns-St. Stephen church in the pronaos of the temple of Isis at Philae, retrieved from https://1.bp.blogspot.com/-zlKUf4GnSKs/WoAa4Nvcw1I/AAAAAAAAFdo/d3ruDWlNsaoB4Ou7Q3CMnUiahwteN_ooACLcBGAs/s1600/Flickr_-_Gaspa_-_File%252C_tempio_di_Iside_%25289%2529.jpg



Figure 27. reused columns-St. Stephen church in the pronaos of the temple of Isis at Philae, retrieved from https://4.bp.blogspot.com/-2hP6YJBXmcI/WoAaxynUWDI/AAAAAAAAFdw/22OhwjcNuOsJ9OT3PrfRQow6QcBNOjGJwCLcBGAs/s1600/Copt_Cross_Philae.JPG

[200] Grossmann 2002: 42.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

the north peristyle. Diagonally opposite, in the southwest corner of the south peristyle, there are several latrines and a bathing room. Recently, the complex has been considered a house for pilgrims to the Menās Center. However, it is more likely to be an early Christian home for the elderly. The small church is situated between the two rows of columns in such a way that only to the west of it a narrow passage is left free for the internal connection of both courtyards. It contains an elongated single-nave, from which a rectangular chancel is divided at the east end by silk-covered walls and a barrier still recognizable in traces of standing. Remains of the base of the altar are also preserved. Several unusually large wall niches are set into the side walls of the room. The eastern end consists of a small apse. Furthermore, the altar room is provided with side rooms on the two sides, which have the function of *pastophoria*. The northern side room also served as a baptistery. and had in the center a baptismal piscina let into the floor. Both side rooms can be entered directly from the sanctuary. In addition, the baptistery has an external entrance from the west. The construction dates to the second half of the 5th century. [201]

A second single-nave church of a very similar elongated shape was found in the southern area of the same village Ḥawāriyya. It is the northernmost member of a larger, but much more modestly constructed building complex, which also consists of several harbors and surrounding rooms. The church itself is entered from the outside on the north side. Two other entrances are found on the south side and provide a connection with the first courtyard adjoining on this side. Later, a small, covered *portico* was presented to the church on this side. Inside the church, at the eastern end, a rectangular chancel is divided by lateral templates, which could have been used as a triumphal arch, and by set barriers. In the

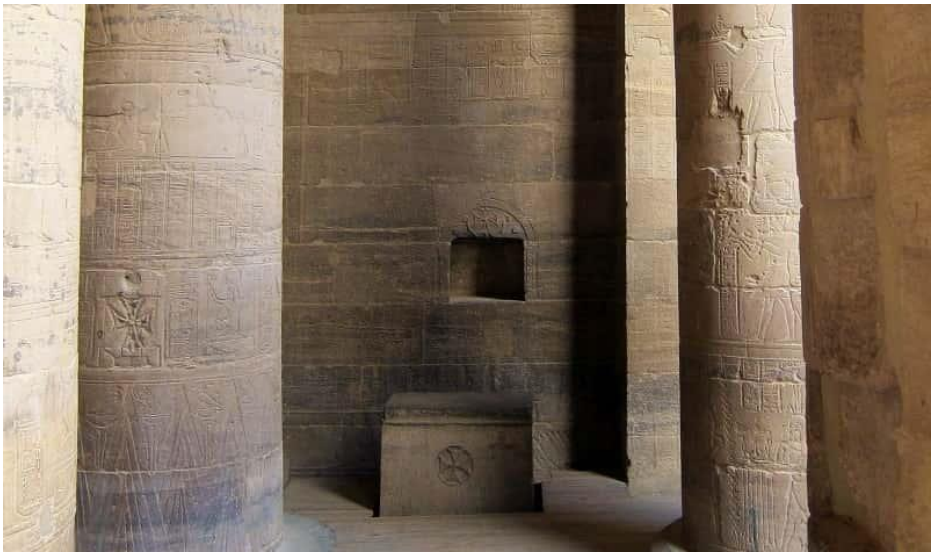


Figure 29. reused pharaonic altar block-St. Stephen church in the pronaos of the temple of Isis at Philae (Capuani 2002, p. 240)

[201] Grossmann 2002: 394-395; Rodziewicz 1988: 271.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

middle of it, there are preserved remains of the altar substructure including a small step placed in front of it. On the south side, at the same level, there is a narrow apse annex, which can be entered both from the chancel and from the courtyard adjoining the church to the south. Its east wall contains a segmental niche. In front of it is an area raised by a low step and separated by barriers, with a baptismal piscina let into the floor, which was intended for occasional or emergency baptisms for those old and sick who were still unbaptized. Below the church, there is a subterranean hypogeum on the floor, to which a long, curved stairway leads down *(fig. 25)*. The entrance is located at the outer northwest end of the church. The hypogeum itself consists of a square central space surrounded on three sides by burial chambers. The latter was intended for several burials and had small window-like openings in the partitions, which were to be walled up by matching stone slabs but were reopened. It is probable that this was the burial place of the founding family of the building. The whole complex of this old people's home was rebuilt several times, but it seems that the oldest buildings, which can be dated to the 5th century, were not intended for such a purpose. The transformation of the buildings in question seems to have taken place later. The small church with the adjoining courtyard to the south belongs to the youngest parts of the building complex and can be dated to the 6th century. [202]

Finally, there were also several small, but fully equipped and therefore fully liturgical single-nave chapels in the monasteries, such as the small north church in the area of the Quṣūr al-ʿIzayla of Kellia, which dates back to the second quarter of the 7th century, and a chapel from the Jeremiah monastery in Saqqara. [203]

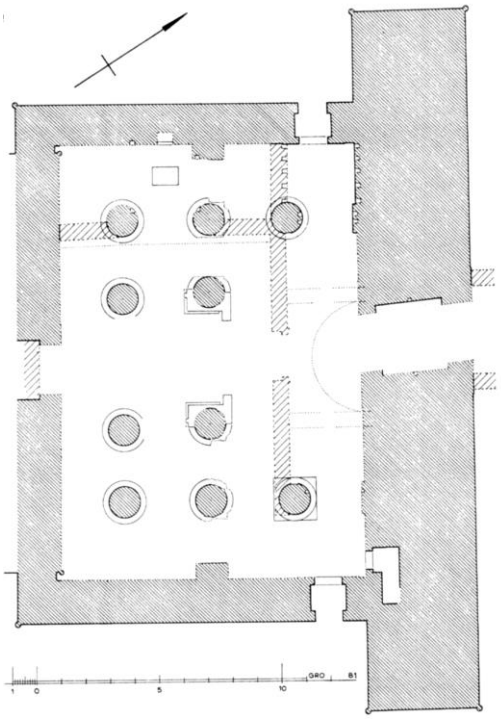


Figure 28. Figure 28. Ground plan of St. Stephen church in the pronaos of the temple of Isis at Philae (Grossmann 2002, p. 679)

Churches built in pagan temples!

St. Stephen church in the *pronaos* of the temple of Isis

[202] Grossmann 2002: 395-396; Abdal-Fatah & Grossmann 2000: 23-41.
[203] Grossmann 2002: 43; Quibell 1908: 65.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

at Philae

The church of St. Stephen, built under Bishop Theodoros (526-559?) in the temple of Isis on the island of Philae, reused the east-west orientation of the two rows of columns of the pronaos. Thus, only one southern side wall at the level of the columns of the temple *(figs. 26, 27)* forecourt was needed to give the room the impression of a three-aisled naos *(fig. 28)*. For the sanctuary, a transverse wall was inserted at the level of the eastern pair of columns, and a niche decorated in shallow relief in the manner of an aedicula was set into the rear wall of the transverse space thus divided. In the center of the room, an altar was placed, which was a reused pharaonic altar block *(fig. 29)*, decorated with a cross on the front. The division of the apse side rooms was made by curtains.

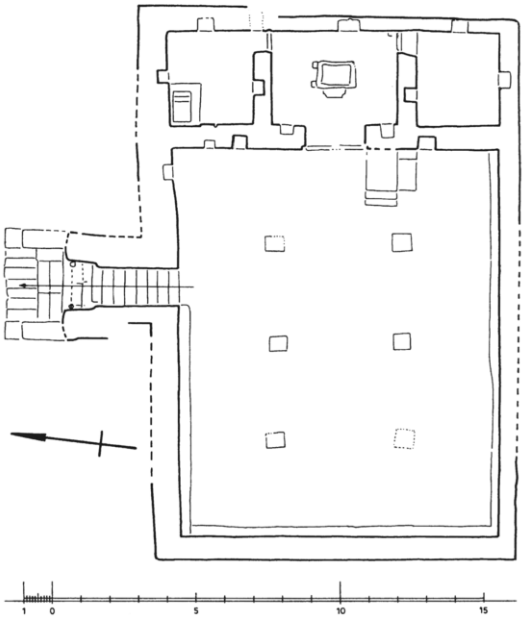


Figure 30. Ground plan of the southern church of Qaṣr ʿīsa 1 (Grossmann 2002, p. 701)

The southeastern corner room, located slightly outside the lateral alignment, could have been used as a baptistery. [204]

Monastic churches

Three-aisled Basilica (nave and 2 aisles)

The western church in Qasr al-Wakhayda and the southern church of Qaṣr ʿīsa 1 – Kellia

The western church in Qaṣr al-Wakhayda and the southern church of Qaṣr ʿīsa 1 *(figs. 30-31)*, both of which belong to the 5th

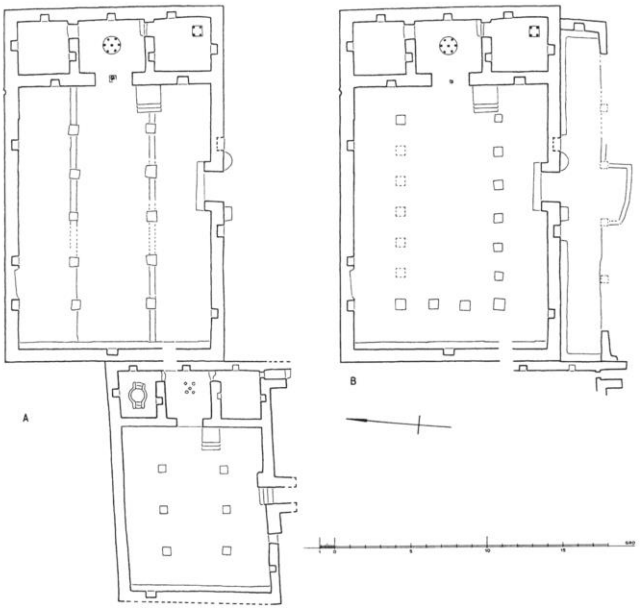


Figure 31. Ground plan of church of Qaṣr al-Wakhayda (Grossmann 2002, p. 702)

[204] Grossmann 2002: 47-48.

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century, have three aisles. However, they are disproportionate in their spatial shape, and the columns are too much wide compared to the size of the church. Obviously, very rough beams were used for the architraves. Ambulatories to the east and west are missing. The spatial proportions are disarticulated and contain only minimal emphasis on the central nave. It may be assumed that this church in Kellia was also covered only with a horizontal flat roof. Only in the somewhat larger community churches built in the 6th century, this phase was overcome. But this by no means happened immediately. The somewhat older eastern church of Qaṣr al-Wakhayda was not yet provided with a western ambulatory and in cross-section still had a very tensionless division, as was the case with the smaller churches of the 5th century. Therefore, it was probably also initially covered with a flat roof. Only during a reconstruction both were corrected and adapted to the construction method, which was already valid everywhere at that time, whereby because of the significant enlargement of the central nave span by this reconstruction the central nave was now very probably also covered with a gable roof. In terms of interior design, however, both buildings correspond to a type that had already been reached in secular church construction in the first half of the 4th century in Kellia, today's Ismant al-Kharab in the Dakhla oasis. Eastern ambulatories were absent in both churches. In addition, in general, churches from Kellia had only relatively small rectangular altar rooms. Structurally, the adobe walls carved half and three-quarter columns and capitals with a simple line painting on the plaster. [205]

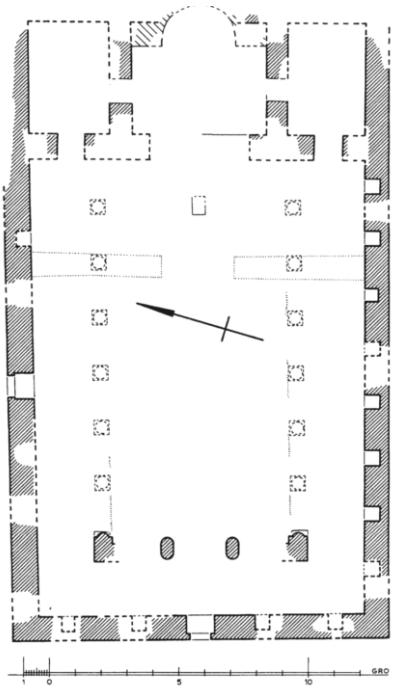


Figure 32. Ground plan of the church of Virgin Mary of Dayr al- Baramūs (Grossmann 2002, p. 709)

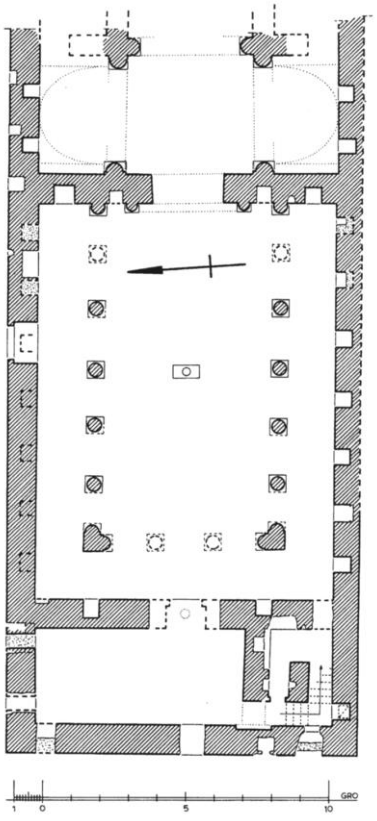


Figure 33. Ground plan of the church of Virgin Mary of Dayr al-Suryān (Grossmann 2002, p. 710)

[205] Grossmann 2002: 50-53, 493-495.

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The Virgin Mary churches of Dayr al-Suryān and Dayr al-Baramūs

A more attractive design prevailed in the churches of the Sketis only in the late 6th and 7th centuries. These churches were built during disputes over the question of the Theotokos (Mother of God). The churches dedicated to the Virgin Mary of Dayr al- Baramūs and Dayr al-Suryān *(figs. 32, 33)* are appropriate examples. They are considerably richer in their execution than the only slightly older buildings in Kellia and seem to have been provided with figurative painting at an early stage. Obviously, by this time the monkish modesty observed earlier had already been abandoned to a certain extent. The room layout in the naos is more favorably proportioned and shows a clearly carved-out west ambulatory. Several columns have been preserved in the naos of both churches. They were built of quarry stones. The corner columns at the western ends of the colonnades were modeled on the shape of heart-shaped columns and consisted of angular piers with half-column bases attached to the pier legs. The bases of the columns were almost classically stuccoed bases with an upper finial corresponding to an Attic base. The capitals, on the other hand, seem to have been formally designed as inverted pyramid stumps in most cases, with only a painted leaf decoration. The very richly modeled stucco capital above the southwest corner pillar in the ʿAdra church of Dayr al- Baramūs, which belongs to the turn of the 6th and 7th centuries, is singular and probably a reused workpiece. In the sanctuary area of this church, all rooms were initially strictly separated from each other and could only be entered from the naos. Only during a more recent reconstruction narrow passages were broken into the partition walls; wherein further development is announced. The latter seems then to have been adopted in some single-nave proper churches in Kellia, with larger connecting openings between all sanctuary rooms from about the same or slightly more recent times. In many cases, the

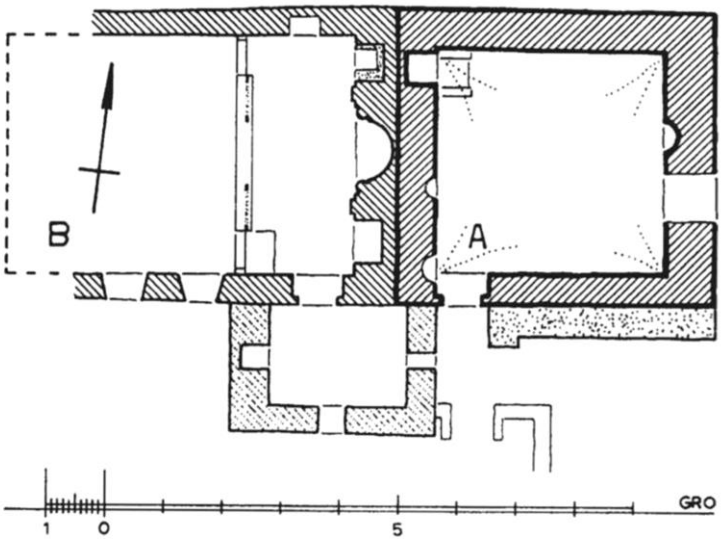


Figure 34. Ground plan of chapel B - St. Jeremiah monastery, Saqqāra (Grossmann 2002, p. 718)

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northern of these side rooms are even provided with a surrounding bench and separated from the sanctuary only by a sequence of columns. [206]

A more modest type of church that was common among the monastic churches, is the single-nave church. But here, the purpose is different from the purpose of this type previously mentioned in the civilian churches. In secular communities, the single-nave church was mostly a private chapel connected with burial areas. In monastic life, the single-nave church was assumably used by a single-living monk. A good example of this type is chapel B within the monastic complex of St. Jeremiah in Saqqāra.

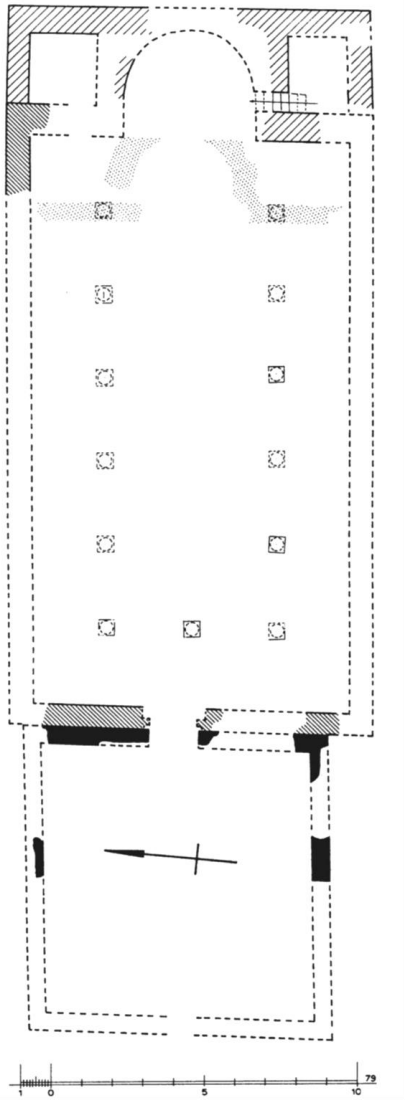


Figure 35. Ground plan of the main church of St. Jeremiah monastery-earlier church (Grossmann 2002, p. 717)

Chapel B - St. Jeremiah monastery, Saqqāra

Chapel B in the Jeremiah Monastery near Saqqāra is obviously a rebuilt cell, which was connected on the west side to an already existing cell A *(fig. 34)*. However, the apse and the lateral cupboard niches already belong to the original furnishings of B. A marble slab was subsequently inserted into the apse as an altar. Likewise, the painting in the apse with the depiction of the Virgin between two angels was added later by choice. The conversion of the cell into a chapel suitable for liturgy also includes the barriers and the southern side room, which was used as a diaconicon. Originally, the entrance to the cell was located in the south, which may have been moved to the west lay area of the chapel after the reconstruction. [207]

Apart from modesty and humbleness in terms of architectural ecclesiastical edifices, on the other hand, in the important monastic settlements, there are more elegant ecclesiastical monastic edifices. One of these examples is the main church of St. Jeremiah monastery. This church was built in two

[206] Grossmann 2002: 53-54, 499-503.
[207] Grossmann 2002: 58; Quibell 1908: 82.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

phases; the first was in the middle of the 6th century while the reconstruction is dated to the 7th century. The new building benefited from the fact that it was located in the middle of a late antique necropolis, in which several richly furnished mausoleums once owned by wealthy Greek and Graeco-Egyptian landowners from Memphis stood, whose owners had left the country after the Arab conquest. These mausoleums could therefore be safely removed for the construction of the new church. The original column decoration in the naos of the main church had been taken from at least four older buildings. The monks would have felt uncomfortable, as the majority of the original owners of these mausoleums had very probably also belonged to the Chalcedonian Church, which was regarded by the Coptic Church as Heretics. [208]

The main church of St. Jeremiah monastery (nave and 2 aisles)

The ruins of the monastery of St. Jeremiah are in the south part of the excavations of Saqqāra, about 500 meters from the Step Pyramid built by the pharaoh Djoser. The first excavations were conducted between 1906 and 1910 by the English archaeologist James E. Quibell. His excavations freed a surface of 18000 square meters from the sand and brought to light a vast church, a funerary building, a refectory, monastic cells, and other buildings. A great number of decorative elements, architectural fragments (columns, capitals, friezes), and wall paintings were taken from the site and today are kept in the Coptic Museum in Cairo. Thereafter, the site

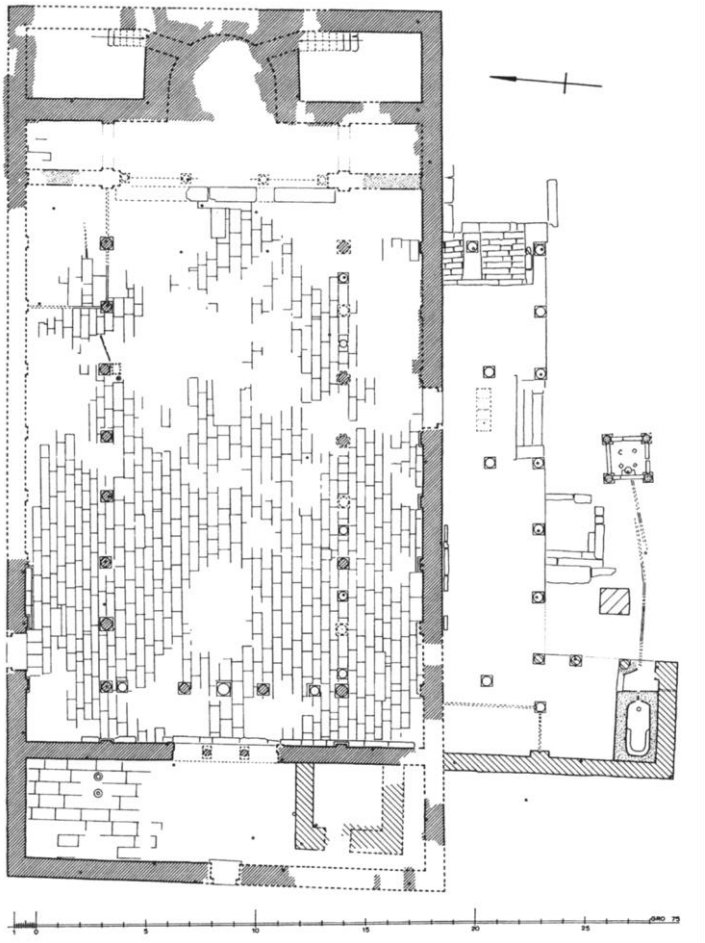


Figure 36. Ground plan of the main church of St. Jeremiah monastery-later church (Grossmann 2002, p. 716)

[208] Grossmann 2002: 507-509, Capuani 2002: 134-135; Quibell 1908: 63- 69; Grossmann 1980: 193-202; see more in Grossmann & Severin 1982: 155-193.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

was somewhat neglected by archaeologists until 1970 when new explorations were conducted by the German archaeologist Peter Grossmann. The history of the monastery is associated with emperor Anastasius I (491-518). The historian-monk John of Nikiou speaks indeed of a certain Jeremiah, a native of Alexandria and the abbot of a monastery close to Memphis, who was known to this emperor. In another source, his *De situ Terrae Sacre* (The Site of the Holy Land), written about 520-530, the monk Theodosius mentions the existence of two monasteries in the vicinity of Memphis, one dedicated to St. Apollo and the other to St. Jeremiah. [209]

The first phase of the construction goes back to the middle of the 6th century. It aimed to establish the essential facilities needed for a community to live. In the 7th century, the second phase of construction was intended to achieve a more prestigious life for the monastery. At that time, the main church was enlarged. Fine freestone was used and decorated with small friezes and painted decorations. The main church is located in the central area of the monastery. Only the limestone floor and the bases of the columns and the bases of the exterior walls remain. A few columns lie on the ground, remaining after the raids that followed the abandonment of the monastery. The first church *(fig. 35)* was built in the middle of the 6th century, made of unbaked bricks. It was of very modest size (25 x 12 meters) compared to the later building, dated to the 7th century, whose vestiges can still be seen today. This second edifice *(fig. 36)* was an especially significant and prestigious achievement. It is made of limestone blocks certainly taken from the sumptuous constructions of late antiquity which stood right there. The monks demolished them in their search for precious building materials. With these recycled resources, they succeeded in adapting this recycled material to build an elegant edifice full of great decorative richness. The church measures 39 meters in length and 20 meters in width. The west side of the building had a rectangular narthex giving access through a wide portal to the naos, comprising a nave, two side aisles, and a western return aisle. Eighteen columns separated the nave from the aisles. Their Corinthian capitals, richly adorned with floral motifs, are preserved in the Coptic Museum in Cairo. Some of the capitals are decorated with vine branches and clusters of grapes sinuously intertwined. Pilasters, corresponding to the interior columns, imparted the same rhythm to the exterior walls. At the time of the excavations conducted by Quibell, the greatest part of the painted decorations had already disappeared; there remained only fragments representing saints

[209] Capuani 2002: 133-134; Grossmann 2002: 507-510.

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on the columns, friezes with ducks, draperies, and geometrical designs. Curiously, the columns corresponding to the entrance doors on the west and south are different from the others, which are placed opposite the main entrance (on the west), and which are still lying on the ground, were made of pink granite whereas those of the south entrance, were made of marble. The sanctuary area of the church was made of one rectangular bay, probably preceded by four small slender columns. The apse on the east and two rooms on the north and south sides opened onto the sanctuary area. From the apse area, two staircases led to two other rooms larger than the preceding ones and situated at a lower level. [210]

Funerary church- Dayr Abū Fāna (Aba Bane) – nave and 2 aisles

A relatively recent Austrian archaeological campaign has partially uncovered the rest of the monastic complex, which lies north of the hill. Among the most interesting buildings, there are a funerary church *(fig. 37)*, a vast room for the ritual of water, and a refectory have been identified. The church has a basilican plan comprising a nave, two side aisles, a return aisle on the west side, and a sanctuary that has an apse, niches, and adjacent rooms on three sides. The entrance was on the south side through a narthex placed on the west side, from which a staircase gave access to the upper galleries. The building dates to the 6th century. It is an enlargement of a previous chapel erected at the end of the 4th or the beginning of the 5th century, in all likelihood to shelter the body of Apa Bane. The funerary purpose of the church was recently confirmed when the tomb of Apa Bane and those of other abbots of the monastery were discovered under the nave floor. The original chapel probably comprised only one nave and one ape. When the church was constructed, the foundations of the chapel walls were used as stylobates. There are remains of a fountain within a large

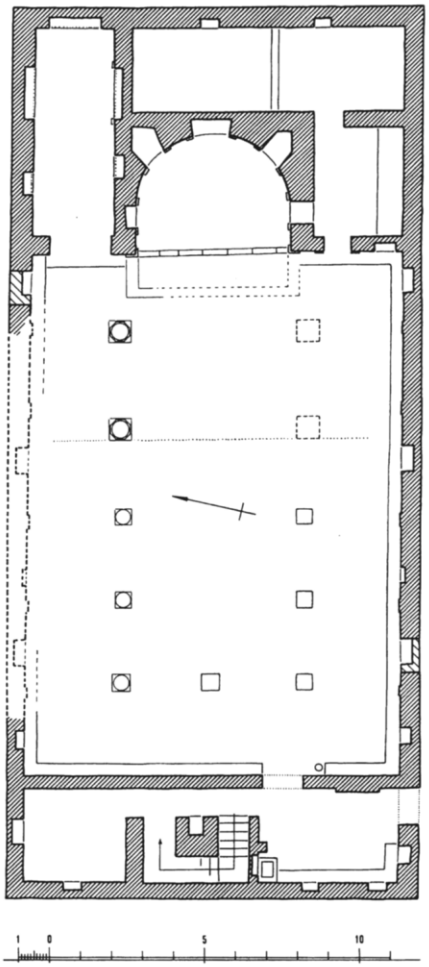


Figure 37. Ground plan of the Funerary church- Dayr Abū Fāna (Aba Bane) (Grossmann 2002, p. 724)

[210] Capuani 2002: 134-135; Grossmann 2002: 507-510.

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room connected with the church. Probably this room was intended to be used in the rituals of prayer and funerals inspired by the Eastern veneration of water which historical sources have attributed to Apa Bane. Along the east side of the fountain room and connected with it, the remains of a refectory have been identified. It is a rectangular space about 15 meters long where the table for the meals is still visible. [211]

The Church of St. Catherine Monastery

This monastery, which is still largely upright today in the southern part of the Sinai Peninsula, is the only early Christian monastery that has come down to us from antiquity *(fig. 38)*. The monastery was built on its present site around the Chapel of the Burning Bush around 545 AD, but monastic settlements existed before that. From time to time, these monastic settlements were harassed by pagan Bedouin tribes, even after Christianity became the official religion of the empire. Thus, in the first half of the 6th century, the monks of Mount Sinai decided to send a delegation to Emperor Iustinianus (527-565) in Constantinople to describe their precarious living situation and to ask him to build a monastery to house their scattered brotherhood. Iustinianus readily acceded to their request. At its foundation and until the 9th century, the monastery did not

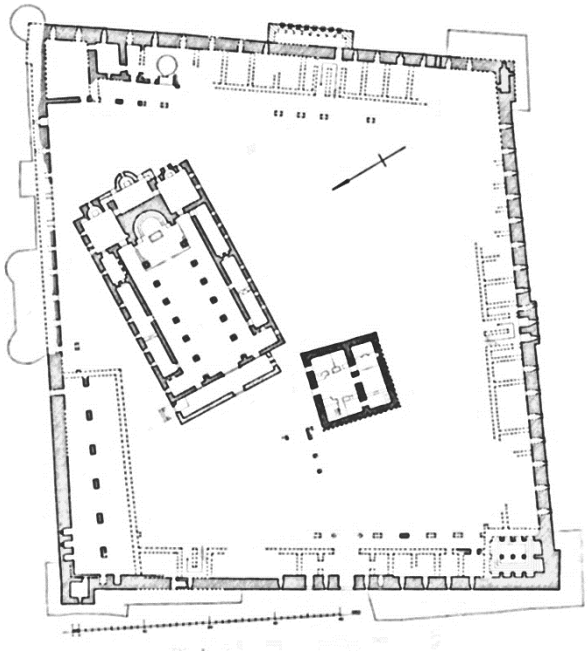


Figure 38. Ground plan of St. Catherine Monastery (Grossmann 2002, p. 764)



Figure 39. The wall of St. Catherine Monastery, retrieved from https://www.sinaimonastery.com/index.php/en/

[211] Capuani 2002: 174; Grossmann 2002: 517-518.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

bear the name of St. Catherine, and its cathedral was called the Transfiguration Cathedral. The monastery has all the medieval characteristics. It contains winding corridors, vaulted corridors, half-worn stone staircases, a basilica, and numerous chapels. It has a chapter house, refectory, scriptorium or library, monastic cells, guest houses, mills, storerooms, workshops, oil presses, distilleries, water wells, and many other facilities. This monastery represents a true labyrinth, in which every inch of interior space was fully utilized. It is a collection of buildings, sometimes two or three stories high, sometimes set into the ground, and sometimes small chambers or chapels are built into the massive walls. The monastery has the appearance of a Roman or Byzantine fortress. Its old, large gate, known historically as the Bishop's Gate, was later closed for defensive reasons and replaced by a small rectangular entrance just wide enough for the passage of one or barely two people. This is also fortified by a triple portal covered with thick iron plates and studded with powerful iron nails *(fig. 39)*.[212]

The Church

Within the walls, the main church, dedicated to *Theotokos* (Mother of God),[213] was founded by Iustinianus between 561 and 565 in commemoration of Theodora his wife and is a fine example of Byzantine ecclesiastical architecture.[214] The three-aisled basilica does not show the architectural tradition of Egypt but belongs to the culture of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem. It is not provided with an inner western gallery but has several side rooms on both of its long sides, as can be found more frequently in Palestine. Furthermore, the presbytery was built on a stepped structure, the *bema*, which was very rarely the case in the Nile Valley. A narthex was added later. Later, the area between the protruding remarkably large pastophoria, east of the apse, was expanded into a crypt, the Burning Bush Chapel.[215] The narthex leads to a great nave which is separated from the aisles by two rows of six granite columns with lotus-headed capitals, unfortunately, painted white and green. It has nine chapels, four on each side, in addition to the Chapel of the Burning Bush behind the altar and below the ground level. The mosaics above the

[212] Atiya 1952: 579.
[213] Grossmann 2002: 568.
[214] Atiya 1952: 581.
[215] Grossmann 2002: 568.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

altars of the Chapel of the Burning Bush and the Cathedral, dating from the reigns of Constantius and Iustinianus respectively, are almost intact. [216]

The gate of the narthex, which is from the 11th century, is of considerable interest on account of the crusader arms engraved on it by medieval pilgrims. But this is not comparable to the next 6th century Byzantine gate of the nave with its wonderful animal and floral engravings. The whole establishment contains a treasure of vestments embroidered with gold and silver threads, jeweled miters and girdles, chalices and trays of the finest workmanship, gold and silver crosses of varying sizes and shapes, and Gospels and Prayer-Books with artistically decorated bindings in solid gold and silver, in several cases mounted with precious stones *(fig. 40)*. Perhaps the most bewildering feature is the collection of icons covering the walls of the Cathedral and the nineteen chapels of this Monastery. They are well preserved in the dry heights of Sinai, and their importance may be ascribed to the fact that they are largely signed and dated by the artists. Since they came from all parts of the Byzantine Empire from the earliest times through the Middle Ages down to modern times. [217]

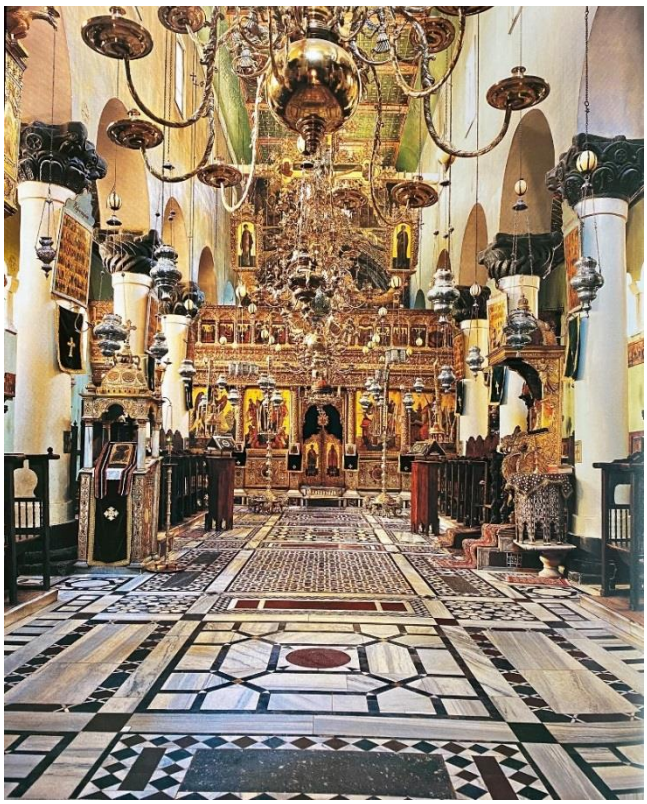


Figure 40. The basilica of St. Catherine Monastery "interiorly" (Gabra & van Loon 2007, p. 95)

It is worth mentioning also one of the most obvious reasons which make this monastery a significant one. The Monastery preserves the oldest functioning monastic library in Christendom. The most famous is Codex Sinaiticus, dated to the middle of the 4th century and one of the most

[216] Atiya 1952: 581.
[217] Atiya 1952: 581-582.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

important text witnesses to the Septuagint. in the new find 1975, eight new pages of Codex Sinaiticus were discovered. [218]

Triconch Church

Monastery of Saint Shenuda – White Monastery *(fig. 41)*

This church represents an evolutionary development of the basic basilica with a nave and two side aisles.[219] The extraordinary renown of the White Monastery is due to the works of Saint Shenuda. The famous monastery near Sohag, founded in the fifth century about 440 AD and dedicated to Saint Shenuda, gained its popular name because it is built of white limestone or because of the light-colored sandstone. The area of the presbytery of the ancient church, which today is separated from the nave by a high wall, has an exceptional structure *(fig. 42)*, the "tri-conch", characterized by three apses opening on three sides of the rectangle and the fourth side opening onto the nave. The walls of the apses are decorated with niches framed by columns; each apse contains two superposed orders of five niches and six columns. The alternation of niches and columns is not an architectural innovation but continues a Hellenistic tradition. The three apses are made of burnt brick and dedicated to Saint Shenuda (center), Saint George and the Virgin Mary. The mass of the edifice is particularly impressive, and its block-like forms recall those of the architecture of Pharaonic times, the church much resembles an ancient Egyptian temple, devoid of any exterior decoration but endowed with an extraordinary monumentality in its volume. The exterior walls, slightly slanted, are made of large stone blocks

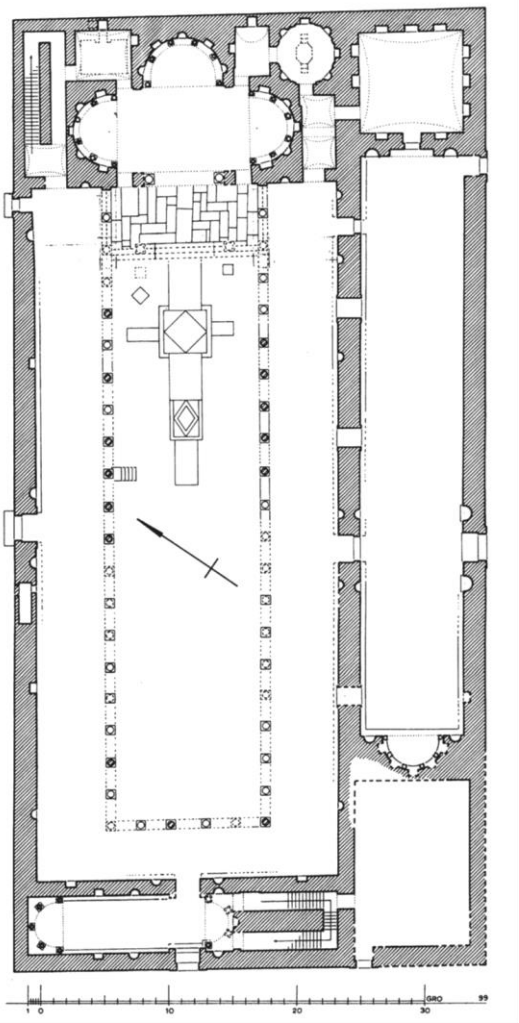


Figure 41. White Monastery ground plan (Grossmann 2002, p. 737)

[218] Isaksson 1997: 132.
[219] Capuani 2002: 43.

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taken from buildings of the Pharaonic era in the neighboring city of Athribis. On some of these stones, decorative motifs and hieroglyphs indicate their original destination, for instance, on the west side of the church, the left pillar of the main entrance door and the frieze near the northwest corner, on the south side, the right pillar of the secondary door. The study of the decorations of these stones and inscriptions has demonstrated that they belonged to edifices dating from periods between the twenty-sixth and twenty-ninth dynasties (664-380 B.C.). What led Shenuda and his monks to use these stones was not only their obvious concern for the economy but also the satisfaction of their iconoclastic fury against the remains of paganism.

The rectangular exterior walls are seventy-five meters in length and thirty-seven in width. The interior of the church is a basilica with a nave ending in a tri-conch sanctuary, two side aisles, and on the west a return aisle, as well as a narthex also in the west, and a large rectangular room along the south wall. This room in the southwest corner has traces showing that it might have had a well when the monastery was founded. In the nave before the door leading to the sanctuary, there are traces of the *bema*. Toward the center of the nave, against the north colonnade, a granite monolith in which five steps were carved is all that is left from the abbot's chair. On the west side, a door leads to the narthex, whose ends have apses formed by columns disposed in a semi-circle. Behind the south apse, a staircase gave access to the upper galleries. The present is on the south side because the main entrance on the west as well as the secondary



Figure 42. White Monastery nave (Capuani 2002, p. 209)

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ones have been walled up. Originally, the building had six entrance gates: two on the west, two on the south, and two on the north side. The entrance leads into a large rectangular hall forty-six meters long and eight meters wide; in the west, this space ends in a fine apse with six columns, and on the east in a wall where a door flanked by two graceful niches opens into a square room. It is difficult to determine with any certainty the original function of such a large space. It is perhaps more plausible to see this spacious room as a gathering place or a refectory in which the monks assembled for the agape after the liturgical celebration. One can get into the church through the door facing the entrance. The nave is twelve meters wide, and the side aisles are separated from it by two series of columns that are connected on the west side. Standing on high plinths, these columns differ from one another both in their dimensions and structure: some are monolithic, others have a shaft composed of many drums, and still others are made of bricks. This variety shows that, like the capitals and friezes, some of the columns once belonged to older edifices from the Roman period. The colonnades were surrounded by a second order of smaller columns that crowned the upper galleries on three sides. In the original wooden roof, beams placed crosswise with the principal axis supported the floor of the galleries and terraces, while massive rafters supported the gable roof covering the central nave. Because of the lack of wood in Egypt, it must have been very difficult to procure beams of such length. Therefore, it was impossible to replace it with the same material when the roof finally collapsed in the Middle Ages, so the builders erected a wall in front of the presbytery in order to form a sort of transept roofed with a cupola, leaving the greater part of the nave open to the sky. [220]

There was a secret underground room. Outside the building on the left, there is a two-story staircase. Within the adjoining gable area between the eastern and northern conches of the tri-conch, there is a small, dark rectangular space which at the same time is entered from the tri-conch and, to a certain extent, represents the northern apse abutment. It later functioned as the library of the monastery. The eastern wall of the room contains a narrow but remarkably deep niche. Its floor consists of a stone slab that can be moved to the left in the masonry, which opens to a shaft leading to an underground chamber. The niche is therefore a secret access to an underground hiding place. [221]

The Red Monastery – the church of St. Pshoi

[220] Grossmann 2002: 528-536; Kamil 1987,1990: 134-135.
[221] Grossmann 2002: 530-531.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

The Red Monastery lies between the cultivated lands of the Nile Valley and the high escarpment of the Western Desert. A monastery may have developed there earlier, by the middle of the 4th century, but the oldest identifiable remains at the site date to the second half of the 5th century and later. [222] Architecturally, the church of St. Pshoi is similar to that of St. Shenouda at the White Monastery. However, there are some differences. In the Red Monastery's church, the building material is tapering fired brick instead of stone. The church of the Red Monastery is smaller than the church of the White Monastery. It is 44 meters in length and 23 meters in width *(fig. 43)*. Unlike the White Monastery, it does not have a west narthex. All other architectural elements are identical. The nave has side aisles connected to the west. It has the triconch, upper galleries, and a large rectangular room on the south side of the edifice. The separation between this room and the church has been destroyed but its traces are still recognizable. Examinations of portals and columns show that these elements were made especially for this building. In contrast, some of the materials used in the construction of the White Monastery were obviously borrowed from ancient pharaonic or Roman edifices. This is to be discussed in more detail in the analysis of this research. Another architectural element that distinguishes the church of the Red Monastery from

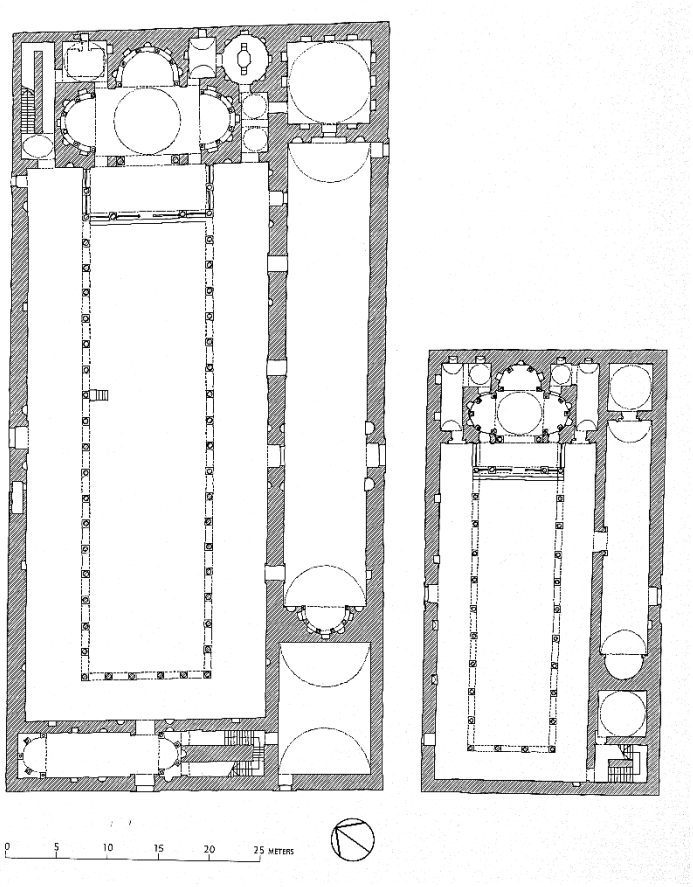


Figure 43. Ground plan of the Red Monastery (right) reconstructed on the same scale as the White Monastery (left) (Bolman 2016, p. xxii)

[222] Warner 2016: 49; Capuani 2002: 206.

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that of the White Monastery is the two columns before the presbytery. The relative narrowness of the triumphal arch, for reasons of stability, created a discordance between the wide nave and the narrow passage into the presbytery, but the addition of two big columns was a clever artistic and architectural invention that could solve the aesthetic problem by removing the discrepancy between the dimensions of the nave and those of the entry to the sanctuary. The three apses of the triconch are embellished by two orders of superposed niches separated by small, elegant columns whose completely painted surfaces lend to the spaces' richness and sacredness. The motif of the broken tympanum surmounting each niche is interesting. Like in the White Monastery, the collapse of the roof and the lack of monastic vocations led sometimes to the Medieval construction of a wall in front of the presbytery, which diminished the space destined for liturgical celebrations. [223]

Dayr Abū Fāna (Aba Bane) – the sanctuary church (triconch)

The sanctuary church *(fig. 44)*, dedicated to Apa Bane, was the only building not overcome by sand within the monastic complex, and it was surrounded by high brick walls erected as a barrier opposite it. The original building is dated to the 6th century, but it was partially transformed shortly after the Arab Conquest. The reason is that a small monastic community settled there back then. The entrance is on the north side. The plan consists of a nave, two side aisles, and a sanctuary area similar to a triconch and flanked by two additional rooms which were subdivided into four by the construction of partitions. The nave is separated from the aisles by two ranks of five columns. An eleventh column placed in the middle of the west side delineates a return aisle between the other two. Except for the column at the southwest

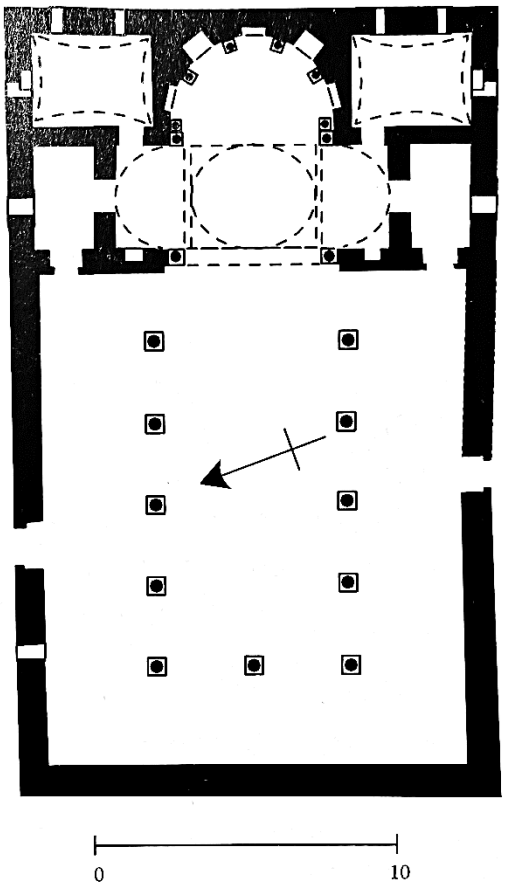


Figure 44. Ground plan of Dayr Abū Fāna (Aba Bane)–the sanctuary church (triconch) (Capuani 2002, p. 175)

[223] Capuani 2002: 206; Warner 2016: 50-51; Török 2005: 163-164; Severin 2008: 109.

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corner, the columns are not those of the original building. The triconch of the sanctuary area is simplified since the side apses are not semi-circular but rectangular and thus are less deep than the main apse. The latter is decorated with fine niches and small columns. The vault is adorned with a large cross richly embellished with carefully executed geometrical motifs dating from the 12th-13th centuries. It is the symbol of the monastery, which is sometimes called Dayr al-Ṣalīb in Arabic (Monastery of the Cross). The same motifs are repeated several times on the interior walls of the church. Beautiful wall paintings from Medieval represent crosses, each one different in shape and decoration. [224] Currently, the *khurus* has a dome in the center and transverse semi-domes at the ends, but neither corresponds to the original design. The latter is drawn much too far toward the middle. If they originally existed, they should have come to an end before the apse columns at the latest. Probably there was originally a cross-barrel vault or just a flat wooden roof. [225]

Dandara

Dandara is on the left bank of the Nile River and opposite the city of Qena. The temple of Dandara which was dedicated to the goddess *Ḥaṯḥūr* when it was erected during the beginning of the Old Kingdom of ancient Egypt. [226]

In the temple of Dandara, a great church was built outside the temple's perimeter and has continued from the 5th century to the 6th century. The stones of the region were used in the construction of the church, the architecture of which extended to the boundaries of the temple, and it is possible that the temple was exploited, as well as the ancient *building of birth* which is possibly used as a major baptistery in the 5th century, and the architectural structures standing at the entrance above Corinthian columns may confirm that the temple was used.[227] The ground plan *(fig.*

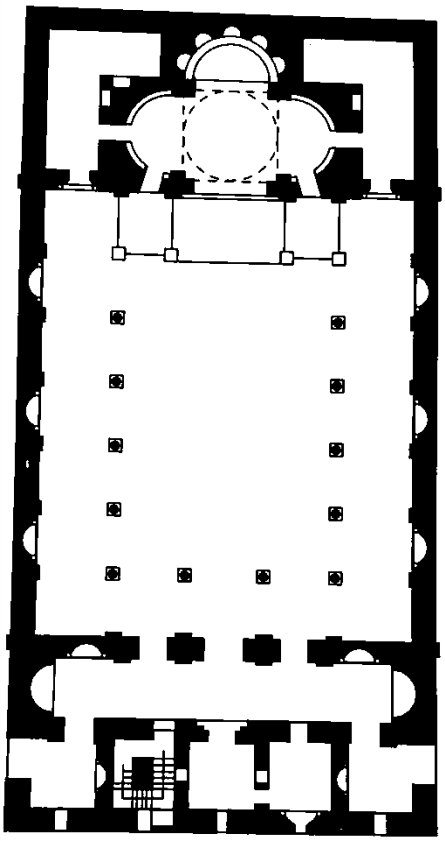


Figure 45. Ground plan of the triconch church in Dandara (Capuani 2002, p. 224)

[224] Capuani 2002: 174; Grossmann 2002: 518-520.
[225] Grossmann 2002: 520.
[226] Capuani 2002: 223.
[227] Capuani 2002: 224.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

45) which is based on the archaeological remains shows that this tri-conch church is a perfect rectangle 36 meters long and 18 meters wide. The four exterior walls, which have kept only part of their original height, must have given a stern and severe aspect to the building. It had two entrances, the first one is on the southern side, and the second, was symmetrical to the first, on the northern side. Neither entrances did not open onto either the nave or the narthex but onto two identical rooms serving as antechambers to the narthex. This complicated access to the church underlines the secret and mysterious character which the Coptic world borrowed from the Egyptian rituals of the pharaonic period; in those ancient days, the architectural structures of the temples were subjected to a predetermined and rigid route, in an increasingly sacred and mysterious atmosphere the closer they were to the holy of holies (Sanctuary).[228]



Figure 46. Decorated niche (cross in a shell)-Dandara church (Capuani 2002, p. 228)



Figure 47. Decorated niche (eagle in a shell)-Dandara church (Capuani 2002, p. 228)

The narthex was normally situated along the west side of the church, and its decorations were especially rich and enhanced by niches with carvings in bas-relief *(figs. 46, 47)*. On its east side, three doors gave access to the *naos* whereas three other doors on the west opened onto two rooms destined for particular liturgical functions and a staircase which must have led to the upper story. The *naos* had a nave, two side aisles separated from the nave by two ranks of columns from which only the bases remain, and an aisle along the west connected to the side aisles. The church had some niches crowned with decorative shell motifs embellished on the north and the south walls. The sanctuary is flanked by two rooms in the shape of a capital gamma, each directly connected with the sanctuary and its respective side aisles. The church is tri-conch form, the main apse is decorated with five small semi-circular niches while the side apses lack them. [229]

Discussions

[228] Capuani 2002: 224.
[229] Capuani 2002: 224.

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Secular churches

Some of the most important early Christian churches in Egypt that have been archaeologically developed to date belong to the urban church construction of the 5th and 6th centuries. During this time the early Christian architecture in Egypt reached its fullest development. It was then that the richest and most important architectural monuments were created. [230]

Aisled Basilica (Three to seven aisles)

The standard type in Upper Egypt was the three-aisled colloquial basilica, which in principle must have been largely fully developed as early as the second half of the 4th century, but unfortunately has not yet been documented by a corresponding number of monuments from this period. The oldest example of this type found so far is the southeast church of Kellia. The originally flat, three-aisle inner zone of the preceding five-aisle basilica was combined into a single central nave, which experienced a significant spatial expansion on the sides. Likewise, the various individual sections of the originally very narrow corridor widened, of which the sections on the western transverse side and both long sides became real side aisles suitable for lay people. In several churches, the remains of the benches intended for the laypeople have been preserved along the relevant outer walls. As a rule, the western passage section seems to have corresponded to the width of the side aisles, but this was not always the case. [231]

The connection between the central nave and the sanctuary, which is only beyond the east gallery, posed a particular problem, particularly from an architectural point of view. Since a special visual emphasis on the central area of the east colonnade was desirable for this connection, for reasons that were easy to see, the middle pair of pillars of the east colonnade was pulled apart a little earlier, so that a larger arched opening was created here. In churches with galleries, which were certainly widespread in Egypt since the early days, because, as everywhere in the East, the galleries served as the normal living area for women, [232] this had the disadvantage that at the east end the two ends of the gallery could no longer be spatially connected to each other. In individual cases, it even seems to have been necessary to connect the indented columns of the east aisle with additional arches to the front wall of the sanctuary. In

[230] Grossmann 2002: 28.
[231] Grossmann 2002: 28-30.
[232] Grossmann 2002: 30; Walters 1974: 36.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

addition, it is questionable whether the more open central intercolumn of the east gallery was always bridged with an arch or could not simply be left open. A decision is only possible in rare cases, as not a single example of this type has survived to a corresponding extent. At least one should point out that the very far apart columns in the east aisle of the south church of Hermopolis Magna, which were very probably not connected by an arch, were not so wide because of their own strength or because of their inadequate foundations. However, buildings of this type have only been documented since the middle of the 5th century. A very beautiful example of ancient church architecture is the basilica in front of the pylon of the Amoun Temple in Luxor, built towards the end of the 6th century, in which the archivolts of the central arch above the east aisle were decorated with a different decor than the triumphal arch at the apse entrance and thus easy to distinguish were. [233]

At the provincial level, the type of five-nave basilica was occasionally retained. While in other areas of the Roman empire, such as in Greece and Syria, the early Christian architecture shows a largely uniform picture, in which even the simplest representatives in the province have convincingly proportioned floor plans, in Egypt, there are sometimes very unusual and often disproportionate church floor plans. For example, in Narmuthis, today's Madīnat Mādi in Fayoum, several churches have come down to us, each of which is distinguished by a remarkably short nave. One of those churches has a seven-aisled nave. Furthermore, the five-aisle principle has been retained in some of the hypostyle halls of pharaonic temples that have been converted into churches. This is especially true of the church in the Kalabsha Temple. The church built into the forecourt of the temple of Biga, opposite the island of Philae, also seems to have had a seven-aisled naos. [234] Regarding the temples that have been converted into churches, this will be discussed shortly in more detail.

Basilica with transept

In addition to the simple three-aisled basilica, a few basilicas appeared in the middle of the 5th century, the nave of which was provided with a three-aisled transept. The most important example of this type is the episcopal church of Hermopolis Magna (al-Ashmūnayn) in Middle Egypt, which unfortunately came to us in ruins. The lateral ends of this transept have a

[233] Grossmann 2002: 30-31.
[234] Grossmann 2002: 32.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

semicircular end, which often led to confusion with a triconch. But that assumption should be rejected as inaccurate due to the shape of the plan of the church and its typological affiliation. This church with a central nave span of around 14 m. is one of the largest churches in Egypt. [235] Another good example of this type is the Great Basilica of Abū Mīna. The early transept basilicas were built for the cult of martyrs in the West as well as in the East. It is traditionally suggested that the transept arms were designed to accommodate masses of pilgrims visiting the tombs of the martyrs, to enable them to participate in the liturgy performed in the sanctuary area. [236]

Central Buildings

Tetraconch: Since the 6th century there have also been some church complexes designed as central buildings in Egypt. The finest example is the new building of the crypt church of Abū Mīna, built in the time of the emperor Iustinianus I (527-565). It was designed as a double-shell tetra-conch, a type of building that was widespread in early Christian times, especially in Asia Minor and Syria, but also in the Laurentius Church of Mediolanum, today's Milan (late 4th century) and, in a somewhat original formulation, also in different places is proven on the Balkan Peninsula and is ,therefore, to be regarded as a clear representation of the general architecture of the empire. In principle, it consists of a square (somewhat elongated in the crypt church) central room surrounded by columns or pillars, the four sides of which are bulged in the middle in a semicircle. Normally there is a concentric passage around the inner space of this tetra-conch, which is not the case with the crypt church of Abu Mina since the outer walls are straight and only have small niches at the points of contact with the conch apexes. In the somewhat more recent, but considerably more modest Eastern Church of Abū Mīna, a second four-cone complex at the same location, the conical shape was also carried out concentrically in the outer shell, based on the Syrian model. [237]

No examples of this type have been found in Upper Egypt, but a somewhat simplified offshoot of this type from the late 7th century can be recognized far in the west in the small adobe church of al-Ḥayz (Baḥariyya Oasis). The building has a rectangular central nave, which is surrounded by wall pillars connected by arches, of which the central arches on the long sides also function as

[235] Grossmann 2002: 35.
[236] Török 2005: 172; see more in Wace, Megaw & Skeat 1959; Grabar 1972.
[237] Grossmann 2002: 37.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

end arches of conical extensions to the outer walls. [238] Certainly, there have been other examples of this type in Egypt. But they have not yet been proven. In Alexandria, which like the entire area of the Mediterranean Sea, was more open to the influences of the general imperial architecture than Upper Egypt, a building of this kind is to be expected. [239]

Oblong domed church: A somewhat simpler central building type is represented by the oblong domed church in the *Khnum* temple in Elephantine. It also comes from the 6th century and is provided with angular pillars that cut a square, in all probability domed central space out of a roughly square overall space.[240] The findspots of its various architectural elements suggest that it stood in the center of the Christian town of which nothing remains nowadays, although it once occupied the top of the mound of ancient ruins. The basilica is apparently the *"large and beautiful"* church described by the 13th Century Arab historian Abū Ṣalih in his commentary on Elephantine. Although there are only sandstone column bases and shafts preserved from the building, along with some elements in granite, its original plan could be recovered. The basilica's considerable size gives an impression of the importance Elephantine enjoyed during the period when Christianity flourished in Egypt.[241] Another example of this type seems to be contained in the church in front of the temple of Caesar Augustus on the island of Philae.

Cruciform: A single-nave, cross-shaped building from the early Christian era, as seen several times in imperial architecture as a grave building, has only been found in one place in Egypt. It is a building on the east wall of the so-called Dayr ad-Dīk in the north of Antinoopolis. In contrast to the examples in Asia Minor and Greece, the ends of the cross arms are bulged in a cone shape. [242]

Small single-nave churches/chapels

In addition to the large buildings mentioned, which are to a certain extent the main representatives of early Christian architecture in the Nile Valley, there are, of course, as in all provinces of the Roman Empire, many small churches in Egypt that do not have any particular

[238] Grossmann 2002: 38.
[239] Grossmann 2002: 38.
[240] Grossmann 2002: 466-467; Grossmann 1982: 211; Gabra & Tim 2002: 133.
[241] Kaiser 1998: 47.
[242] Grossmann 2002: 39-40.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

architectural demands. Basically, they are to be seen as the reduction forms of the three-aisled basilicas, but as a rule, they have only one nave. Their architectural value is low. However, they are important because of their equipment, which reveals what was important to their builders. Occasionally, some elements that are otherwise not or only rarely proven have been preserved in them, which can be important for a better understanding of those buildings. [243]

The small single-nave churches or chapels in the area of Abū Mīna are all connected to a tomb and therefore have to be considered private memorial chapels, as they are found in the necropolis and in several mausoleums of the 4th and 5th centuries in al-Bagawāt, the necropolis of the old city of Hibis in the Oasis Maior (Kharga Oasis). They were probably not intended for regular liturgical celebrations. One of these chapels in Abū Mīna even has its own baptistery. [244]

Since, according to the ideas of early Christian times, the dead needed constant intercession by the living, and especially such prayers as were said during the celebration of the Eucharist in Christian churches, Christian mausoleums were not infrequently connected with a small chapel that could occasionally be used for a Eucharistic liturgy, especially on the memory of the deceased. Normally, however, the relatives would have gathered here only for informal devotions without the participation of a priest. There are no rules for the architectural design of these chapels, but there is an effort to make them look like a church, even though this was often achieved only to a small extent and the deviations predominate. Usually, following the example of urban and village churches, they are equipped with a three-room sanctuary, consisting of a central apse and two small side chambers. Furthermore, in several chapels of this type from Oxyrhynchos and al-Bagawāt, a row of columns in front of the sanctuary was erected. The middle nave represents the front triumphal arch. So, the area remaining between these columns and the sanctuary has to be considered as the eastern ambulatory. Since these chapels are usually single-nave, there is no connection with the side aisles. Thus, the secular area enters into a spatial connection with the sanctuary as it does for the nave of a basilica. In the case of chapels, which lack such a row of columns or an east aisle, the area to be considered as sanctuary passes directly into the lay space of the mausoleum, which was certainly not advantageous for the performance of the liturgical celebration in these spaces but could be tolerated because of the private

[243] Grossmann 2002: 41.
[244] Grossmann 2002: 42.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

ambiance. However, a burial church with several aisles was found in the area of the northern necropolis of Antinoopolis, which is richly decorated with paintings, but its ground plan is so irregular and obstructed that an understanding of the spatial arrangement is not yet possible. Presumably, these ecclesiastical burial chapels were only rarely used for worship outside the days of commemoration of the dead, which is supported by the fact that they were only rarely equipped with a permanently installed altar. Permanently installed altars are only found in the burial churches of the pilgrimage center of Abū Mīnā. However, it was only with the installation of an altar, for which in the other chapels a wooden folding altar (portable altar) was used for the celebration of the Eucharist, that these chapels really became liturgical places of worship. The same applies to the barriers, which have been proved only in Abū Mīnā as well as sporadically in Oxyrhynchos. [245]

Churches built in pagan temples

Peter Grossmann states that it is incorrect to assume that Christian churches in the Nile Valley were converted or repurposed pagan temples. [246] Rather, the fear of demons, which was still very widespread in the 4th century, prevented Christians from converting pagan temples into churches. [247] In addition, numerous temples were in operation in Egypt as well as in the rest of the empire for a long time after the Edict of Tolerance issued by Emperor Galerius (293-311), shortly before the declaration of Christianity as the only recognized religion in the Roman Empire under Theodosius I (379-395), and the Prohibition of any cult of gods on November 8, 392. The cult of Isis in Menuthis, one of the northeastern suburbs of Alexandria, continued flourishing until the last quarter of the 5th century until Patriarch Petrus Mangos (482-489) seized the place of worship in a police operation and brought the confiscated cult objects in a triumphal procession to Alexandria and exposed them to ridicule. The cult in the Temple of Apollo and some of the smaller sanctuaries of Abydos was only forcibly ended by the monk's father Moses in the second quarter of the 6th century, whereby according to the only fragmentary surviving life of Moses, 30 pagan priests fell by the wayside. Moreover, the cult was officially tolerated in the temple of Isis in Philae until the Iustinianus I (527-65) era, but this was due to foreign policy reasons, since the Blemmyes in the south, in return for peaceful behavior and omission of robbers in the imperial

[245] Grossmann 2002: 332-333; Petrie 1925: 16.
[246] Grossman 2002: 43.
[247] Grossmann 2002: 43; Stemberger 1987: 154.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

territory. [248] In the case of Philae, the standing temple of Isis witnesses the reuse of the temple as a church. The nowadays question is whether this reuse was destructive or functional. In other words, was it ideological reuse, or rather just a pragmatic reuse process due to the need for a church under the lack of means of erecting? [249] This will be shortly discussed in more detail within the analysis of this chapter.

Monastic churches

The development of the monastic church building in Egypt does not follow the same rules as the secular church building in the cities and villages. So, the monastic churches can only be connected to the general development to a limited extent. Structural solutions that have been found are retained for longer in the monasteries, or older building types that have been abandoned for long time in urban church construction, are occasionally used for new buildings. Likewise, the development of the internal spatial structure often lags behind the general development. The churches of the 6th century in Kellia on the western edge of the desert still represent a type of building that was no longer used in urban architecture as early as the 5th century. [250]

In addition, they sometimes seem to have been built completely against all traditions. Some churches were simply practical and limited to meet the minimum goal of such a building. The rock church of the Phoibammon monastery in Thebes is one of them. Several examples have also been preserved in the earth caves near Isna, which are dated from the late 5th century. Likewise, the rock chapel of Makarios in the Sketis, today's Wādi al-Naṭrūn. It was also so small. [251] That is based on a well-considered principle that was important to all mature desert fathers. Significant for this understanding is a discussion preserved under the anonymous fathers' texts. It tells us about an old wise monk who drastically describes to his pupil the negative consequences that would occur if the monks gave up their desired modesty: *"... When we stand before God, we should do so in humility and not in loud arias. ... "*. The same also applies to some churches, which were characterized by humility.[252]

[248] Grossmann 2002: 44; see more in Till.
[249] Dijkstra 2011: 401.
[250] Grossman 2002: 48.
[251] Grossman 2002: 48-49; Hirschfeld 1992; Badawy 1953: 67- 89; also see more in Bachatly et al., 1982.
[252] Grossmann 2002: 49-50.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

However, types of monastic churches during this period varied. Not only modest churches were found, but also huge new huge, evolutionary edifices were founded. Earlier architectural designs and features existed, and simultaneously, new architectural designs and features emerged. The clearest example of new evolutionary architectural features was the triconch design in basilicas. Nevertheless, triconch was a familiar form in all spheres of Late Antique architecture, such as funerary, residential, recreational, and public. [253]

Triconch

Instead of the apses or rectangular sanctuaries, which to a certain extent are to be regarded as standard equipment of the parish and monastery churches, in some more richly developed churches, also somewhat more complicated room forms had appeared. Relatively frequent in Upper Egypt is the so-called triconch. This is a roughly cloverleaf-shaped composite room in which a semicircular conch is attached to three sides of an approximately square, in more recent examples usually also covered by a dome, central room field, while the fourth side opens as a triumphal arch to the naos. [254] Unlike the standard Christian Basilica with a single apse at the end of the nave, the triconch basilica combined what were virtually two buildings, the basilica hall, and the trefoil. Rather than a simple visual termination of the nave, the triconch was a separate space, with its own form and structure and possibly its own function. [255]

The example of the church of the Schenute monastery soon set a precedent and found numerous replicas, especially in Upper Egyptian church construction. Even in the Dakhla oasis, there is a building of this type in the church of Dayr Abu Matta. In contrast, no churches equipped with a triconch have been encountered in the north of the country. How far the T-shaped room design, composed of rectangular room parts, as it is present in the sanctuary of the eastern church on the island of Philae, can be compared with a triconch, is uncertain, but also cannot be excluded completely. [256] The architecture of the triconch had certain influences on the rest of the arrangement of the sanctuary. Because of various technical limitations imposed by the spatial composition, the width of the triumphal arch opening to the naos was limited. For constructional reasons, it could not be wider than the main eastern conch. So, the use of two smaller, unusual

[253] Kinney 2016: 37; Deichmann 1954; Morvillez 1995; Lehmann 1996; Gattiglia 1998.
[254] Grossman 2002: 118-119.
[255] Kinney 2016: 37; see more in Grossmann 2008.
[256] Grossman 2002: 120.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

side doors was necessary. In the church of the Schenute monastery, these doors were at the ends of the central transverse rectangular space. For appropriate reasons, the apse side rooms (*pastaphoria*) were angled around the side cones, which had disadvantageous consequences for the vaulting of these rooms. To avoid this problem, in the church of the Schenute monastery, the side rooms were divided into several rectangular rooms and an octagonal room in the southeast corner by inserting partition walls. [257] László Török describes the triconch of the White Monastery as 'Modernity'. Nevertheless, more details about the origin of the triconch will be discussed shortly in the architectural analysis. [258]

Also, one of the obvious architectural phenomena that emerged during the 5th and 6th centuries, occurred when Christianity in Egypt moved from the approach of the private worship freedom of individuals to the approach of the regulated restricted ecclesiastical dominance. Consequently, huge churches which could accommodate large numbers of believers emerged. Not only that but also new certain architectural elements were built either in churches or monastic complexes. [259] The pilgrims needed to access the holy place or relic without interrupting arrangements for the service of the Eucharist due to Functional liturgical considerations. Thus, Separate baptisteries were built to accommodate an increasing number of converts, and rooms were added to accommodate the catechumens. New churches with narthexes and side passages for the catechumens were built. These churches were designed to accommodate the baptismal processions. [260] From another aspect, Copts under the theological and political pressures felt themselves in need of a kind of authority in order to be able to control their doctrine and its disciplines to be able to keep them under the umbrella of a regulated church. Thus, parches were erected in most of Egyptian cities. [261] ***The History of the Patriarchs*** asserts that during the time of Petrus IV (567-579) there were *"six hundred flourishing monasteries, like beehives in their populousness. . . where all the people held the true faith."*. [262]

In sum, it comes clear that the basilica form was dominant in all types of this period, simultaneously the Egyptian architectural character was minded too. In addition to the new

[257] Grossman 2002: 120-121.
[258] Török 2005: 153-158.
[259] Qādūs & al-Sayyid 2002: 28-29; Martin 1984.
[260] Balderstone 2007: 21.
[261] Qādūs & al-Sayyid 2002: 29; Martin 1984.
[262] Gabra & Tim 2002: 5.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

emerged elements due to the liturgical needs matching the number of believers and nature or rites.

Architectural analysis

Generally, Emperors sought to establish their theological position by supporting the construction of elaborate new churches at the major pilgrimage sites, such as the monastery of St. Catherine in Sinai, or in some cases renovated existing ones. On the other hand, churches documented for the 5th century reiterated the architectural forms established in the previous century, particularly the aisled-church design, and developed a couple of new ones; the triconch sanctuary and the transept church. The use of particular architectural forms for certain important churches can be related to the contemporary theological debate. The triconch sanctuary appears to represent the Egyptian view of the nature of Christ which developed out of Alexandria's theological school. The dome appeared again as a symbol of divinity, this time in response to Nestorianism, particularly in churches dedicated to the *Theotokos*. The form of transept church in Egypt suggests that it was intended as a symbol of conciliation; using the Latin cross to emphasize Christ's humanity as in the West and in this way following Chalcedon. However, this form is rare, the obvious two examples are Abū Mīna transept church funded from the imperial purse, and the basilica of Hemopolis Magna (Al-Ashmunein). [263] A church with triconch sanctuary form probably was an interim form. By the 6th century, this form was developed by adding a fourth apse to be tetraconch instead of triconch. The central nave became almost square, sometimes to adapt to the landscape, like in the case of the eastern church in Abū Mīna monastery, or just as a logical evolution of the triconch form, particularly in the wide square spaces. [264]

This -so-called- post-Chalcedonian conflict influenced the monasteries of Egypt. The monastic community of Kellia, west of the Nile Delta, physically illustrates the schism between Melkites and Copts. Before 451, archaeological evidence demonstrates, Kellia had one church; after the middle of the 5th century, it got to have two; one for each side of the Chalcedonian schism. Each

[263] Balderstone 2007: 21-35.; Allen 1996:164.
[264] Qādūs & al-Sayyid 2002: 37

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

church had its own baptistry, possibly for baptizing converts from the other side. Kellia came to be a community quite literally divided against itself. [265]

It is worth mentioning an important meaningful notice; after Chalcedon, Alexandria remained Melkite, while the monasteries and the countryside were Coptic Orthodox. W.H.C. Frend has commented that "The loss of Alexandria to the Chalcedonians had the effect of polarizing differences between an 'imperial' or 'Melkite' church in Alexandria and the 'Coptic' or 'Monophysite' church in the remainder of Egypt, whose center was now the monastery of St. Macarius," southwest of the Delta. The divided nature of the Church in Egypt was reflected also in the monasteries. The Pachomian monastery of Metanoia at Canopus in Lower Egypt had Melkite leanings while the Pachomian monasteries in Upper Egypt remained anti-Chalcedonian until the time of Iustinianus. [266] Moreover, although Alexandria was the root of Christian thought at that time, one single standing church cannot be found there. [267]

The architectural richness of this period comes from the architectural integration that occurred between the concept of the local ancient Egyptian architecture character and the Hellenistic-Roman architecture, namely the Byzantine influence. For instance, when the need for a huge hall for believers was necessary, the builder recalled the solution of columns halls from ancient Egyptian temples, while the basilica character was obviously present in both Chalcedonian and non-Chalcedonian examples. [268] Architectural exchange was present between Egypt and the Byzantine world.

Transept Basilica

In the clear example of Hermopolis Magna, the three-aisled transepts have apsidal ends, and their colonnades form curving ambulatories in the apses. The 44 monolithic red granite columns of the nave and the transepts, as well as the red granite columns of the porticoes, were taken with most of their limestone Corinthian capitals from monumental Roman buildings, dated roughly to the early 3rd century. The limestone Corinthian capitals of the galleries were likewise Roman spolia. Pilaster capitals supporting the triumphal arch of the basilica and the pediment of the north portico were carved originally for the basilica. Late antique figural and ornamental niche heads

[265] Gabra & Tim 2002: 5.
[266] Gabra & Tim 2002: 5.
[267] Qādūs & al-Sayyid 2002: 29; Martin 1984.
[268] Qādūs & al-Sayyid 2002: 29.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

and various decorated architectural components found in the area of the Christian enclosure seem to have been *spolia* taken from 4th-century edifices. [269] It is suggested that the architectural model of the transept basilica of Hermopolis can be found in the early ecclessistical architecture of Alexandria. The Alexandrian origin of the form of the transept with apsidal ends and circumambient colonnades also seems to be indicated by the type of colonnaded exedra that occurs in the western narthex of the White Monastery and, after Hermopolis, in the Iustinianus "transitory narthex" that connects the Church of the Holy Sepulchre with the Great Basilica at Abu Mena. When one considers this particular type of transept in the liturgical context of the crypt, one can identify some of the models that may have influenced the Hermopolis layout either directly or through Alexandrian mediation. As possible inspirations, one can point to the Church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople with its imperial mausoleum and the Sanctuary of St. John in Ephesus, probably built between the 4th and 5th centuries. The former is said to have had a cruciform floor plan. The latter was a transept basilica in which the three-aisled transepts had straight ends. The tomb of St. John, from which a miraculous "manna" flowed, was located under the center of the crossing and was accessible through a shaft with a trapdoor. Finally, one finds transepts with straight end walls and porticoes in the sanctuary of St. Demetrios in Thessaloniki. The church was founded in 412/413 but was not completed until the end of the century. The relic of the saint was buried in a crypt under the crossing. [270]

Triconch

In 2016, Dale Kenny conducted a thorough study of the origin of the triconch. First, one needs to distinguish between the origin of “triconch” as an architectural design or idea, and the triconch in ecclesiastical use, namely the “triconch basilica”. Therefore, scholars used to have their quest consist of two parts; one is about the origin of the “triconch”, and the second part is about the origin of the “triconch basilica”.

At the beginning of the 20th century, Josef Strzygowski generated a productive debate in art history, the "Orient oder Rom" controversy. Strzygowski first traced the triconch basilica type to Alexandria. But after the publication of Bruno Schulz's analysis of the unfinished palace called Mshatta in Jordan, he thought that it was the origin of the triconch. Strzygowski dated the palace

[269] Török 2005: 171; Wace, Megaw & Skeat 1959; also see more on capitals in Deichmann 1975.
[270] Török 2005: 173.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

between the 4th and 6th centuries and identified the first Christian use of the form in Constantius's basilica at Bethlehem rebuilt by Iustinianus (527-565). [271]

Ugo Monneret de Villard concluded that this "Egypto-Palestinian" combination of long hall and triconch originated in the palace architecture of late antique Syria and that the architect of both Sohag monasteries may have been Syrian. Only a few years later, K. A. C. Creswell published the definitive assertions for an eighth century (Umayyad) date for Mshatta. Hence, he proposed that the influence had run the other way, from Christian Egypt to Muslim Syria. Creswell concluded that although the triconch was first used as a throne room in Syria, "the further development… in which the triple-apsed throne room is preceded by a basilical hall, was due to Egyptian influence." [272]

André Grabar took an entirely different direction from the debates initiated by Strzygowski. Grabar viewed triconchs as one of several types of centralized buildings that marked the presence of a martyr's tomb or Christian holy site, such as polygons, crosses, and tetraconchs. He suggests that these forms were all appropriated from pagan funerary architecture because of their common function of heroizing the deceased. In the specific case of the triconch, Grabar traced its adoption by Christians to the so-called cellae trichorae known from examples around Rome: the mausolea then called Santa Soteris and San Sisto in the cemetery of Callixtus and Santa Sinforosa on the via Tiburtina, which he dated to the 3rd or 4th century. He surmised that the source of the triconch, as well as of its combination with the hall, was to be found in Palestine, citing Siyagha (Mount Nebo, in Jordan), where a long nave was added to the triconch. [273] There is an opinion that St. Shenouda Archimandrite in his decision about the form of the sanctuary of the church of the white monastery was influenced by the triconch sanctuary of Mount Nebo in Palestine since he had connections with the Egyptian monks there. On another side, while the baptistery layout seems to have accommodated the immersion rite as described by Cyrillus of Jerusalem, it was located, as a right angle, in the southeast corner of the church, connecting the disrobing room at the east end of the catechumens' narthex with the southern apse of the triconch, rather than taking a linear form as at Dora or Siagha, Mount Nebo. [274] However, the date

[271] Kinney 2016: 37; Marchand 1994.
[272] Kinney 2016: 37, 38; see more in De Villard 1926; Creswell 1932.
[273] Kinney 2016: 38; Grabar 1943-1946; Brown 1981: 69-85.
[274] Balderstone 2007: 23.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

of the basilican addition to the triconch on Siyagha, for example, is now held to be the second half of the 6th century, long after the Sohag churches were constructed. Moreover, when the addition was made, the lateral conchs were walled off, so the basilica was effectively single-apsed. [275]

In his analysis of the dates and geographical distribution of triconch triclinia, Irving Lavin indicated that the trefoil dining rooms were familiar in the western provinces of the Roman Empire in the early 5th century before they appeared in the East in the later 5th and 6th centuries. Lavin suggests that because of its "aulic" associations, the triconch played a role in the adoption of centralized forms for churches, thus undermining Grabar's derivation of the same forms from martyria. In the 1980s, Nenad Cambi confirmed that "trefoil plans were used in [the] later Roman period for triclinia and mausolea, then in the fourth century these forms were transposed into baptisteries and martyria. During the fifth and sixth century triconchs became popular for the eastern end of basilicas." Applying Lavin's results to Sohag, Peter Grossmann concluded that a direct derivation of the triconch sanctuary from the triclinia is less likely than descent from the funerary triconchs as in Rome, which also housed Eucharistic celebrations and was therefore suitable model for the design of a church. [276]

In his article published in 1996, Tomas Lehmenn states: "The question of the origin of the triconch basilica- East or West-is again open. Whether this architectural type arose first in Egypt (Sohag), Greece (Crete), or elsewhere (North Africa), and whether the triconch basilicas that came about through the addition of longitudinal extensions (Concordia, Betika) preceded or followed the architectural type will not be settled conclusively without new discoveries. Equally unknown is the derivation of the triconch basilica from the 'sepulchral sphere' or from villa and palace architecture." [277] Also, Iris Stollmayer concludes that there was no single architectural idea (Baukonzept) to which the triconch basilica corresponded. She suggests that triconch basilicas were regional constellations, each with their own prototype and development. They represent a "theme" whose material realizations had no unified form or function; "no common origin or genesis can be discerned." [278] In his above-mentioned study, Kinney states: "I tend to

[275] Kinney 2016: 38; Piccirillo 1989; Alliata & Bianchi 1998: 171-176; also see more in Stollmayer 1999; Michel 2001; Grossmann & Severin 2003: 135-136.
[276] Kinney 2016: 39; Lavin 1962: 4-5, 10-12, 15-21; Cambi 1984; Grossmann 1992: 190.
[277] Kinney 2016: 39; Lehmann 1996: 335-352.
[278] Kinney 2016: 39; Stollmayer 1999: 137-141.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

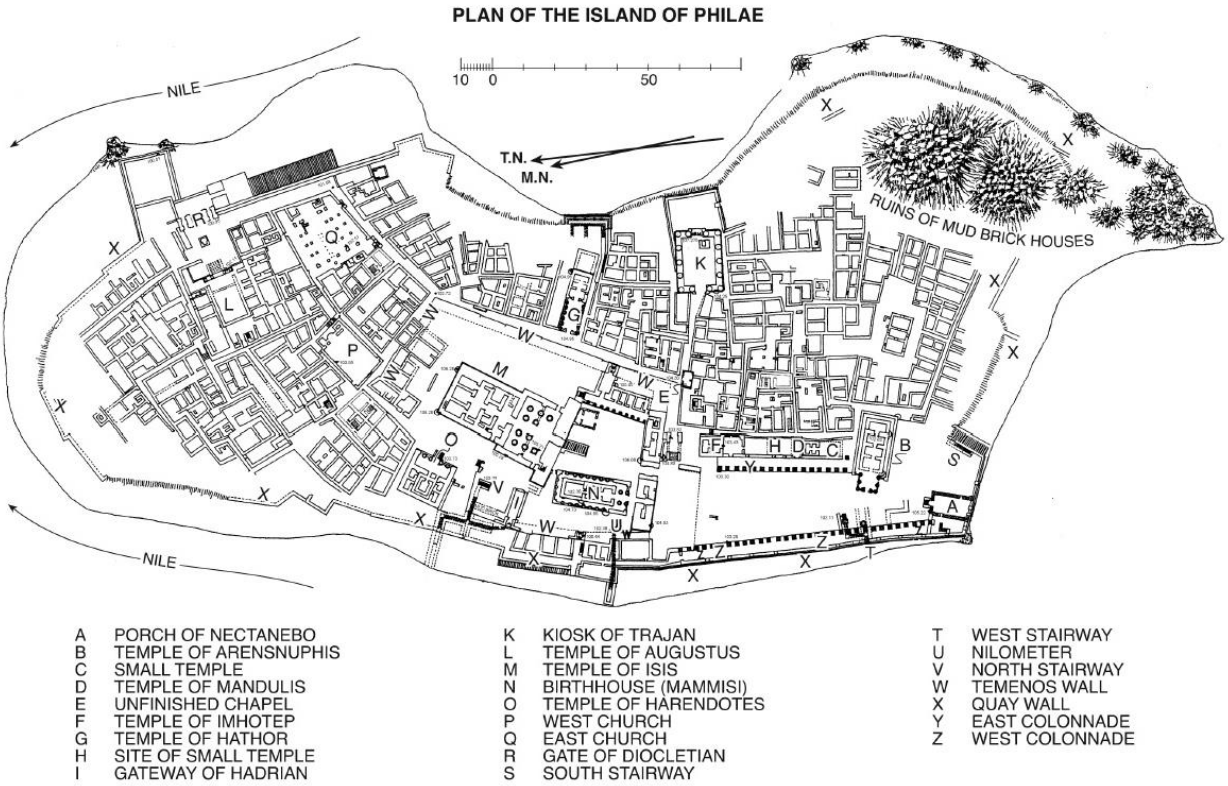
agree with Lehmann and Stollmayer that the quest for a single progenitor of the triconch basilica is fruitless, and with Stollmayer that the known examples are best explained as regional groups with separate histories." [279] Nevertheless, he believes that the design of the Sohag triconch basilicas is unique, especially the elevations of the triconchs. He states: "Late antique triconchs were generally thin-walled buildings with superficial decoration-opus sectile, painting, mosaic-adhering to cylindrical walls. The Sohag triconchs, by contrast, are highly three-dimensional, displaying two levels of pedimented niches separated by two orders of columns carrying entablatures... These elements constitute a "tabernacle facade," a widespread feature of public architecture in the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire in the second and third centuries... The well-known nymphaion at Jerash (Gerasa, in Jordan), dated 190 or 191, is an especially relevant example." [280]

In sum, I tend to adopt Grossmann's conclusion that according to the present state of research, the oldest example of an ecclesiastical building, not only in Egypt but according to the investigations of T. Lehmann, even in the entire Christian world, in which this type was executed in a formally largely flawless manner, is the church of the Schenute monastery (mid-5th century) near Sohag, which also in other respects stands out from the usual framework of monastic architecture. However, the spatial form of the triconch was not invented in this church and also not in Egypt, as is occasionally still claimed in recent research, but had already been known and used since the high imperial period in spring houses, thermal halls, in palace and villa architecture as well as in tombs. Only in the 5th century, it seems to have found its way into church architecture as well. Moreover, in the aforementioned church of the Shenute monastery, the central space of the triconch is still transverse rectangular and was initially only covered with a wooden roof. [281]

Temple to church!

[279] Kinney 2016: 39.
[280] Kinney 2016: 45; also see more in Dorl-Klingenschmid 2001: 48-55; Berns 2002; Burrel 2006; Richard 2001; Kraeling 1938: 54, 406-407.
[281] Grossman 2002: 119.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014



Archaeological map of Philae before the transferral of its temples to Agilkia (after Lyons (1896) pl. 1).

Figure 48. Archaeological map of Philae before the transferal of its temples to Agilika (Dijikstra 2011, p. 422)

In his study, published in 2011, Jitse H.F. Dijkstra suggested a reliable methodology for studying the reuse of ancient temples in forming or erecting churches in Late Antique Egypt. Using this methodology may ease getting a consistent understanding of the rare case of the reuse of Ancient Egyptian temples as churches in Late Antique Egypt. He stands for the suggestion of Ward-Perkins; that instead of too much focusing on the reuse of a temple as a church, one should rather take into consideration what Ward-Perkins calls the 'negative evidence', namely the cases in which temples were not reused at all or reused for other different purposes, in addition to looking at the cases when totally new churches were erected. [282] In light of this idea, instead of keeping influenced by literary narratives, the new archaeological data has encouraged scholars to reevaluate the literary sources on temple destruction and conversion. [283] For instance, the famous horrible demolition of the temple of Serapeum of Alexandria took place in 391, in the time of

[282] Dijkstra 2011: 392; Ward-Perkins 2003: 286; Foschia 2000: 433.
[283] Dijkstra 2011: 390; Saradi-Mendelovici 1990: 47-61.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

Archbishop Theophilus [284], which is reported not only by the Church historians *Rufinus*, *Socrates*, *Sozomen,* and *Theodoret*, but also by the non-Christian sophist *Eunapius*, [285] the temple was only set on fire, and the valuable library was also lost. However, the final destruction and demolition of the temple did not take place until centuries later and was primarily used for the extraction of building materials. Today only the very sparse remains are left on site. [286] In this sphere, Dijkstra says: *"As a result of the progress that has recently been made in studying what little is left of the site of the Serapeum, we are somewhat better informed here. No new building foundations have been found on the temple terrain dating to the 4th c. or later. This circumstance makes it unlikely that a church was built here as we would expect some trace of it to remain in the archaeological record. Moreover, the temple building would not have lent itself easily for reuse as a church, as Sozomen claims….. To what extent the temple itself was destroyed in 392 will probably remain unknown. The colonnaded court of the temple remained standing until Arab times, and it seems likely that the temple was only gradually dismantled for building material after the late 4th c. riots"* [287] *Rufinus* states that on one side of the temple a martyr's shrine was built and on the other side a church, while according to *Sozomen*, the temple was slightly later turned into a church named after the emperor Arcadius (395–408). [288] Literary sources do not agree on what happened after the closure of the Serapeum. Literary works have often been used to make generalizing statements concerning religious violence against temples and temple reuse as churches in Egypt. True, in some cases, religious violence did occur. But for the complete picture, one also have to take into consideration other types of evidence, especially archaeology. [289] Thus, the methodology suggests reevaluating altogether simultaneously, inscriptions and literary sources, papyri, and archaeological remains.

[284] Beck 1998: 525; Malaise 1997: 371-372.
[285] Dijkstra 2011: 394; Giangrande 1956: 6. 10-11.
[286] Grossmann 2002: 45.
[287] Dijkstra 2011: 399; Bidez & Hansen 1960.
[288] Dijkstra 2011: 394; Schwartz et al, 1999; Bidez & Hansen 1960
[289] Dijkstra 2011: 400.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

In the case of the temple of Isis in Philae, papyri do not tell us anything about the fate of temples. In terms of inscriptions and literary works, the ones from and on Philae give us information about temples in Late Antiquity. The archaeological record is also sufficient to obtain a detailed impression of the complexity of the issue. [290] On one side, from the aspect of literary sources, according to *Procopius*, it was only in an event that can be dated on the basis of circumstantial evidence to 535–37 that the emperor Iustinianus ordered one of his generals, Narses the Persarmenian, to 'destroy' the temples of Philae. He also said that the temples of Philae remained open until this exceptionally late date (535–37). On the other hand, at Philae, one finds the last-dated hieroglyphic (A.D. 394) and demotic (A.D. 452) inscriptions from all of Egypt, and the other inscriptions from the island attest to continuous cultic practice only till the 5th century. [291]



Figure 49. Standing remains of the temple of Isis-Philae, retrieved from https://kids.britannica.com/students/assembly/view/260798

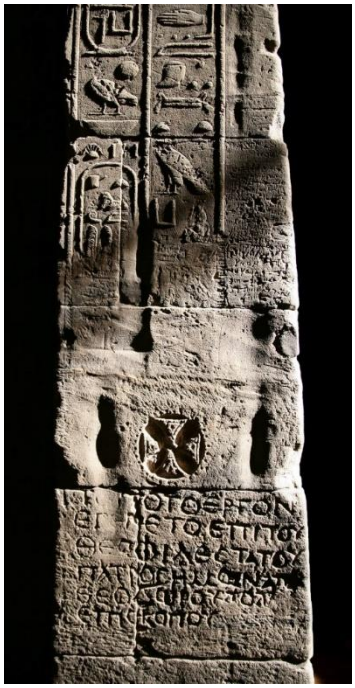


Figure 50. Inscriptions-temple of Isis, Philae, retrieved from https://1.bp.blogspot.com/-JwAteTENUDk/WoAbVmGkLnI/AAAAAAAAFd8/oRheKonrnqovtXzBb6ZPxT41-uNkyN_tACLcBGAs/s1600/Philae_Temple_of_Isis_coptic_cross_2.JPG

[290] Dijkstra 2011: 412; Dijkstra 2008: 36-39, 85-122, 306-324.
[291] Dijkstra 2011: 423; de Césarée et al., 1963.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

Archaeologically, in 1895/96, the island was 'excavated' in preparation for the building of the first Aswan Dam. The 'excavation' consisted of the removal of mud brick houses dating to the late antique and medieval. A good map *(fig. 48)* was made which contained the ground plans. Moreover, when the Aswan High Dam was built in the 1970s, which would completely submerge the island, the temples were transferred to the nearby island of Agilkia, but the remains of two late antique freestanding churches, the East and West Church, were left underwater. We, therefore, have to rely on the traces left in the standing remains of the temples *(fig. 49)*, supplemented by the scanty notes left by early visitors and the excavators.[292]

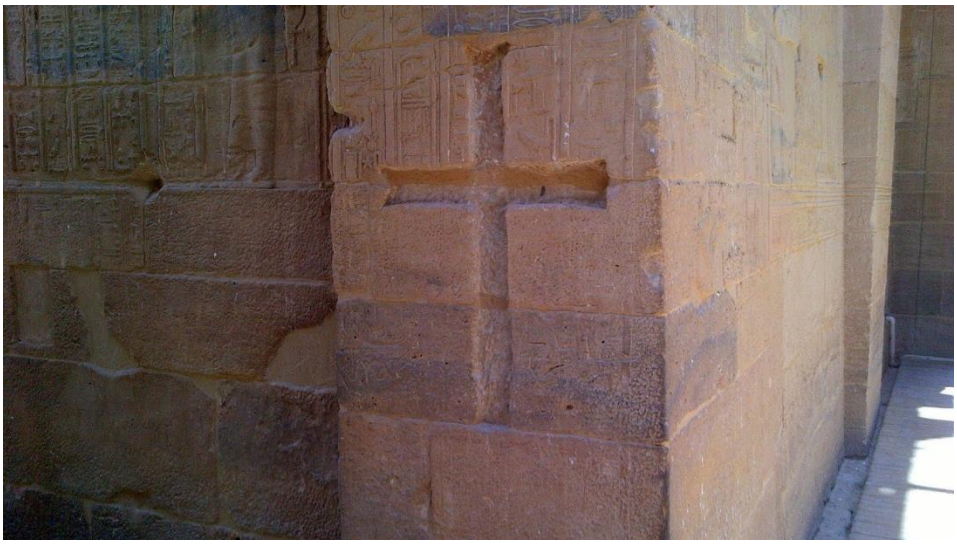


Figure 51. A cross engraved in relief-temple of Isis, Philae, retrieved from https://4.bp.blogspot.com/-VM2PGc8C-Z8/WoAZQvzzCCI/AAAAAAAAFck/nHcx4a5yk4srIvIJiOl-1dT1DfNoFSswQCLcBGAs/s1600/9491771935_c32f30cdac_o.jpg

Dijkstra states: "The literary account of Procopius has obscured the interpretation of the archaeological data for the fate of the temples at Philae."[293] The assumption that Iustinianus put an end to a still flourishing cult seems to be inaccurate. The event is related to 5 Greek inscriptions *(fig. 50)* that still exist in the *pronaos* of the temple of Isis. These inscriptions recall the construction of a church within a temple. They mention Bishop Theodore of Philae (ca. 525 - 577). So, it was reused, not destroyed.[294] Procopius portrays Iustinianus as the bringer of Christianity by abolishing "pagan" cults. Dijkstra comments: "Procopius certainly exaggerated, since the Isis Temple, as can still be witnessed today, was hardly 'destroyed' and is one of the best-preserved temples in Egypt." He explains: "Procopius seems to be influenced by the

[292] Dijkstra 2011: 421-423; Lyon 1896.
[293] Dijkstra 2011: 423.
[294] Dijkstra 2011: 423-424; de Césarée et al., 1963.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

imperial propaganda machine. "[295] With Nautin, he agrees that "here too something less dramatic took place" *(fig. 51)*.[296] The conclusion seems that the regular cults came to an end shortly after 456/57. In other words, it is highly probable that the event Procopius describes was, in reality, only a symbolic closure of a no longer functioning temple. [297]

Nevertheless, several church complexes in Egypt were set up in abandoned temples. As a rule, however, the steps taken by the church to transform a temple into a church have been rather modest. Only the most suitable room for the conversion into a church has been used, while there are no examples of the remainder of the same temple being destroyed in the same process. The rooms not needed for the church seem to have only been locked or walled up. How far the fear of demons played a role in early Christian times is uncertain. If later destruction took place, it was in any case solely due to the extraction of building material. [298]

From a typological point of view, there are five-aisled, three-aisled, and single-aisle churches among the temple rooms that have been converted into churches. The spatial structure was usually based on the existing pharaonic inventory. Clearly recognizable is the effort to gain church rooms with three or more aisles when taking over such temple rooms. Extensive demolition and renovation work or the merging of smaller rooms by removing the partition walls has been avoided as far as possible. At most, a few niches were hacked into the walls and door openings made. On the other hand, they did not hesitate to erect new walls anywhere or to put up additional rows of columns.[299]

Different influences in same location

Remarkably, several locations include different types of ground plans for churches *(fig. 52)*. These different types indicate also different influences: Egyptian and non-Egyptian. Out of seven locations, six of them include both influences together *(fig. 53)*. Such a phenomenon may relatively suggest tolerance. For instance, in Abū Mīna complex, the north church, which is far

[295] Dijkstra 2011: 424; de Césarée et al., 1963.
[296] Dijkstra 2011: 424; Nautin 1967: 7.
[297] Dijkstra 2011: 426; Dijkstra 2008: 175- 218; Dijkstra 2004: 152.
[298] Deichmann 1982: 105-136.
[299] Grossmann 2002: 45.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

from the rest of the churches of the complex, was non-Chalcedonian, whereas the other churches were Chalcedonian, under imperial support.

General analysis of influences

The analysis refers also to the fact that, in general, Egyptian influence never appears alone without a non-Egyptian influence in any of the examined churches known so far *(fig. 54)*. There is 65 % of the examples offer Egyptian with non-Egyptian influence, whereas 35 % offer only non-Egyptian influences *(fig. 55)*. Nevertheless, influences varied, where the dominant percentage was for a dual character, namely Roman along with Egyptian influence with 27 %. However, the same percentage exists for the Roman influence alone. Then, 15% is the percentage of examples that offer the following influences: Byzantine with local influences, and Graeco-Roman, Byzantine, with local influences together. The Byzantine solely occupies 12 % of the examples, whereas Byzantine influence along with Roman influences represents only 4 % *(fig. 56)*. The total number of models used is 26. The percentage graphs represent an approximate percentage of a number of models or a group of types.

In light of the above analysis, I believe that the following facts prove that assumed tolerance, cultural exchange, and innate evolution existed, where political circumstances could not distort the human nature and the character of real Christians. The fact that Egyptian influence never appears solo without a non-Egyptian influence must be highlighted.

- *Different influences in the same location*: since both Chalcedonian and non-Chalcedonian churches existed more or less in the same location, I believe that some level of tolerance existed and was accepted by both sides; Imperial authorities and local Copts. Obvious examples are Kellia and the St. Minas complex and its vicinity.

- *Triconch*: since the origin of the triconch was non-Egyptian, it is a good sign that it was utilized in non-Chalcedonian monasteries, particularly where one of the most influential monastic fathers of that era, St. Shenouda Archmindrite lived, erected, and taught. In the White Monastery and in the Red Monastery, which were erected under the influence of St. Shenouda, one can see the triconch element standing so far in 2023. Such

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phenomenon implies tolerance and the acceptance of cultural exchange concepts even by the strong personality of St. Shenouda and his successors.

- *Temple to church*: since some temples were generally converted into churches without intended destruction, I believe it is an indication Copts respected their Ancient Egyptian heritage. This is not to deny the destructions mentioned in written sources. However, contrary to the written sources, archaeological evidences prove that destruction would have happened only in the context of reusing the building materials from ruined temples. An obvious example is the standing temple of Isis in Philae, where a church dedicated to the Virgin Mary was established within the temple with only minor modifications. Most probably, conflicts between Copts and Pagans were driven by political aims.

Applying the intended methodology for this chapter, successfully, I could prove the assumption of this research in terms of architectural manifestations. The next chapter adopts the artistic side of this analytical study.

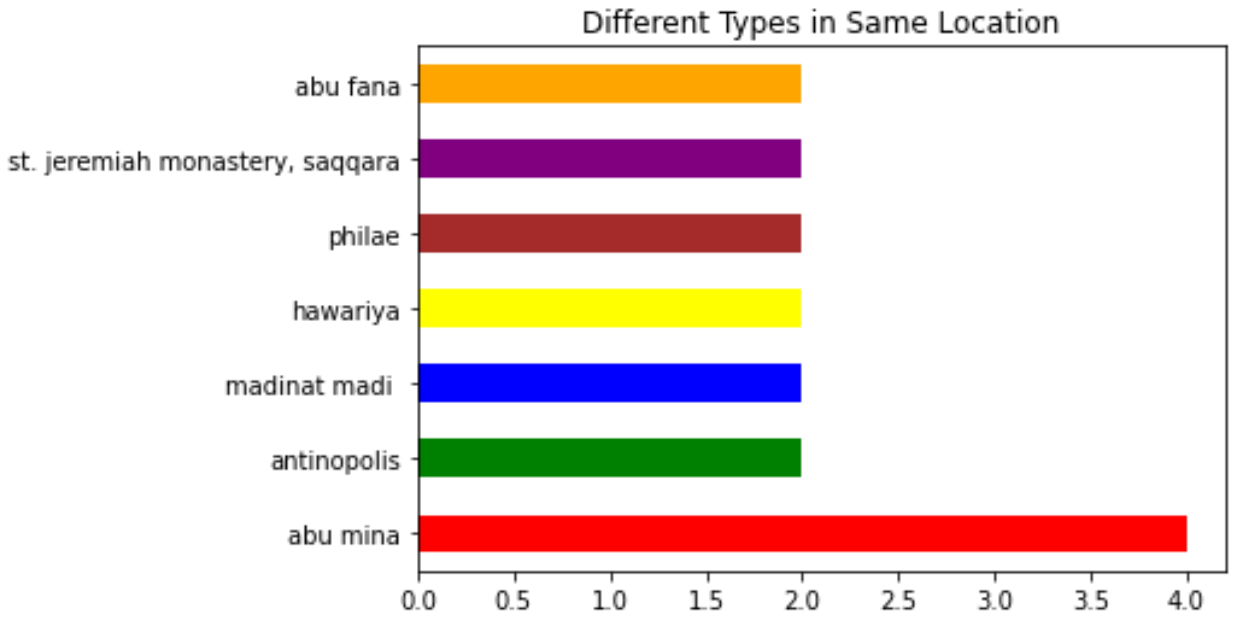


Figure 52. Different types in same location, (produced by B. Gabra using Python)

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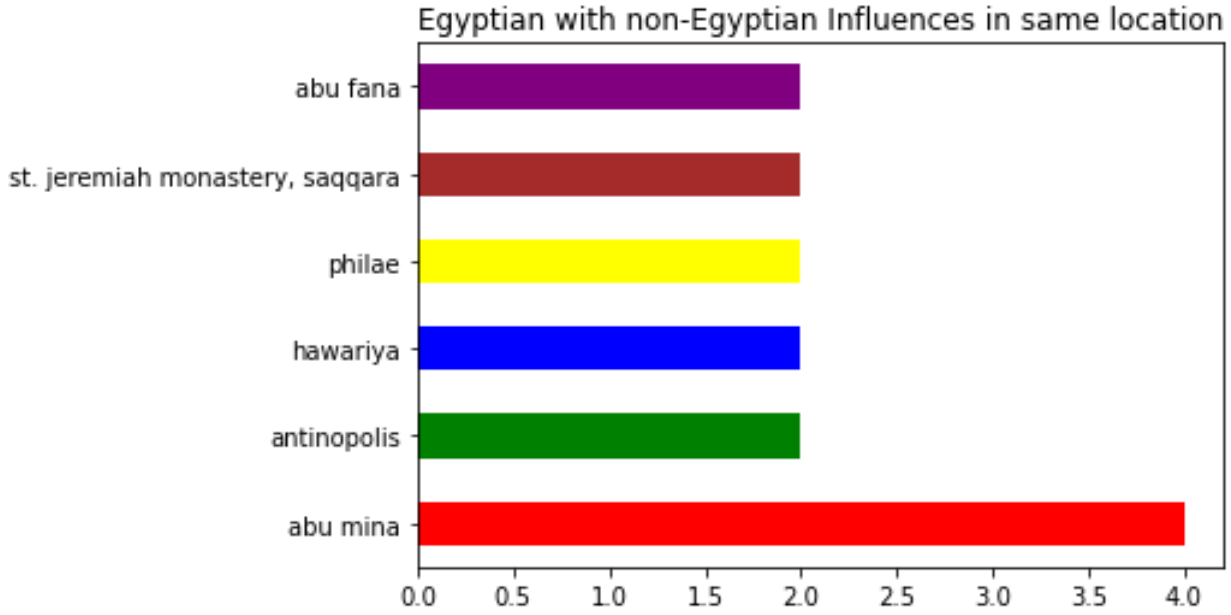


Figure 53. Egyptian with non-Egyptian influences in same location, (produced by B. Gabra using Python)

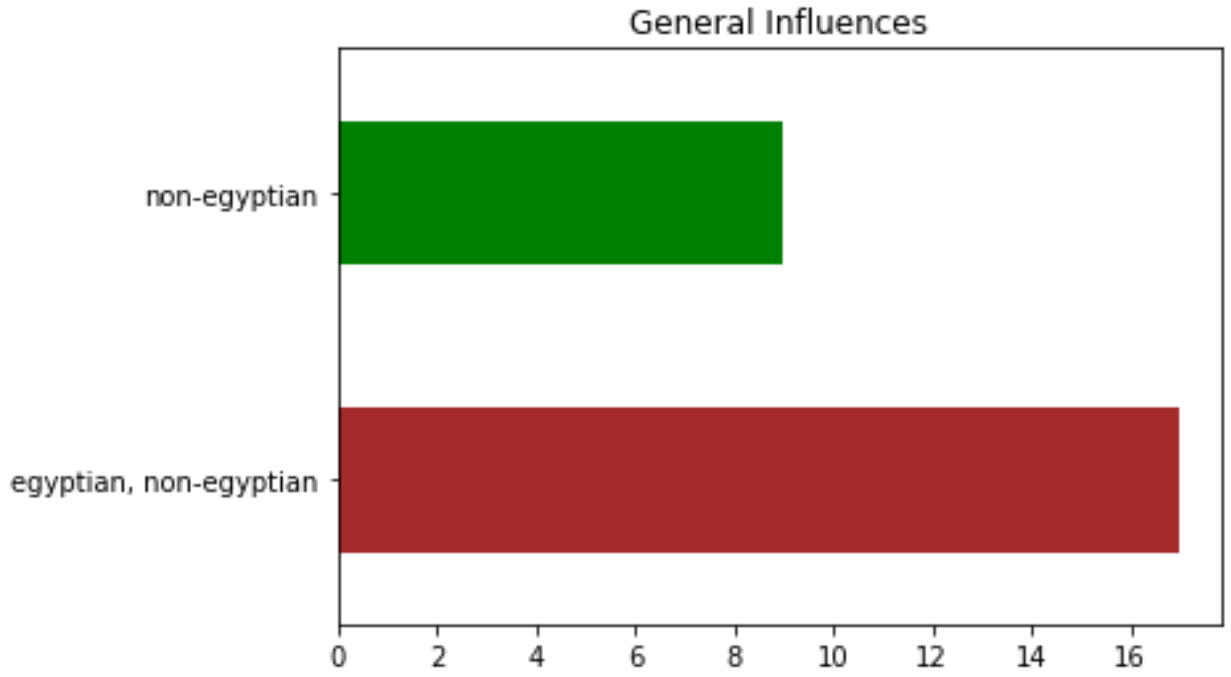


Figure 54. General influences analysis, (produced by B. Gabra using Python)

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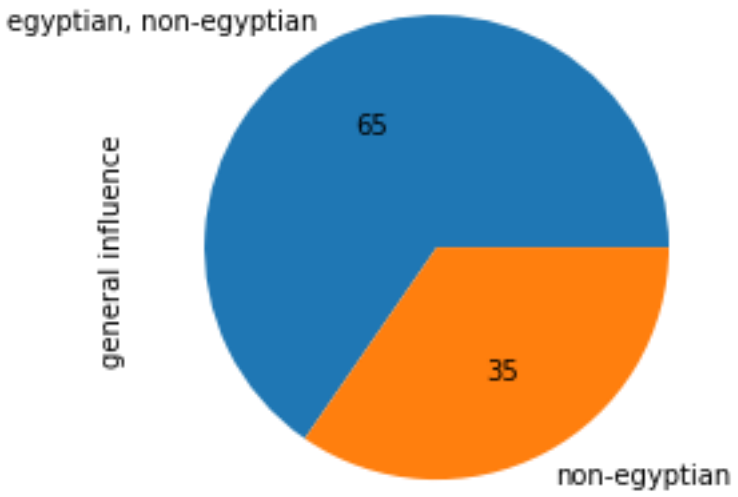


Figure 55. Percentage of "Egyptian with non-Egyptian" influence comparing to "only non-Egyptian influence" [total number of models used is 26, the graph represents approximate percentages of groups of various types], (produced by B. Gabra using Python)

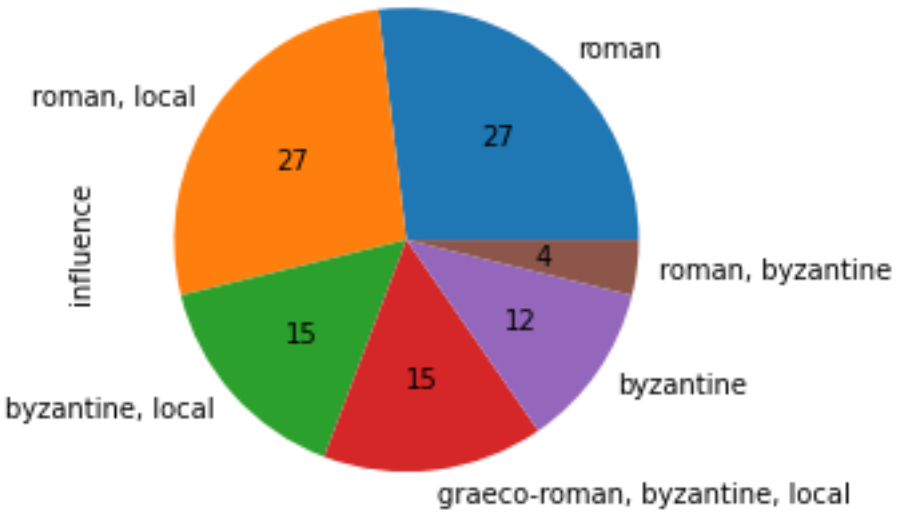


Figure 56. Detailed percentages of all influences [total number of models used is 26, the graph represents approximate percentages of numbers of models in groups of types], (produced by B. Gabra using Python)

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VII. ICONOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

Art reflects not only the religious circumstances but also both political and economic situations. Therefore, this chapter adopts an analytical study of the iconography of the post-Chalcedon period and till the Arab Conquest. The etymology of the "iconography" term comes from the old Greek "ikon" (image) and "graphein" (to write). As a field of study, Iconography is the branch of art history that studies the identification, description, and interpretation of image content. In the field of architectural heritage, this term is used to indicate the set of representations related to the same subject, from which one can get a better understanding of such an archaeological study case. [300]

This chapter demonstrates a database containing iconographic typology created by the author *(fig. y)*. This typology is theme-type based, followed by discussions and analysis of the elements illustrated in the selected examples of each type, attempting to conclude the character of Coptic art of this period based on the suggested characteristics.



Figure 57. Christ in Majesty-Saqqāra (Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006, p. 76; van Loon 2014, p. 199)

[300] Ramzy, I., https://www.suscopts.org/mightyarrows/art.html (2023.05.03)

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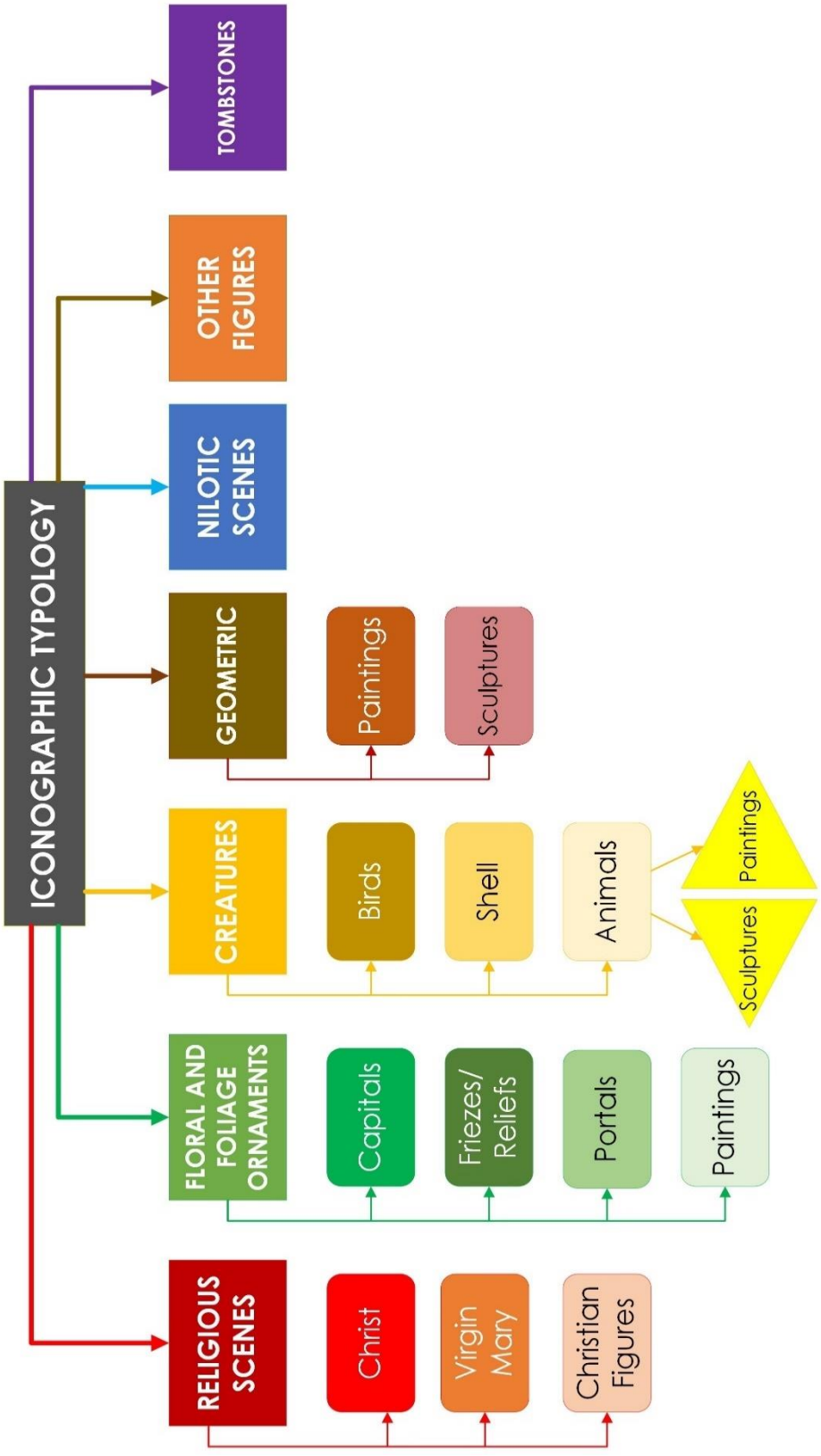


Figure y. Iconographic Typology (Typology by B. Gabra, Diagram is produced by B. Gabra using Visio)

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TYPOLOGICAL DATABASE

RELIGIOUS SCENES: -

Christ:

Christ in Majesty

Fig. 57: Christ in Majesty

Material: Tempera

Dimensions: Total original is about 1 m in height

Location: Saqqāra, monastery of St. Jeremiah, cell 709 - currently in the Coptic Museum, Cairo

Era: 6th-8th century



Figure 58. Christ in Majesty & Ascension of Christ-Red Monastery (Bolman 2016, p. 131)

Description: Christ in Majesty is the most frequently encountered Christian theme depicted in Coptic art. This particular version decorated a niche in the eastern wall of a monk's cell at the monastery. Christ occupies a gem-encrusted throne with a cushion and holds a jeweled book in his left hand while raising the right hand in blessing. He is enclosed in a *mandorla* supported by the four incorporeal creatures. The creatures are depicted according to biblical visions in Ezekiel 1, which describe an enthroned figure in a chariot supported by the four incorporeal creatures, who pray ceaselessly and guard the throne of the Lord. At the top of the niche, there are two busts in medallions, representing the sun and the moon. On either side of Christ, two archangels are also depicted in medallions. Stars fill the *mandorla* and outside of it, emphasizing Christ's heavenly setting. [301]

Fig. 58: Christ in majesty

Location: The Red Monastery, the eastern semidome of the triconch

[301] Van Loon 2014: 199.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

Era: Phase 2, circa 500-550 C.E.

Description:



Figure 59. Eastern lobe, 2nd level-triconch of Red Monastery (Lyster 2016, p. 105)

Fragmentary remains of a giant painting of Christ in the eastern semidome form the core of the paintings of the second phase. He sits on a throne, facing the viewer, within a divine field supported by the four incorporeal creatures and angels. In the flanking spandrels, Moses receives the Law (north) and encounters the burning bush (south). Prophets are identified by their rolled scrolls, apostles or evangelists holding books, and peacocks populate other spandrels and the skylight area. In the eastern spandrels of the northern and southern semidomes, in addition to the two depictions of Moses, are two particularly unusual paintings of angels seemingly flying away from the central apse. As in Phase 1, the subjects of the lateral semidomes can no longer be determined with certainty. Below the (Christ in Majesty) in the eastern lobe, painted curtains, enigmatic pairs of animals, baskets filled with bread, pink and green garlands, and small faces facing each other on two columns also belong to Phase 2 *(fig. 59)*. The niches in the northern and southern parts of Level 1, were filled with full-figure figures holding books and standing in front of curtains. In the niches of Level 2, the figures were represented at chest level. The clearest example of one of the standing figures is unidentified *(fig. 60)*. In the painting, small wheels flank the lower part of Christ's *mandorla* amid larger wheels. A face peers out from the center of each double wheel, presumably the "Spirit of the Living Creatures," but no eyes adorn the edges. [302]

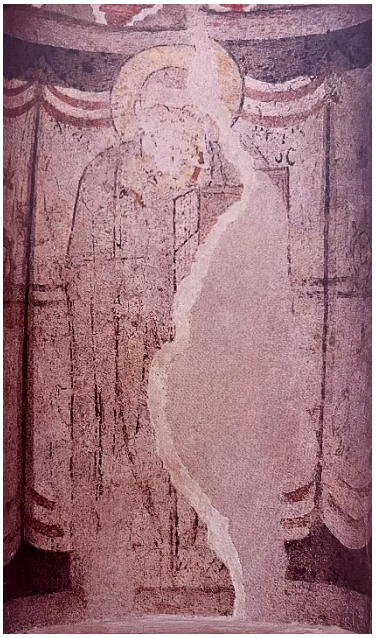


Figure 60. Standing Figure-Christ in Majesty-Red Monastery (Bolman 2016, p. 133)

[302] Bolman 2016 c: 131-134.

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Fig. 61: Christ with angels

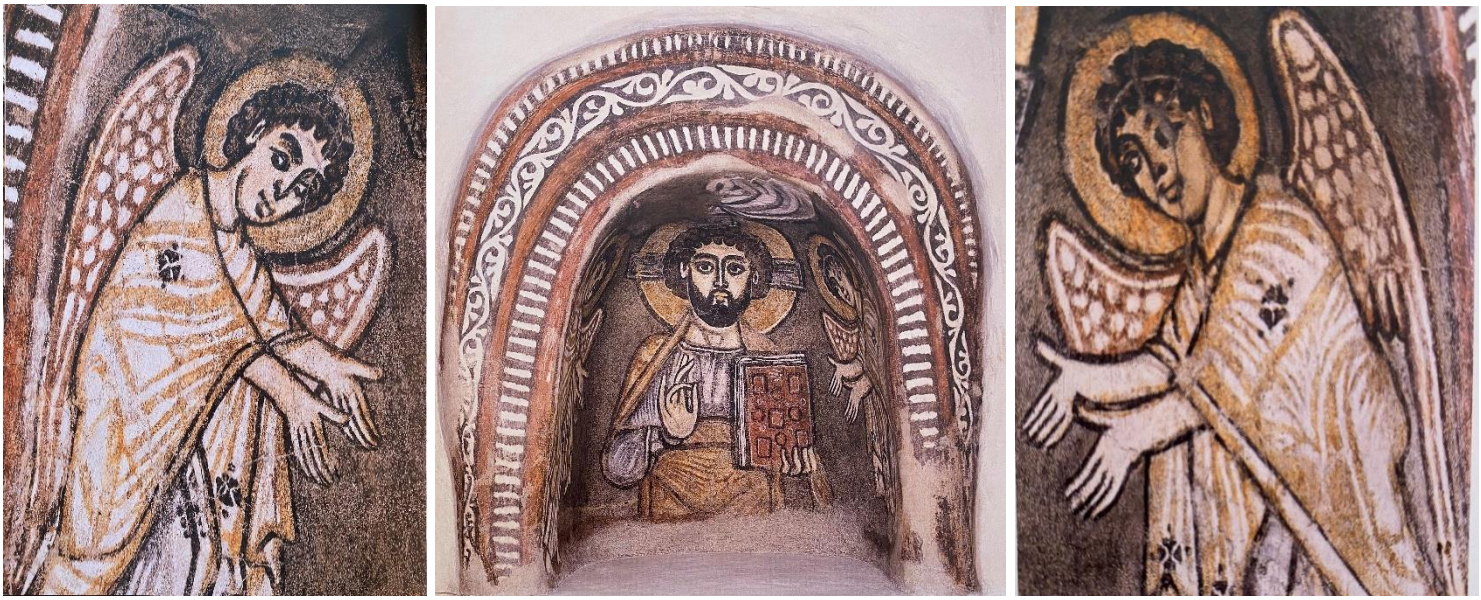


Figure 61. Christ with angels (van Loon 2014, p. 74-75)

Material: Tempera

Dimensions: 70 cm in height, 45 cm in width, depth of the niche is 35 cm

Location: Saqqāra, monastery of St. Jeremiah, cell 1795 - currently in the Coptic Museum, Cairo

Era: 6th-8th century

Description: This image of Christ between angels has been used for the devotional practices of early Christian monks. Niches like this one were located in the eastern wall of a monk's cell. In early medieval Egypt, ritualized Christian prayers were undertaken facing east, suggesting that the niche served as a focal point for prayer and meditation. At the back of the niche, Christ appears as a half-length figure, dressed in a white tunic and a dark orange cloak. His head is encircled by a cross inside a halo. His right hand is raised in blessing, while his left hand grasps a closed book. On either side of Christ stand two bowing angels. Conservation works revealed a detail at the top of the niche. Although partially damaged, it appears to represent a conch shell with a looped cross at its hinge. Although the painting seems similar to the other of Christ from Saqqāra, it emphasizes a different aspect of his nature. This image of Christ in Majesty from cell 709 shows him as he will appear at the end of time to judge the world. But this image offers a more approachable Christ. Rather than representing him in a mandorla, which would indicate his

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existence beyond time and space, Christ has only a halo around his head. The Angels step on the red band separating the painted surface from the niche's interior, serving as intermediary figures between Christ and the viewer. The cross on the shell above serves as a symbol of salvation. The images invite the monk to share the prayers with the angels. [303]

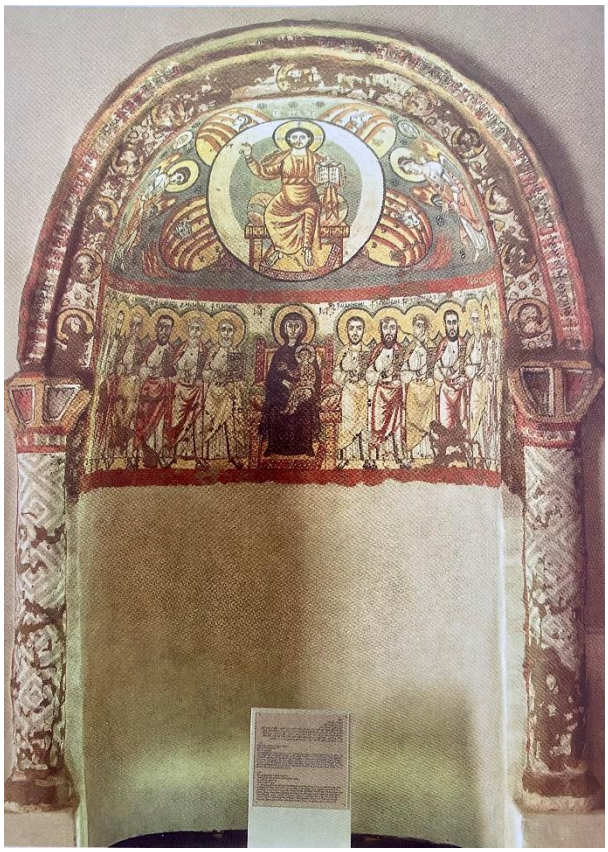


Figure 62. A niche with a double composition of Christ enthroned and the Virgin, apostles, and saints (van Loon 2014, p. 200)

Fig. 62: A niche with a double composition of Christ enthroned and the Virgin, apostles, and saints

Location: Bawīṭ, Monastery of St. Apollo – currently in the Coptic Museum, Cairo

Era: 6th-8th century

Description: Christ occupies the upper zone, while the Virgin, apostles, and saints are in the lower zone. She is represented as an orans (in the praying posture) enthroned holding her Child and surrounded by the apostles. This double composition would become the principal and preferred model for the eastern niche of the altar room. The design symbolizes simultaneously the past, the present, and the future. It represents the Ascension, in which Christ is going up to heaven on a chariot throne surrounded by angels, as described in various Coptic texts. Also, it refers to Christ's Kingship that follows His Ascension (present) while, at the same time, it indicates His second coming on the Day of Judgement. Both Syrian and Coptic hymns have been used to describe the scene of this niche in various ways. [304]

Ascension of Christ

Figs. 58, 63: Ascension of Christ

[303] Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006: 74-75.
[304] van Loon 2014: 200.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

Location: The Red Monastery, the eastern semidome of the triconch

Era: Phase 1, late 5th century



Figure 63. Ascension of Christ-Red Monastery (Bolman 2016, p. 153)

Description: The only identifiable figural composition from Phase 1 in the Red Monastery triconch is the Ascension of Christ in the eastern semidome. It once formed the centerpiece of an ambitious iconographic ensemble in the sanctuary. All the paintings from this first program were later covered by the artists of the second and third phases. The present visibility of the Ascension is due to the fact that the plaster supporting the later paintings largely detached from the eastern semidome sometime in early Byzantine times. As the only surviving part of this early program, the painting must now be viewed in isolation. It is a rare scene. Not only is it the earliest known monumental Assumption, but it is probably the oldest surviving figural apse painting in a church anywhere; it is certainly one of the few surviving examples from late antiquity in any context. In the imperial cult room of the Temple of Luxor, there is an apse with little more than ghosts of figures, circa 298-302 AD, painted during the reign of Emperor Diocletianus. A frescoed fourth century semidome in Rome, the Catacomb of Domitilla, is in somewhat better condition. Although there appear to be no painted apses in churches predating the first phase of the Red Monastery, there are a handful of early Byzantine parallels in the far more durable medium of mosaic. [305]

This painting dates from shortly after the construction of the church in the late 5th century. Its current condition is due to a series of accidents. The painting was covered by two later versions of Christ in Majesty, made by the artists of the second and third phases. The second team covered the Ascension with a thick layer of painted plaster, while the third team worked with a

[305] Bolman 2016 c: 130; Belting-Ihm; also, for the painting of Luxor see Jones & McFadden 2015; for Domitilla see Andaloro 2006: 179-180.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

thin layer of whitewash. At some point in the early Byzantine period, much of this later plaster and whitewash fell away from the semidome, taking with it most of the two depictions of (Christ in Majesty) and revealing the Ascension from the first phase. Most of the final layer of paint from this earliest composition was also stripped from the shell of the semidome, as it adhered to the fallen plaster. For the most part, only the initial sketch of the painting survived, drawn first in ocher, then covered by red, and supplemented by black. A few areas of the preserved plaster from the second phase have peeled off in more recent times, and in these cases, the final layer of a painting of the Ascension still adhered to the semidome. So, one may have some clues about the final appearance of the work of the first team. Somewhat later, but still, in early Byzantine times, the artists of the fourth phase created a third version of Christ in Majesty, which they painted over the earlier Ascension, as well as the surviving fragments of the compositions from the second and third phases, on a grayish whitewash ground. This whitewash from the fourth phase has flaked off in many places, revealing much of the first painting in the apse, but also creating a certain visual confusion. The Ascension composition consists of two flying angels lifting an enthroned Christ into the sky, above a row of figures: two standing angels in the center, flanked by the twelve apostles, all depicted in red *(figs. 58, 63)*. With their bodies and gazes, the apostles express their surprise at the theophany. They convey a sense of movement and attention that gives the impression that this event is taking place in time and on earth, in contrast to the hieratic stylistic notes of the later phases. Between and above the lower figures, lily flowers rise on tall stalks, drawn with black outlines. Between them are text panels with the names of the apostles above their respective heads. A green encaustic ground suggesting foliage or trees once framed them in the upper area. Restorers noted traces of Egyptian blue for the sky and in some areas for the apostles' clothing. Other iconographic elements are not visible in the painting. [306]

Christ as Logos

Fig. 64: Christ as Logos

Location: The Red Monastery, the southern semidome of the triconch

Era: Phase 3 circa 550-600 C.E.

[306] Bolman 2016 b: 151-153.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014



Figure 64. Christ as Logos-Red Monastery (Bolman 2016, p. 145)

Description: The southern semidome also shows an imposing enthroned Christ, but this one is different from the eastern image. There is no divine field around his body, and despite of the two angels attend him, the four incorporeal living creatures are absent. The wheels of fire are also missing. This bearded Christ holds a huge, decorated codex with his left hand and holds his right hand in front of his chest in a gesture that reflects blessing. In area of the four prophets with their open scrolls in the northern apse, the four evangelists stand with books representing the word of God. Two roundels with figural subjects no longer detectable are positioned at the edges of the composition, near the apex. Christ on a larger scale than the other figures in this painting. The third-phase nimbus is missing, and a second-phase halo has emerged over time from beneath the later paint layer, which accounts for its awkward placement. The remains of a capital appear to rest on Christ's head. In this case, it was part of the third-phase architectural framework, which was painted over when the figures were added. There are also some second-phase fruit trees at the top of the semidome. [307]

Christ "Savior"

Fig. 65. Two lunettes; lunette with angels and the bust of Christ, and a lunette with St. Apollo flanked by other saintly men.

Material: Tempera

[307] Bolman 2016 c: 146.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

Dimensions: 165 cm in height, 330 cm in width, and 165 cm in height, 335 cm in width

Location: Bawīṭ, Monastery of St. Apollo – currently in the Coptic Museum, Cairo

Era: 6th-7th century



Figure 65. Two lunettes; lunette with angels and the bust of Christ, and a lunette with St. Apollo flanked by other saintly men-Bawīṭ (Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006, p.87)

Description: Decorated lunettes suggest the artistic influences of Alexandria and Constantinople. The lunette with angels around Christ's head shows two angels in flight, supporting a medallion enclosing the head of Christ. The word "Savior" is written in Coptic in the space above the medallion. Christ's long wavy hair is parted in the middle and lies on his shoulders. The painter achieved a harmonious effect by restricting his palette to shades by ocher, except for the hair of all figures and the beard of Christ, whose heavenward glance is underscored by shading below his eyes. In the lunette with St. Apollo flanked by other saintly men, the central figure is St. Apollo, the founder of the monastery. The names of the other two saints are unclear, but probably they are the monks Phib and Anoup, his usual companions. The three men are similar, but the painter varied the drapery over the legs. Their heads are large, and the drapery is distinctively stylized. The saints on horseback are in the praying posture. [308]

Christ in a laurel wreath

[308] Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006: 86-87.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

***Fig** 66:* Bust of Christ in a laurel wreath

Material: Tempera

Dimensions: 80 x 90 cm.

Location: Kellia, Quṣūr al-Rubayāt, site 306, room 2

Era: 7th century



Figure 66. Bust of Christ in a laurel wreath-Kellia (Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 58)

Description: Christ was often depicted in monks' quarters, but most commonly in the apse of an oratory. This bust is unusual, because it was simply painted on a flat wall. At Kellia, it is the only image so far uncovered that signals Christ's triumph by surrounding him with a laurel wreath. The subject is executed in a series of geometric forms: the oval face and cylindrical neck have deep crimson contours. The same red outlines Christ's raised hand and the circles and rectangles on the codex he holds. A different, watery red emphasizes the eyes, and a medium red, colors the cheeks and chin below the small mouth and moustache. The now faded green of the wreath would have presented a stark contrast. At some point the image was painted over with whitewash. Perhaps this was an iconoclastic gesture, but if so, the perpetrator will have inadvertently achieved the antithesis of his purpose, preserving the painting for posterity. [309]

Virgin Mary:

Nursing Virgin Mary

[309] Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006: 58.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014



Figure 67. Nursing Virgin Mary-Red Monastery (Bolman 2016, p. 140)

Fig. 67: Nursing Virgin Mary

Location: The Red Monastery, the northern semidome of the triconch

Era: Phase 3 circa 550-600 C.E.

Description: The paintings in the northern semidomes are very different in character from the Christ in Majesty. Although the central figure, a nursing Virgin is enthroned, the painting is slightly smaller and lacks mandorlas. She sits within decorated arcades that suggest the palatial heavenly Jerusalem. These arcades continue the complex architecture of the trilobe sanctuary. In

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

the northern painting, multiple figures sit and stand, or hover above. There are remarkable arcades, complex pillars, and a plethora of hanging lamps and censers. The material ambiguity expressed by the ornamental painters of the second phase in the lower zones through the use of trompe l'oeil elements, arches rendered as twisted ropes, and wattle walls, continues here with a series of ethereal arcades in a confusing spatial environment. At the very top of the composition, one can recognize an orange arcade resting on three capitals. However, the columns supposed to support these capitals do not exist. The Virgin Mary occupies the central area, but the capitals to her left *(fig. 68)* and right rest directly on the arches of a second, lower arcade. Normally, material architecture must follow the laws of physics. This illusory architecture does not. Neither, in this painting, does space. The background lavender suggests an atmosphere that expresses the otherworld, including white stars painted both directly on this unusual light purple and on red discs. A deeper space is inserted behind the two angels that emerge from between the upper and lower arcades. Each appears in front of a blackish-blue oval, framed with white, which fits tightly around their bodies. This darker color is painted with small clusters of dots that suggest far stars. The impression is that of another world from which they have only partially emerged. A fragmented inscription identifies the angel on our right as Gabriel. His companion must be Michael. [310]



Figure 68. Detail of the arcades and lamps, with Joseph at the left-Red Monastery (Bolman 2016, p. 141)

[310] Bolman 2016 c: 141-142.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014



Figure 69. Close view to nursing Virgin Scene-Red Monastery (Bolman 2016, p. 141)

The lower arcade is perforated and embellished with detailed decoration. The lavender of the background shows through the circular spaces in each band, giving no depth and enhancing the fragility of the structure. Interestingly, the arches have joggled voussoirs in the form of two triangles set on either side of a circle, an architectural element that is otherwise unattested for some centuries. Repeated patterns of a dot surrounded by a circle form a frame that encloses the arcade and some other parts of the painting, such as the Virgin's throne. Larger and more complex versions of this motif decorate the central band of each arch, constituting circular holes

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

framed with multiple dots that rotate with the voussoirs. This common motif of a dotted circle represented a mirror and had an apotropaic function, The intended viewer, looking at this painting, would have seen this plethora of circles with dots as radiating power against evil. While the four major piers on which these pierced, apricot-colored arches rest convey little sense of mass, they nevertheless establish three large pictorial fields. Two additional thin, arched backdrops, perhaps niches, frame pairs of prophets at the left and right of the Virgin with Child. A similar shape, but lower and with pronounced capitals at each side, forms the backrest of the throne behind the Virgin Mary. The doubts about spatial relationships are enhanced by the six rounded, hornlike extensions connecting these three backdrops to the four piers. The curves of the numerous arcades and arches reinforce the dynamism created by the deep concavity of the apse. Six lamps with opposing beaks hang down from hanging chains decorated with crosses, one on each horn. Lamps of various materials, censers, crosses, and stars fill the remaining spaces. All lamps show yellow or red flames or white smoke. [311]

Fig. 69: Close view to nursing Virgin Scene

Location: The Red Monastery, the triconch

Era: Phase 3 circa 550-600 C.E.

Description: The nursing Virgin Mary called the *Galaktotrophousa* (she who nourishes with milk), sits calmly facing the viewer, holding her left breast by her right hand up to Jesus' lips. This monumental pair constitutes the stable center of the complete composition. They are flanked by the four standing prophets holding open scrolls. The men are painted on a smaller scale than the Virgin Mary. She rises above them, even while seated. In the complete scene, in the curve of the apse, the poses of three of the prophets, turning and gesturing toward the mother and child. The two angels protecting them from both sides direct their gaze to the enthroned pair.



Figure 70. The Virgin in Majesty (Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006, p. 111)

[311] Bolman 2016 c: 142; Maguire et al, 1989: 5-7.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

Purplish red cloth covers Mary's entire body, except for her face and hands. She wears no jewelry, while the color of her clothing conveys royal status. Her long, a bit oval face, double chin, and distant gaze continue earlier conventions for depicting goddesses. Christ does not look like an infant here but like a young child. He lies back in his mother's arms, his hands extended. He wears a white robe with dark red and purple lines reminiscent of colored textile ribbons and shadows. The Virgin threads a thin white sash with fringes through her fingers. It is probably a liturgical textile used at the Eucharist, indicating Christ's future sacrificial role. [312]

The Virgin in Majesty

Fig. 70: The Virgin in Majesty

Material: Limestone

Size: 56 x 38 cm.

Location: Luxor

Era: 6th-7th centuries

Description: Christ and Virgin Mary are facing the viewer. His right hand is raised in blessing and the left holding the Gospels open on his knee. He is a robed miniature adult, with a cross-nimbus behind a head of curly hair. Each angel flanking the central group holds a cross in one hand. Both raise the other arm and wing to protectively enfold the Virgin and her son. The heads on tube-like necks of mother and child are disproportionately large. The folds of their garments, especially those at the Virgin's neck and around her head, are treated as juxtaposed geometric forms. The architectural setting includes twisted columns at either side of



Figure 71. The Virgin and Christ Child with archangels (Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006, p. 112-113)

[312] Bolman 2016 c: 142; see more about Isis and Mary in Early Icons Mathews, T. F., & Muller 2005: 6-9; see also Belting 1994: 376; Woodfin 2012: 17.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

the niche. The shell in its summit resembles pointed leaves or petals radiating behind the Virgin's head. [313]

Virgin Mary with apostles, saints, prophets, angels

Sculptures

Fig. 71: The Virgin and Christ Child with archangels

Material: Limestone

Size: 47.5 x 56.5 cm.

Location: Unknown provenance

Era: 6th century

Description: The Virgin and Child are shown in an unusually informal pose, concerned not with each other but with the men who stand at either side. The halos identify the men as saints, perhaps apostles. The setting is a colonnade; the Virgin's throne is flanked by pairs of columns with drawn curtains between them. Better-preserved reliefs depicting similar compositions suggest that Mary once handed a crown-encircled cross to the figure at her right. The Christ child turns his upper body leftward, stretching his right arm across his body to hand a scroll to the bearded man at his left. Each of the archangels holds a scepter and an orb. Their bodies are less well-proportioned than the saints whom they tower above, and their wings are squeezed into the restricted space on either side. The folds of the elaborately rendered garments worn by all the figures fall in unnaturally regular intervals. [314]

Paintings

Fig. 62: A niche with a double composition of Christ enthroned and the Virgin, apostles, and saints

It is the same example I have discussed among the ‘Christ in Majesty’ examples. [315]

Angels/ Angels with saints

[313] Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006: 111.
[314] Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006: 113.
[315] van Loon 2014: 200.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

Sculptures

Fig. 72: Two angels presenting the bust of an evangelist

Material: Limestone

Dimensions: 35.5 cm in height, and 103 cm in width

Location: Bawīṭ, Monastery of St. Apollo – currently in the Coptic Museum, Cairo

Era: 6th century



Figure 72. Two angels presenting the bust of an evangelist (Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006, p. 90)

Description: The hovering angels who support the bust in a tondo are iconographic descendants of the victories familiar from Roman imperial art that presented the bust of an emperor. The codex inside the lower edge of the tondo identifies the bust as an evangelist. Another codex is depicted diagonally across the folds of a long piece of cloth that the angels hold draped below the tondo. The sparse foliage flanking the scene may be understood as a national reference to paradise. The height and length of this particular panel suggests that the frieze of which it once formed a part might have decorated a large, elaborately sculpted entablature, of perhaps a lintel above a doorway. In all likelihood, the deliberate damage to the faces of all three figures was the work of iconoclasts. [316]

Fig. 73: Half-kneeling angels presenting the cross in a wreath

Material: Limestone

Dimensions: 24 cm in height, and 48 cm in width

[316] Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006: 90.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014



Figure 73. Half-kneeling angels presenting the cross in a wreath (Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006, p. 93)

Location: Bawīṭ, Monastery of St. Apollo – currently in the Coptic Museum, Cairo

Era: 6th century

Description: This relief was a part of a frieze. The iconographic source for this motif is Roman imperial art. The hands and the curls show that this sculpture is relatively poorer than similar ones. The sculptor misunderstood the cloth draped between the hands of the angels, reducing its folds to a single rounded ridge at either side flanking concentric semi-circles below the wreath. He also distorted the rectangular shape of the codex to a trapezoid and enlarged it to bridge the space between ridges. Three other panels of virtually the same height have been identified as belonging to the same series. One of them shows the same motif as this relief, while others present scenes from the lives of the Old Testament figures David and Daniel. [317]

Paintings

[317] Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006: 93.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

Fig. 74: Double-sided icon of St. Theodore, the General, and the Archangel Gabriel

Material: Tempera on wood

Dimensions: 61.5 cm in height, and 25.2 cm in width

Location: Bawīṭ, Monastery of St. Apollo – currently in the Coptic Museum, Cairo

Era: 6th century



Figure 74. Double-sided icon of St. Theodore, the General, and the Archangel Gabriel (Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006, p. 92)

Description: The current state of this icon represents only half the original. Recent research has revealed the complicated history of the icon. The figure of Gabriel preserved on one side was once accompanied by another archangel. The remains of the initial composition on the other side show two monks, and it represents the label of St. Phib. About 50 years after the icon was made, a figure of a warrior was painted over St. Phib. This warrior who holds a shield is St. Theodore, revered as a dragon slayer. Double-sided icons were made to be carried in processions. However, this icon was probably displayed on the top of the iconostasis of the monastery's church and only later was used as a processional icon. [318] The icon shows the frontality, bright outlines, and large eyes of figures. [319]

Figs. 75, 76: Flying angels with Eucharistic implements

Location: The Red Monastery, the eastern semidome of the triconch

Era: Phase 2, 3 circa 500-600 C.E.

[318] Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006: 92.
[319] van Loon 2014: 211-212.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

Description: Flying angels with Eucharistic implements are represented next to the two depictions of Moses and the central Christ in Majesty. The one on the northern wall, holding a wine flagon, is adjacent to Moses receiving the law *(fig. 75)*. The angel on the southern wall, to the right of Moses and the burning bush, holds other ritual objects *(fig. 76)*. One can easily recognize the large chalice with handles and the spoon, but the third element is somewhat surprising. It is an early example of a liturgical item particular to the Egyptian church, called a throne, which is used to hold the chalice. The angels, carrying the implements for the transformation of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, link the paintings with the celebration of Communion by the historical priests of the monastery and also point to the eternal, celestial liturgy. Angels were believed to perform liturgies in heaven and on earth. So, these depictions also make visible that only the most spiritually advanced ones could see with their physical eyes. [320]



Figure 75. Flying angels with Eucharistic implements, north wall-Red Monastery (Bolman 2016, p. 282)



Figure 76. Flying angels with Eucharistic implements, south wall-Red Monastery (Bolman 2016, p. 128)

Fig. 77, 78: Archangels Michael and Gabriel

Location: The Red Monastery, the triconch

Era: Phase 3 circa 550-600 C.E.

Description: Painting of archangels Michael and Gabriel *(figs. 77, 78)* in the ground floor niches of the eastern lobe. [321]

[320] Bolman 2016 c: 137; for more discussions, see also Kötzsche 1977; Butler 1884: 42-44; Bolman 2007: 423-424.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

Christian Figures (Saints, prophets, apostles, monks)

Sculpture/reliefs

Fig. 79: Relief with the Sacrifice of Abraham

Material: Limestone

Dimensions: 44 x 82 cm.

Location: Unknown provenance

Era: 5th-6th centuries

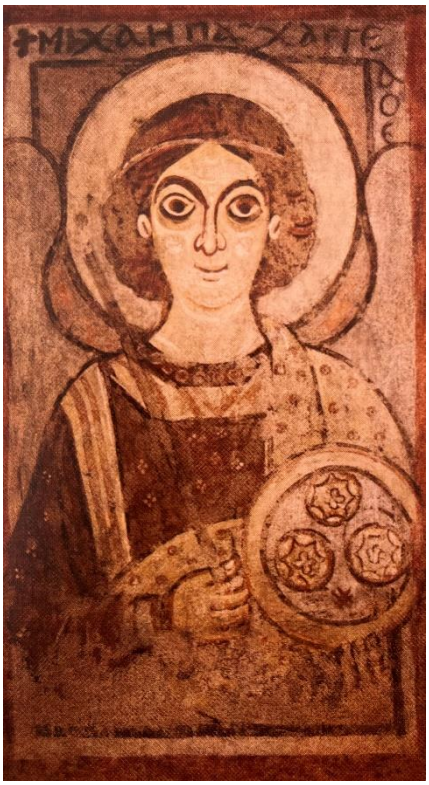


Figure 77. Archangels Michael-Red Monastery (Bolman 2016, p. 139)

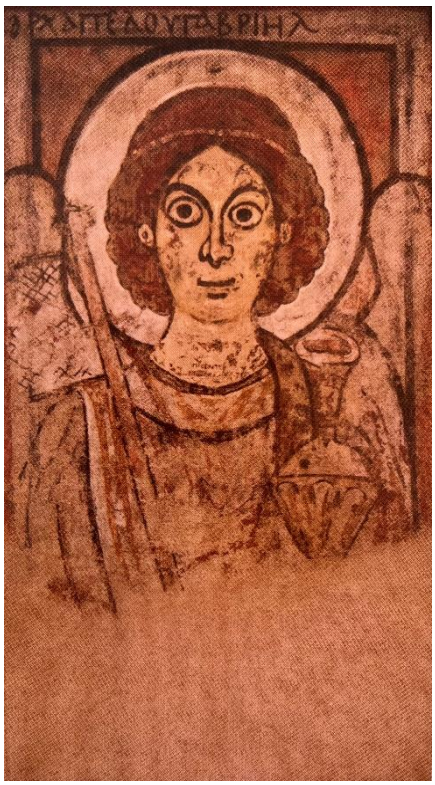


Figure 78. Archangels Gabriel-Red Monastery (Bolman 2016, p. 139)

Description: All the standard iconographic components of the story can be recognized in this relief. The figure of Abraham stands centered below an arch; he raises his right arm to deliver the fatal blow to Isaac whom he holds fast by the hair. The nude boy's hands are tied behind his back. The ram, which is never missing, is shown here to the left of Abraham's figure, ready to take Isaac's place on the altar in the right corner. An arm extends from the left side of the arch to restrain Abraham, giving visual expression to God's intervention. Foliage decorates the diagonal framing elements of this 'broken pediment' and fills the triangular space at either side above them. The surface is abraded, but even in its worn state, it is clear that the carving is less plastic than in the earlier pediments with their mythological themes. [322]

Fig. 80: Plaque with three Hebrews in the Fiery Furnace

Material: Limestone

Dimensions: 40 x 61 cm.

Location: Unknown provenance

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[321] Bolman 2016 c: 139.
[322] Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006: 103.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

Era: 6th-7th centuries



Figure 79. Relief with the Sacrifice of Abraham (Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006, p. 102-103)

Description: This plaque was probably set into the wall of a church or monastery. This is a favorite Old Testament theme in Coptic art. Here four figures in comparatively high relief fill the entire surface of the plaque to depict the episode as recounted in the Book of Daniel. The story is set in the palace of Nebuchadnezzar (r. 605-562 B.C.). When the three Hebrew youths, Meshach, Shadrach, and Abednego refused to worship an idol, they were thrown into a 'fiery furnace' from which they emerged unscathed, thanks to a protective angel sent by God. In this relief, the Hebrews are easily distinguished from the angel by their pointed Phrygian caps. Two of them are shown as orants, while the third raises his hands in front of his chest in an alternative attitude expressing prayer. In contrast to their strictly frontal figures, the



Figure 80. Plaque with three Hebrews in the Fiery Furnace (Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006, p. 105)

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

angel turns his upper body slightly toward the middle of the panel. His raised left hand is fisted, and he carries a staff topped with a cross on the right. [323]



Figure 81. Relief-decorated panel (Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006, p. 80)

Fig. 81: Relief-decorated panel

Material: Wood

Dimensions: 29 cm in height, 22.5-25 cm in width

Location: Bawīṭ, Monastery of St. Apollo – currently in the Coptic Museum, Cairo

Era: 6th-7th century

Description: This piece functioned as a cupboard or box lid. The tenons at the top and bottom of the left edge slipped into sockets enabling the panel to swivel to open or to close. There is a monk depicted in the left half. The conical shape suspended on a strap over his left shoulder is a pen holder, an accessory that identifies him as a scribe. A peacock is on the right side, evoking the Resurrection, with schematic foliage above its back. A horned altar is below the peacock. The halo around the monk's seemingly bald head shows that he can be neither the owner nor simply a monk. Probably he is "the scribe of justice", the patriarch Enoch who is known to have been well-appreciated at Bawīṭ. Simple beveled outlines define the composition. The improper proportions and execution suggest that the panel was made by a non-professional, probably the owner himself, rather than by a skilled craftsman. [324]

Paintings

Fig. 82: Four saints and supplicant

Material: Tempera

[323] Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006: 105.
[324] Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006: 80.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

Dimensions: 110 cm in height, 145 cm in width

Location: Saqqāra, monastery of St. Jeremiah, cell A - currently in the Coptic Museum, Cairo

Era: 6th-7th century



Figure 82. Four saints and supplicant (Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006, p. 65)

Description: Four bearded and haloed men are frontally depicted. Two of them raise their arms in prayer. These orant figures alternate with two others cradling a closed book in one arm. Three of the men wear ample patterned robes. The nudity of the fourth is concealed by his extraordinarily long hair and beard. He is St. Onnuphrius. Originally, a fifth person stood to his right. The label of the man to his left reads "Macarius, bearer of the spirit," while the saint with cross-topped staffs is identified as St. Apollo. The name of the fourth figure is currently invisible, but from an old photo of the scene, it is known as "Pamun". [325]

Fig. 83: Fragmentary wall painting of the sacrifice of Abraham

Material: Tempera

Dimensions: 100 cm in height, about 230 cm in width

Location: Saqqāra, monastery of St. Jeremiah, refectory - currently in the Coptic Museum, Cairo

Era: 6th-7th century

[325] Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006: 65.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014



Figure 83. Fragmentary wall painting of the sacrifice of Abraham (Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006, p. 65)

Description: The figures are preserved to about waist height. Abraham holds a sword in one hand, while the other hand is not preserved. The boy is clothed only in a loincloth. His hands are tied behind his back, on a platform that supports an altar approached by steps. The ram is shown beneath a tree in the center. The only missing feature is the hand of God, which was lost in the upper part painting. The isolated figure to the left of the tree is drawn on a slightly larger scale than Abraham. His costume shows his distinguished status. Perhaps he is a saint, unrelated to the Old Testament subject. Originally Abraham's toes pointed in opposite directions as if the figure stood frontally facing us. But then the painter altered Abraham's stance, rewarding the right foot so that the figure seems to turn more naturally toward Isaac. Colorful interlace and a festoon with foliage form a dado below the scene. [326]

Figs. 75, 76, 84: Moses

Location: The Red Monastery, the eastern semidome of the triconch

Era: Phase 2, circa 500-550 C.E.

[326] Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006: 106-72.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

Description: To the left of Christ, on the northern spandrel of the eastern semidome, the two hands of God extend from heaven to give Moses the law *(fig. 75)*. The patriarch stands with his feet next to his sandals. The counterpart to this scene on the south spandrel, Moses and the burning bush, has suffered a substantial loss *(fig. 76)*. Despite the lacuna, this painting includes three distinct and unusual features: a snake that curves downward in front of Moses' lower body; a thin trunk that makes the bush look like a small tree; and a bust-length Christ within the bush itself *(fig. 84)*. The dipinto in Coptic above the bush states, "Jesus speaks with Moses in the bush." The narrative of Christ speaking from the bush has early textual attestations, but visual representations are very rare. The temporally closest existent image to that at the Red Monastery is a Romanesque painting at Santa Maria Immacolata, Ceri, of c. 1100. Aside from the Red Monastery painting, the only other Byzantine example still surviving is an illumination of circa 1150. It shows the young Christ in the bush. The adjacent scene at Ceri and in this Byzantine, miniature is Moses holding a snake in his hand. [327]

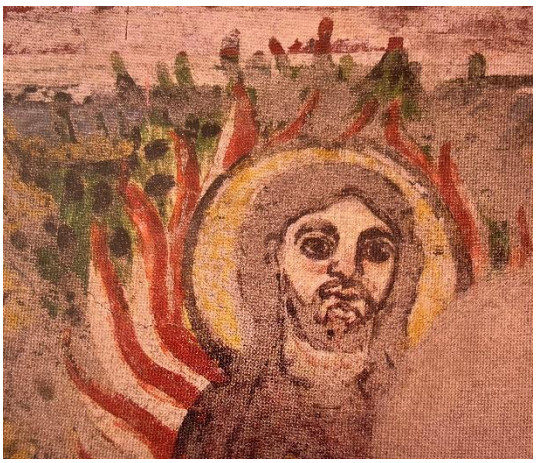


Figure 84. Christ in the burning bush-Red Monastery (Lyster 2016, p. 102)

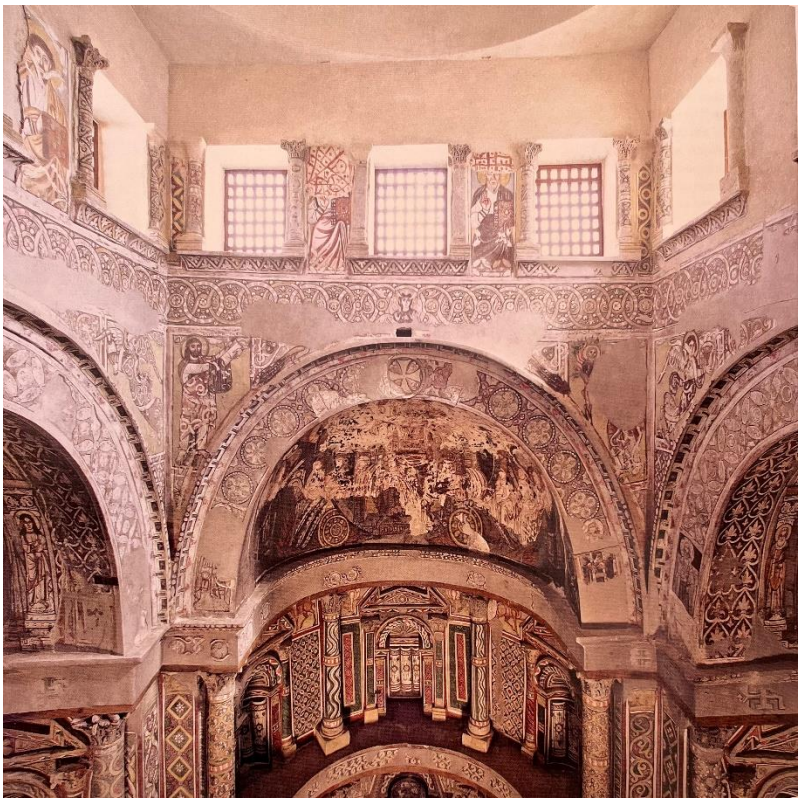


Figure 85. Eastern lobe, with part of northern and southern lobes and the clerestory-Red Monastery (Bolman 2016, p. 132)

[327] Bolman 2016 c: 134-136; see more discussions in Drandaki 2006: 495-500; Linardou 2011.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

Fig. 85: Christian Figures

Location: The Red Monastery, the triconch

Era: Phase 3 circa 550-600 C.E.

Description: The painters of the third phase covered the spandrels and clerestory with ornament, obscuring the earlier figural depictions. A few small-scale figures, one of a standing military saint and at least two monks, are positioned frontally on the outer faces of the arches framing the semidomes. Currently, they lack identifying inscriptions.[328]

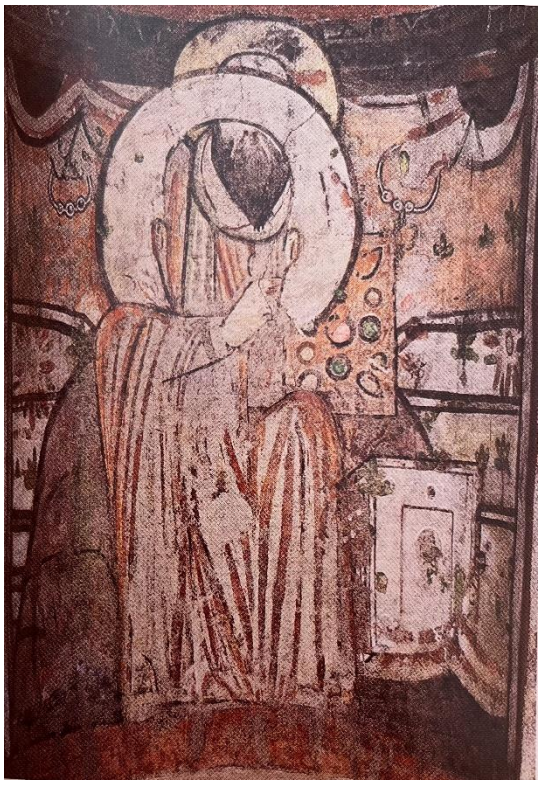


Figure 86. Cyril, patriarch of Alexandria (Bolman 2016, p. 139)

Fig. 86: Cyrillus, patriarch of Alexandria

Location: The Red Monastery, the triconch

Era: Phase 3 circa 550-600 C.E.

Description: On a slightly large scale, a more than bust-length figure represents Cyrillus, patriarch of Alexandria with the ghost of an earlier standing figure, probably also of Cyrillus, under the later paint layer. [329]

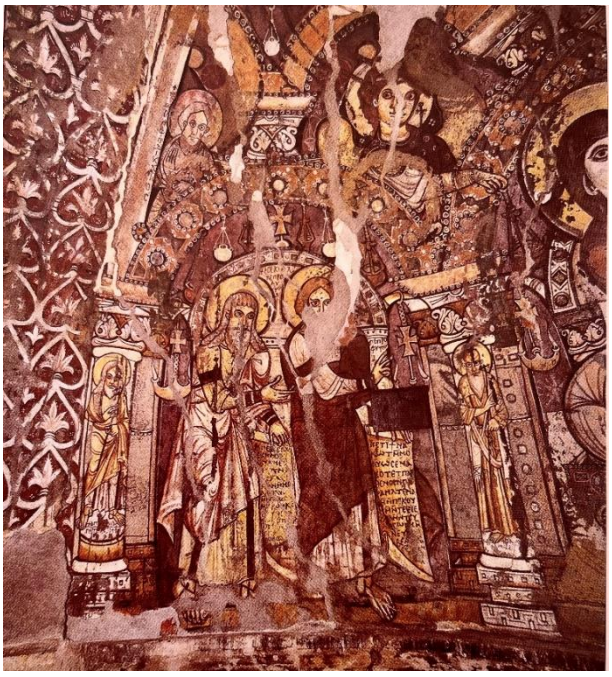


Figure 87. Christian Figures on the western side of the northern semidome-Red Monastery (Bolman 2016, p. 142)

Figs. 87, 88: Christian figures

Location: The Red Monastery, the northern semidome of the triconch

Era: Phase 3 circa 550-600 C.E.

[328] Bolman 2016 c: 139.
[329] Bolman 2016 c: 139.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

Description: From left to right, inscriptions in Sahidic Coptic identify that the four large prophets holding scrolls with texts are Ezekiel, Jeremiah, Isaiah, and Daniel. As usual in such paintings, they are costumed in a tunic, a voluminous mantle, and sandals. In early Byzantine representations, these clothes are often white, but at the Red Monastery the prophets are garbed in luxurious rose, yellow, gold, and dark purplish red. As usual, Daniel stands out because of his eastern dress, which is a cap, a tunic, leggings, a cloak clasped in the center of his chest, and soft shoes or boots.



Figure 88. Christian Figures on the eastern side of the northern semidome-Red Monastery (Bolman 2016, p. 143)

In addition to these dominant figures, miniature men stand in front of the four elaborate piers that segment the painting. They are, from left to right, "Elijah the Tishbite, "the Apostle Peter," "the Apostle Paul," and "Moses the Lawgiver." Mary's husband "Joseph the Just," and "Salome," mentioned in apocryphal infancy gospels as her midwife, gaze out from the upper left and right margins of the scene, as if from the second story of a theatrical backdrop. The small figures seemingly attached to the four major piers of the architectural framework punctuate the image visually and conceptually. [330]

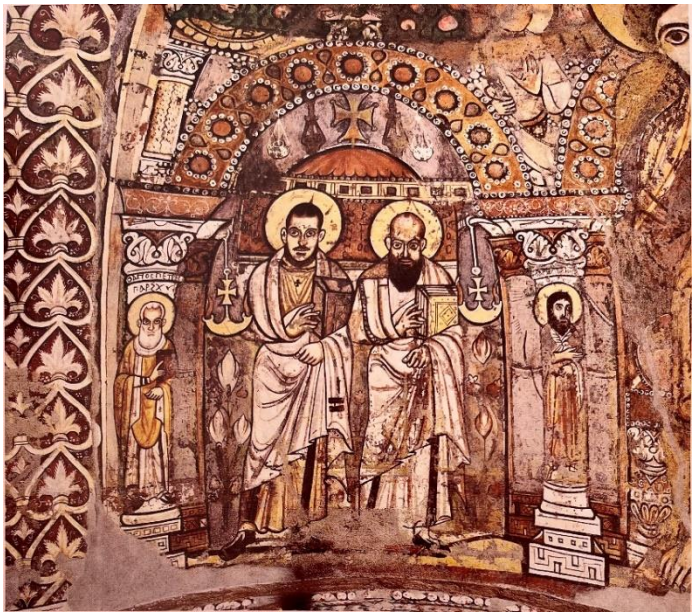


Figure 89. Christian Figures on the eastern side of the southern semidome-Red Monastery (Bolman 2016, p. 147)

Figs. 89, 90: Figures

[330] Bolman 2016 c: 143-144.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

Location: The Red Monastery, the southern semidome of the triconch

Era: Phase 3 circa 550-600 C.E.

Description: The evangelists, John and Mark stand, to the viewer's, left of Christ *(fig. 89)*. Luke and Matthew are on Christ's right side *(fig. 90)*. They gaze with intensity out at the viewer, wearing the tunic and mantle typical for Old and New Testament figures. These four men represent the proclamation of the word of God to the world in the form of the Gospels. The dominant message of this semidome is that Christ, as the Logos, undertook a ministry on earth to ensure humanity's salvation, while granting the law to Moses. Though the main figures in this painting are common in early Byzantine art, this specific hieratic composition, with an enthroned Christ flanked by standing evangelists, is quite unusual. There is a mosaic semidome in Milan that is conceptually related, showing a youthful Christ teaching the apostles. This fourth-century antecedent at Sant'Aquilino, with its emphasis on the dissemination of God's word, is thus similar to the message of the Red Monastery painting, but it focuses more on apostles rather than the evangelists, which makes it significantly different. [331]



Figure 90. Christian Figures on the western side of the southern semidome-Red Monastery (Bolman 2016, p. 148)

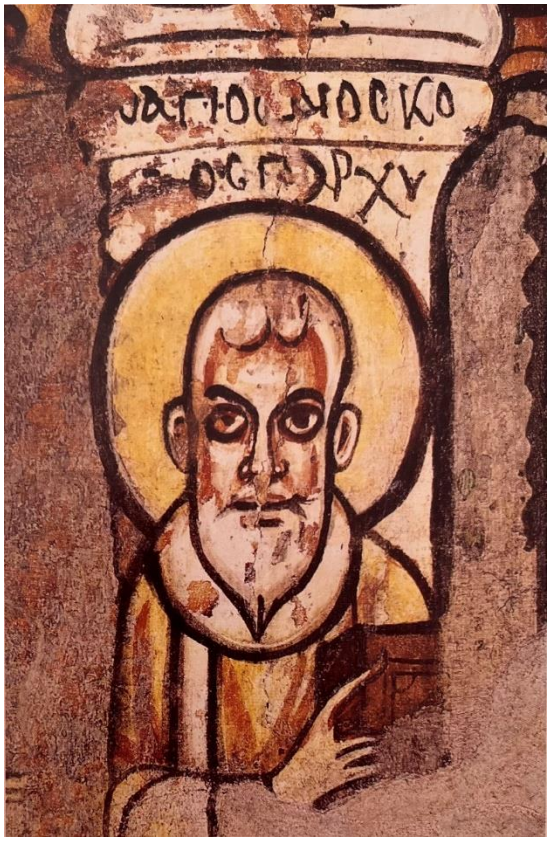


Figure 91. Dioscorus, patriarch of Alexandria-Red Monastery (Bolman 2016, p. 149)

[331] Bolman 2016 c: 146.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

Fig. 91: Dioscorus, patriarch of Alexandria

Location: The Red Monastery, the southern semidome of the triconch

Era: Phase 3 circa 550-600 C.E.

Description: Only the inclusion of Dioscorus unequivocally announces the Miaphysite position of the third-phase program, and his image is not part of the primary narrative system in the semidomes. However minor, the message is nevertheless clear. Art historians have noted the tremendous difficulty, indeed usually the impossibility, of identifying a doctrinal position in early Byzantine art and architecture. The division resulting from the Council of Chalcedon presumably generated the construction or redecoration of numerous Miaphysite churches in Egypt in the 6th century, and thus it seems quite likely that at least one motivation for painting the Red Monastery triconch for a third time, not long after the creation of the second-phase paintings, was to make a pro-Miaphysite statement. [332]

FLORAL AND FOLIAGE ORNAMENTS: -

Capitals:

Fig. 92: Capital decorated with acanthus

Material: Limestone

Dimensions: 65 cm in height

Location: Bawīṭ, Monastery of St. Apollo – currently in the Coptic Museum, Cairo

Era: 6th century



Figure 92. Capital decorated with acanthus (Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006, p. 83)

[332] Bolman 2016 c: 149; for more discussions about the decoration of "Monophysite Church", Mundell 1977: 60; see also more discussions in MacCoull 2003; MacCoull 2006: 401-42.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

Description: The base from which the stylized plant forms looks like a shallow platter, its external is decorated with an openwork design of meander patterns, surrounding, and separating alternating smaller rosettes with six round petals. The acanthus branches seem to grow from the platter. There are four evenly spaced groups of two shorter branches flanking a larger one. The tips curl downwards unnaturally. More branches extend upwards and outwards, behind and between those groups, and at the corners of the abacus. The sharply cut foliage stands out against the background which is painted dark green.[333]



Figure 93. Capital decorated with wind-blown acanthus foliage (Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006, p. 64)



Figure 94. Capital with vines and bunches of grapes (Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006, p. 71)

Fig. 93: **Capital decorated with wind-blown acanthus foliage**

Material: Limestone

Height: 43 cm

Location: Saqqāra, monastery of St. Jeremiah, cell 709 - currently in the Coptic Museum, Cairo

Era: 6th century

[333] Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006: 83.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

Description: Acanthus leaves in two rows twist as if tossed in a storm. Volutes flanking foliage adorn the four corners of the abacus. Between them, is a cross in a wreath of foliage that shows the Christian impact on the Corinthian order. The delicate foliage, such as the vines and wickerwork designs, contrasts with the architectural function of the capitals they decorate. Leaves, vines, and basketwork could never have supported the weight of an architrave. This piece was probably produced during the expansion or rebuilding of the main church at the site in the first half of the 6th century. This capital is the only surviving example from Egypt proper with a type of decoration invented by Roman imperial sculptors in Western Asia Minor and subsequently elaborated by their Byzantine successors in Constantinople. [334]



Figure 95. Palm-frond capital (Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006, p. 77)

Fig. 94: **Capital with vines and bunches of grapes**

Material: Limestone

Dimensions: 40 cm in height

Location: Saqqāra, monastery of St. Jeremiah - currently in the Coptic Museum, Cairo

Era: 6th century

Description: The main shape is covered by intertwining vines, tendrils, leaves, and bunches of grapes in high relief, evocative of the Eucharist and Christ's sacrifice. A bead-and-reel ornament surrounds the base. The plant forms on the 'basket' are highlighted with red paint on the vines

[334] Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006: 64.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

and brown on the leaves. The foliage on the four projecting corners of the abacus is more conventionally rendered in shallower relief. A heart-shaped frame of tendrils around a bunch of grapes and a single leaf is centered on each side. This capital is one of the finest ever found. One may compare it with contemporaneous ones produced anywhere in the Byzantine empire. [335]

Fig. 95: **Palm-frond capital**

Material: Limestone

Dimensions: 53 cm in height, Abacus is 71 cm, the depth of the base is 45 cm

Location: Saqqāra, monastery of St. Jeremiah - currently in the Coptic Museum, Cairo

Era: 6th century

Description: Palm fronds and acanthus in relief decorate this capital. Each group of acanthus springing from the base is centered over the rib of one frond and fans out to overlap half of each flanking frond. Paint completes and enhances the sculptor's work. The leaves on one side of each rib were painted green (now much faded). The rectangular abacus and the spaces between the tops of the fronds were painted a lighter shade of ocher. Plant-form columns had a long history at Saqqāra stretching back to about 2500 B.C. [336]

Fig. 96: **seven-lobed leaves capital**

Material: Limestone

Dimensions: 53 cm in height, depth of the base is 37 cm



Figure 96. Seven-lobed leaves capital (Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006, p. 77)

Location: Saqqāra, monastery of St. Jeremiah - currently in the Coptic Museum, Cairo

[335] Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006: 71.
[336] Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006: 77.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

Era: 6th century

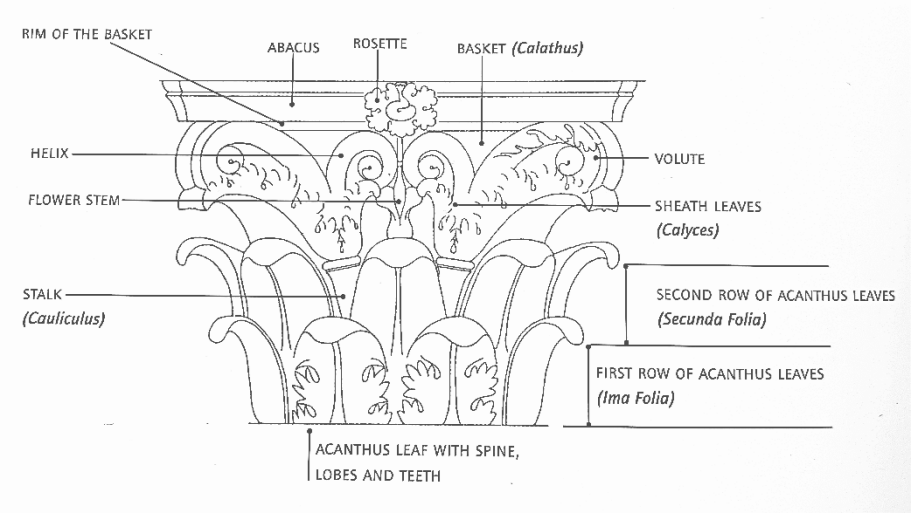


Figure 97. Elements of the Corinthian capital (Gros 1996, p. 494)

Description: The decoration of the capital is sculptured in low relief. It relies on the effect of the details, rather than on an interplay of light and shadow. Each pair of seven-lobed leaves, one above the other, is separated from the next by vertically entwined vines which form alternating smaller and larger roundels. This capital was uncovered during the early excavations, and it dates back to the 6th century. [337]

Fig. 98: **Typical Late Antiquity capitals**

Size: Large

Location: The Red Monastery, the triconch basilica

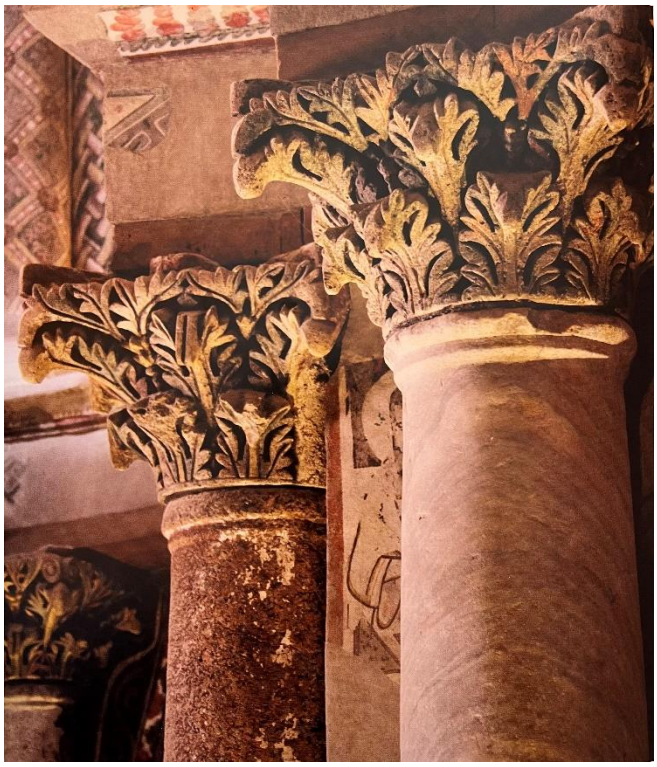


Figure 98. Typical Late Antiquity Capitals-Red Monastery (Kinney 2016, p. 78)

Description: The large capitals in the Red Monastery are typical of late antiquity in terms of the reduction of the standard elements of the classical Corinthian capital to three *(fig. 97)*. As mythologized by Vitruvius, the classical capital is fundamentally a cylindrical basket (calathus) supporting a flat tile (the abacus). The basket is surrounded by two rows of acanthus leaves (*ima* and *secunda* folia). Branches (*cauliculi*, singular *cauliculus*) emerge

[337] Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006: 77.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

between the upper leaves and send out nodes, which are curved by the weight of the tile and curl into volutes and helices. Leaves growing from the *cauliculus* form a sheath (calyx, plural calyces) for the spiraling nodes. The upper rim of the basket is visible between the volutes and the helices, and each side of the abacus is ornamented with a rosette. The capitals in the triconch have only the *ima* and *secunda* folia and the *cauliculi*. [338]



Figure 99. Large capitals-Red Monastery (Kinney 2016, p. 81)

Fig. 99: **Capitals with Volutes**

[338] Kinney 2016: 79.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

Size: Large

Location: The Red Monastery, the triconch basilica

Description: None of the large capitals of the triconch church of the Red Monastery have helices. Only the central capitals in the north and south apses have volutes *(fig. 99. b-c)*. In the absence of helices and Volutes, the sheath leaves take on a life of their own and grow exuberantly to the top of the capital. The abacus is so far recessed from the calathus. It can hardly be seen. [339]

Fig. 99: **Capitals with unfamiliar rosette**

Size: Large

Location: The Red Monastery, the triconch basilica

Description: In place of its rosette, an unfamiliar ornament often appears above the central leaf on the capital itself. The motifs instead of the rosette are varied and irregular, whether leaf fragments forming a V *(fig. 99. d)*, mysterious rows of ovoids *(fig. 99. c)*, shamrocks *(fig. 99. b)*, stacked arches, geometric or foliate *(fig. 99. a, e)*, or a four-petaled St. Andrew's Cross *(fig. 99. f)*. [340]

Fig. 99: **Capitals with unfamiliar *secunda folia***

Size: Large

Location: The Red Monastery, the triconch basilica

Description: On the lateral faces of several capitals in the north and south apses, the *secunda folia* have been replaced by an abstract foliate or *semifoliate* pattern, upright *(fig. 99. g)* or hanging *(fig. 99. h)*, sometimes within a circular frame *(fig. 99. i)*. Flat and much shallower than the heavy acanthus leaves, these abstract patterns probably were easier for the carvers to execute. They are surreptitiously placed so that the capitals present the traditional formula on their principal faces and appear only to the viewer who makes the effort to examine them from the side. [341]

Fig. 100: **Medium-sized capitals**

[339] Kinney 2016: 79-80.
[340] Kinney 2016: 80.
[341] Kinney 2016: 80.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014



Figure 100. Medium and small capitals-Red Monastery (Kinney 2016, p. 82)

Size: Medium

Location: The Red Monastery, the triconch basilica

Description: The medium-sized capitals over the limestone columns on the second level are much simpler in design than the large capitals *(fig. 100. a-c)*. They have only one row of acanthus leaves (one leaf in the center of each face of the capital and one in each corner), vertical sheath leaves, and volutes. The sheath leaves come from nowhere, without *cauliculi*, and the

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volutes also seem like independent features that simply appear on top of the corner folia. Sometimes volutes from two sides of the capital meet over the corner leaf, creating the comic impression of two eyes and a beak, like a cartoon duck looking out from beneath the entablature *(fig. 100. a)*. The carving is primitive and often obscures the integrity of the separate parts. [342]

The same design appears on the rectangular pilaster capitals flanking the passageways in the north and south apses of the triconch *(fig. 100. d-f)*. Each has two visible faces, the narrow one toward the triconch and the longer one facing the passage. A standing acanthus leaf and sheath leaves, with or without *cauliculi*, appear on each face, with a standing acanthus leaf at each corner. The two capitals at the east end of the south apse *(fig. 100. d)* seem more traditional than the others. The *cauliculi* are visible, and there are helices as well as volutes *(fig. 100. d)*. In contrast, the western pilaster capitals *(fig. 100. e-f)* lack the helices, the *cauliculi* are suppressed, and the acanthus leaves in the center of each side have prominent beaded spines *(fig. 100. e-f)*. [343]

Fig. 100: Small-sized capitals

Size: Small

Location: The Red Monastery, the triconch basilica

Description: The small capitals have a *cauliculus* in the center and one acanthus leaf at each corner *(fig. 100. g-i)*. Volutes appear on the pilaster capitals of the first level and on all capitals in the clerestory *(fig. 100. h-i)*. Only the front face of the small capitals is ornamented, and the carving is incomplete. Sometimes the *cauliculus* looks like a stylized tree, while volutes spring in a V pattern from the stem and the sheath leaves grow between them. [344]

Fig. 101: Capitals, varied in size and design

Location: The Red Monastery, the triconch basilica

[342] Kinney 2016: 80-83.
[343] Kinney 2016: 83.
[344] Kinney 2016: 83.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014



Figure 101. Capitals varied in size and design, chancel arch and sanctuary facade-Red Monastery (Kinney 2016, p. 84)

Description: The facade of the triconch basilica of the Red Monastery originally had 36 additional capitals. There are two capitals on the columns under the choir arch, 20 pilaster capitals of different sizes and 14 capitals on the pilasters and half-columns framing the niches. Only 15 pilaster capitals and 8 niche capitals are preserved, some of which are in very poor condition. The large column and pilaster capitals have the same elements as the large capitals inside the triconch (*ima* and *secunda* folia, *cauliculi*, sheath leaves, volutes), but are much more varied. [345]

[345] Kinney 2016: 83.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014



Figure 102. Capitals varied in size and design, west of the sanctuary facade-Red Monastery (Kinney 2016, p. 85)

On the capitals below the arch, the secunda folia are disproportionately large. The lobes of the

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

acanthus leaves are cut so that each lobe is different, and the outer shape of the leaf is interrupted by teeth that are drawn inward and touch the underside of the lobes above *(Fig. 101. a-b)*. The *cauliculi* are ornamented with a spiral pattern, and the spines of the mid-secunda leaves are beaded. The bracts are replaced by medallions containing a cross *pattée*, placed above the cauliculi like a symbol of triumph. [346]

Some of the large pilaster capitals are somehow similar to the template of the triconch *(fig. 101. c)*. Others are transformed *(fig. 101. e)*, which show beading on all secunda folia, pattée crosses over the cone-shaped cauliculi, and a new motif in place of the ima folia. A flat, trilobed plant is enclosed in a pear-shaped double ribbon with five-pointed leaves hanging from the vestigial end of the acanthus leaf on each side *(fig. 101. d)*. The secunda folia display a third style of carving the acanthus leaf, with small teeth that touch the bottom of the lobe above them and lobes that grow outward, each on its thin stem. Severin named lobes of this form "leaf branches", according to the definition of Kirsten Krumeich. There are no motifs on the ima folia but there is deep curving between the teeth of the leaf branches of the central leaf, which also appears on the triconch facade. The pendant capital on the south is similar, but only the central acanthus leaf has leaf branches. The teeth are not too sharp or regular. The cauliculi lack spiral fluting, and rosettes rather than crosses are sculptured between the helices and volutes *(fig. 101. e)*. [347]

A pilaster capital is relatively conservative and was carved in a manner close to that in the triconch, while another at ground level displays the novel framed plant *(fig.101. c, g)*. The capitals on the pilasters and half-columns framing the niches on the facade are of the same design as the triconch's small capitals (corner leaves, central *cauliculi*, volutes). [348]

The capital in line with the north nave colonnade is relatively similar to the large triconch capitals in terms of design and function *(fig. 102. a)*. It also looks like another capital on the ground outside the sanctuary. Only the demounted capital includes a cross *pattée* in a double circular rim above the *secunda* folia *(fig. 102. b)*. Since the demounted capital is likely to be a

[346] Kinney 2016: 83.
[347] Kinney 2016: 83-86.
[348] Kinney 2016: 83.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

remnant of the nave colonnade, the template of the large triconch capitals seems to have been followed also in the lower order of the nave. [349]

The pairs of pilaster capitals on the skillfully decorated portals in the north and south external walls of the basilica are related to the capitals on the triconch facade. Each capital has two decorated faces, one toward the aisle and one toward the exterior of the building. The capitals of the south portal exhibit leaf branches on the *ima* folia and conical *cauliculi* including *pattée* crosses on the exterior faces and stylized foliate patterns in pear-shaped frames overspreading the *ima* folia on the sides toward the passage *(fig. 102. e-f)*. The capitals of the north portal are weathered and harder to make out *(fig. 102. g-h)*.[350]

Fig. 103: **Basket capital with wickerwork interlace**

Material: Limestone

Dimensions: 28.5 cm in height

Location: Saqqāra, monastery of St. Jeremiah - currently in the Coptic Museum, Cairo

Era: 6th century

Description: The relief decorating the comparatively squat capital imitates wickerwork to reinforce the resemblance to a basket. The abacus is relatively plain, with wide space horizontal incisions, interrupted only by a small block of foliage at the center of each side, a motif unobtrusively repeated



Figure 103. Basket capital with wickerwork interlace (Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006, p. 71)

[349] Kinney 2016: 83.
[350] Kinney 2016: 86.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

underneath the projecting corners. [351]

Fig. 104: **Basket capital**

Material: Limestone

Dimensions: 33.5 cm in height

Location: Bawīṭ or Saqqāra - currently in the Coptic Museum, Cairo

Era: 6th century

Description: The decoration of the relatively tall abacus weighs heavily upon the deeply carved wickerwork design of the squat basket that sits on the ring base decorated with a chevron pattern. The damaged foreparts of recumbent rams project from the corners of the abacus. The horns encircling the rams' ears identify them as wooly broad-tailed sheep, a type introduced into Egypt from the south around 2000 B.C. It became associated with the god Amun, head of the Egyptian pantheon. Between the rams, bowls of fruit alternate with peacocks carrying crosses on their backs. [352]



Figure 104. Basket capital (Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006, p. 83)



Figure 105. Basket capital with a looped cross (Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006, p. 42)

[351] Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006: 71.
[352] Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006: 82-83.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

Fig. 105: **Basket capital with a looped cross**

Material: Marble

Dimensions: 28 cm in height, depth of the base is 24.8 cm

Location: Fusṭāṭ - currently in the Coptic Museum, Cairo

Era: 5th-6th century



Figure 106. Trapezoidal capital (Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006, p. 188)

Description: It is a capital in the shape of a basket, decorated with an interlaced pattern. The surface of the basket is deeply carved in imitation of wickerwork. The tall ring base is decorated with a chevron pattern. Doves, perched for flight, occupy the four corners of the abacus. A looped cross has been given a prominent place in the design. The cross is centered between the doves on all four sides. They sculptured each cross against a wreath to celebrate the triumph of Christianity. [353]

Fig. 106: **Trapezoidal capital**

Material: Marble

Dimensions: 83 cm in height, max, width 107 cm, D. of base 55 cm.

Location: Alexandria

Era: 6th century

Description: Capitals with four sides in trapezoidal shape are found alongside basket capitals throughout the Mediterranean. Foliage decorates the conical base of this example, which was hollowed out for reuse as a baptismal font at some point after it no longer served its original

[353] Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006: 42.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

purpose. On all four sides, a panel with a stylized symmetrical depiction of the tree of life is centered in the wickerwork design. Most of the marble that reached Egypt in Late Antiquity came from Constantinople and Proconnesos. Finished marble capitals were also imported through Alexandria and copied there in limestone as well as marble. Skillful local sculptors produced their designs, which some specialists believe could have impacted the development of ornamental capitals outside Egypt. [354]

Friezes/ reliefs:

Fig. 107: **Two superimposed foliate friezes**



Figure 107. Two superimposed foliate friezes (Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006, p. 90)

Material: Limestone

Dimensions: Height of upper frieze: 11-12 cm; Height of lower frieze: 18-19 cm

Location: Bawīṭ, Monastery of St. Apollo, south church – currently in the Coptic Museum, Cairo

Era: 5th to 7th century

Description: This sculpture was discovered by a French expedition. It includes at least different fifteen kinds of foliate friezes. None of them can be certainly dated. Scholars suggest that the lower frieze was not sculptured at the same time as the upper one but was created 200 years later, in the 7th century. The upper frieze is narrower, with a rounded profile and organic, rendered foliage. When the friezes were in place on the exterior of the east wall of the church, the panel with angels sat directly below a circular window that illuminated the altar inside. [355] Stone

[354] Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006: 188.
[355] Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006: 90.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

sculptures often reused pieces blended with elements made to order. These sculptures usually consisted of capitals, doorframes, and niche heads. The sculpture of this case could be implemented in wood too. [356]

Fig. 108: **Frieze with scrolls enclosing busts and animals**



Figure 108. Frieze with scrolls enclosing busts and animals (Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006, p. 66)

Material: Limestone

Dimensions: 40 cm in height and 135 cm in length

Location: Saqqāra, monastery of St. Jeremiah - currently in the Coptic Museum, Cairo

Era: 6th century

Description: The acanthus frieze includes scrolls framing animals and busts. The human faces have large eyes and are topped by two rows of circles simulating curls. The antelope to the left and the lion to the right, are similarly reduced to abstract forms. The sculptor took the inscription for his frieze from a 4th-century prototype and added a cross in the center to claim the composition for Christianity. The block has been identified as a doorway lintel. The dedication of Victor and his son Shoi is inscribed in Coptic across the bottom of the block. [357]

Fig. 109: **Relief featuring a cross**

Material: Limestone

Dimensions: 38 cm in height, 100 cm in length

[356] van Loon 2014: 202.
[357] Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006: 66.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

Location: Saqqāra, monastery of St. Jeremiah - currently in the Coptic Museum, Cairo

Era: 6th century

Description: A **Greek** cross, surrounded by fronds set within interlocking borders, is set squarely in the center of the relief to form the focus of the design. The arms of the cross are decorated with an interlaced decoration. Forms of Blossom **fill** the **spaces** between them. The remaining surface is covered with symmetrically carved foliage. The design is well-balanced, although it has many details. The raised border on all four sides shows that the piece is not a fragment, but complete in itself. It once served as the centerpiece in an entablature. [358]



Figure 109. Relief featuring a cross (Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006, p. 77)

Portals:

Fig. 110: **The southern portal of the triconch basilica, Red Monastery**

Material: Limestone

Location: The Red Monastery, the triconch basilica

Era: 5th - 7th centuries

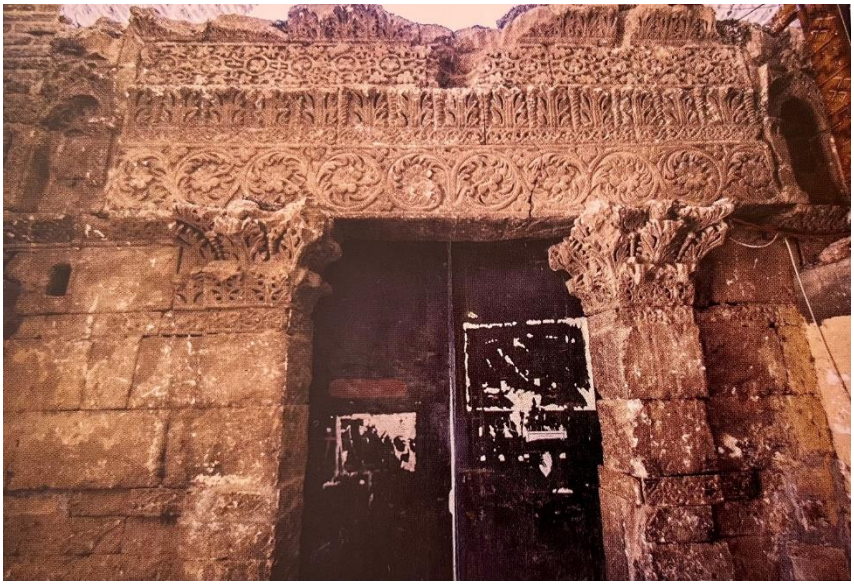


Figure 110. The southern portal, external façade-Red Monastery (Kinney 2016, p. 88)

[358] Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006: 77.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

Description: The exterior of the southern portal of the triconch basilica of the Red Monastery is in relatively good condition. It has been protected by the medieval tower that is close to this side of the basilica. Only its top parts are significantly damaged *(fig. 110)*. Above the relatively little door, there is an ornamented five-part assemblage of frieze as well as cornices. The cornices extend beyond the door edges to terminate in shallow, rectangular niches with Type A pediments. The niches are not as high as the horizontally stacked entablature. To complete the architectural structure, they positioned a block with a relief image of a striding animal above each niche. The eastern niche is considerably damaged. [359]

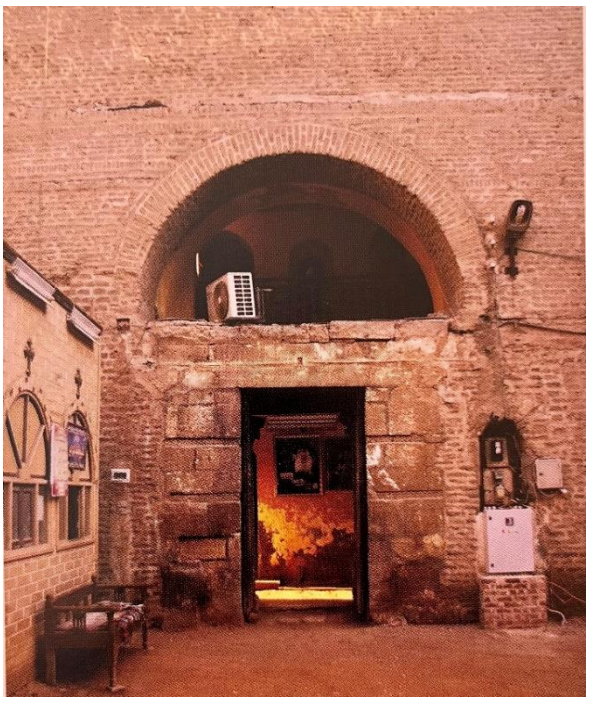


Figure 111. The southern portal, interior view-Red Monastery (Warner 2016, p. 53)

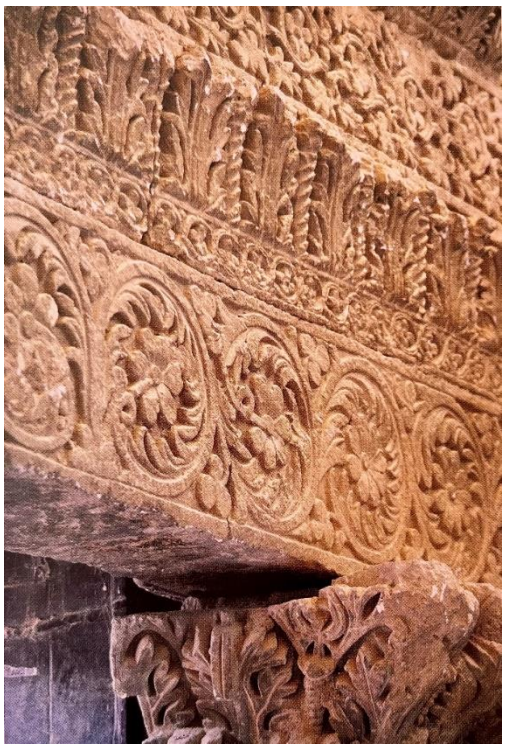


Figure 112. Detail of the southern portal-Red Monastery (Kinney 2016, p. 88)

The sculptor used limestone blocks coursed into the walls to construct the jambs of this portal. The jambs contain three narrow bands of relief ornament. One is directly under the capitals, one is slightly above the vertical mid-point of the jambs, and one is almost centered between the middle band and the doorstep. Similar bands appear in strips on the blocks of the inner face of the doorway, which is without decoration *(fig. 111)*. The capitals were cut from rectangular blocks, leaving a roughly triangular area under the curve of each capital that was filled with an acanthus leaf. Severin considers the leaves to be remains of friezes of standing acanthus, which "doubtless.. continued on the originally adjoining sculpted blocks." [360]

[359] Kinney 2016: 88.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

The horizontal components of the entablature are a composition of a decorated lintel, fillet, cavetto, frieze, and cornice *(fig. 112)*. The lintel was made from a single reused block, whose original pharaonic reliefs are visible on its underside. The length of this spoliate block seems to have determined the width of the entire horizontal ensemble since the upper components were carved on smaller blocks pieced together to match the length of the pharaonic one. [361]



Figure 113. The northern portal, external façade-Red Monastery (Kinney 2016, p. 89)

The lintel bears a foliate scroll that springs from the center and twists outward to form five circles on each side. The leaves that sprout from the insides of the tendrils resemble the serrations of the acanthus lobes on the triconch capitals, and shamrocks, also resembling those of the triconch, fill the spaces in between. The first group of blocks above the lintel features a narrow band of guilloches containing rosettes beneath a row of standing acanthus leaves alternating with spirally grooved cones that are probably *cauliculi*. The frieze appears to have been truncated at the top. The carving of the acanthus leaves is compatible with the capitals of the triconch. Although it is easy to miss from the floor, the frieze has a curvature that resembles a shallow cavetto. The pattern of the frieze above the cavetto is one of the most complex of the ensemble, a play on the basic shape of interlaced circles with rosettes. Each circle has four spurs that extend laterally to intertwine with a partner of the adjacent circle, then bend back to produce a triangular lobed leaf. The circles are filled by four- or five-leaf rosettes. Above this frieze, the badly damaged cornice appears to have been decorated with standing acanthus leaves and other motifs above a semicircular cornice with a rope pattern. In the best-preserved segment, acanthus leaves alternate with a geometric form consisting of bands that wind in a circle on either side of a central stem.

[360] Kinney 2016: 88; Severin 2008: 101.
[361] Kinney 2016: 88.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

The carving of the acanthus differs from that of the cavetto and instead resembles the patterns recorded by Kirsten Krumeich on capitals from Oxyrhynchos: four-pronged lobes with teeth pointing in different directions, some of which bend back to touch the lobe above. [362]



Figure 114. Detail of the internal façade of the northern portal-Red Monastery (Kinney 2016, p. 90)

The well-preserved niche, which forms the western end of the entablature, is a miniature version of the Type A, square-based niches in the triconch. All parts of the niche, from the pilaster shafts to the compound pediment, are decorated with reliefs. There is even a slotted modillion cornice above the pediment arch. Due to the richness of reliefs, this niche resembles those in the triconch of the White Monastery rather than the normal niches of the Red Monastery. Below the niche is a small, chamfered cornice with a simplified version of the leaf scroll of the lintel. The block with the animal above the niche is too damaged to say much about the design, except that it is a quadruped walk toward the center of the door. As mentioned earlier, the interior of the south doorway is undecorated. [363]

Fig. 113: **The northern portal of the triconch basilica, Red Monastery**

Material: Limestone

Location: The Red Monastery, the triconch basilica

Era: 5th - 7th centuries

Description: The entablature of the north portal is less straight. Severin dismissed it as a mixture of "unskillfully assembled, reused sculpted construction elements, whose combination reveals no

[362] Kinney 2016: 88-89; Krumeich 2003: 30-34.
[363] Kinney 2016: 89-90.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

understanding of classical or late antique decorative associations." However, it has the same structure and design as the south portal, at least in terms of the four horizontal elements rather than five. Nevertheless, this portal, unlike the southern one, is decorated on the side toward the aisle of the basilica. There is only one band of relief and no capitals or decoration on the jambs of this side *(fig. 114)*. This side of the door is significant because it contains traces of the plasters used in the triconch. Therefore, it is probably in situ as a leftover of the original basilica. [364]

Weathering and other damage to the outer facade of the portal affect the perception of its style and quality. Like on the southern entablature, the lintel is a limestone monolith, and the upper three bands are matched to its length with smaller blocks. But the components are not as smoothly formed. There are no niches. Also, figural sculptures are included within the length of the entablature rather than being set beyond it. The western edge of the entablature is irregular, and the masonry connecting it is disturbed. The lintel shows a frieze of circles, one full circle alternating with two tangential half-circles. The inner sides of the circles include beadlike solids ornaments, and the centers contain flowers composed of three-pointed petals and shamrocks branching from a central disk. The center of the pattern, where two full circles stand side by side, is displaced to the left, east part of the block. This oddity cannot be explained by reuse because the frieze is uniformly bordered by a flat lintel and must be complete as it is seen. So, it may reflect a miscalculation by the sculptor. The design, generally, represents textile patterns rather than architecture. [365]

The frieze above the lintel is almost similar to the *cavetto* on the south portal, with standing acanthus leaves but without *cauliculi*. The leaves are differently sculpted, with beaded spines and lobes with teeth that frame the leaves connecting them. The touching points form vertical rows of three negative lozenges. The frieze stretches without interruption onto projections at the ends of the outer blocks, which form consoles for the figural reliefs placed into the band above them. The band is decorated with a perfect frieze of eight linked circles. Each circle is filled by a quadruple pattern of crossing ribbons that grow five-pointed leaves and bunches of grapes. Two blocks with figural ornament fit over the projections at the ends of the acanthus frieze below. Although the figural reliefs have been damaged, one can see that both represented stepping horses, probably with riders and possibly with another human figure walking or standing in front.

[364] Kinney 2016: 90; Severin 2008: 98.
[365] Kinney 2016: 90.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

The remains of the crowning cornice show that it was a well-carved slit-modillion cornice, like those at the White Monastery, in terms of having diverse motifs filling the component. The preserved motifs are an equal-armed cross, a flower with alternating round and lanceolate petals, another flower with rounded and three-lobed petals, and the remains of a four-petaled rosette. [366]

The internal entablature has only one decorated motif. It is a frieze on three blocks over the monolithic lintel *(fig. 114)*. Each block shows a different pattern, but all of them contain negative spaces and drill holes, like the upper bands of ornament on the external facade of the door. On the left (west), a stripe with dots along both edges forms an extended quincunx containing flowers in the outer circles and a wreath of five-pointed leaves in the center. Inside the wreath, there is a one-handled vessel with a spout. A similar but looser pattern on the right block is centered on a circle of three-pointed leaves, framed by bands, that encloses a rosette. The longer middle block displays two rows of three connected circles, enclosing four-petaled rosettes and another flower whose four petals have three lobes each. Floral and foliate forms fill the spaces. A large section in the center of the block contained two more circles, but it has been scratched out. The remains of two consoles appear between the blocks, and there could have been a third in the damaged part of the middle block. The relief above the east console has been removed. But on the left one, one can still recognize traces of a throne. [367]



Figure 115. Foliate cross (Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006, p. 59)

On both sides of the north portal, the

[366] Kinney 2016: 90.
[367] Kinney 2016: 90-91.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

ornaments vary from the traditional architectural vocabulary such as standing acanthus leaves, and slit-modillion cornice, to novelties that may have been borrowed from other media, particularly textiles. Both the north and south portals have resemblances at the White Monastery in terms of the way carving some elements. [368]

Paintings:

Fig. 115: Foliate cross

Material: Tempera

Dimensions: 109 x 70 cm.

Location: Quṣūr al-Rubaiyāt, site 233, room 2/3

Era: 7th century

Description: This depiction of the cross, the predominant motif in the hermitage paintings at Kellia, is remarkably decorated. The Christian symbol *par excellence* here seems to be made of thickly leaved branches arising from between twisting vines. This scene is ornamented with tendrils. The tendrils, like the cross, are executed in crimson upon an initial drawing in orange on the rose background. Balls are at the end of the splayed ends of the foot, arms, and summit of the cross. Bells hang from cords strung between the summit and the arms. More bells are pendulous from the arms of the cross. Normally, the tinkling caused by swaying actual crosses hung with bells, announces the approach of religious processions. When the painting was uncovered, the excavators could distinguish a thin white line marking the intersection of the cross. Probably the painter drew it to assist in structuring his composition. [369]

CREATURES: -

Birds:

Sculptures

[368] Kinney 2016: 91.
[369] Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006: 59.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014



Figure 116. Relief with eagles flanking an interlace crown (Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006, p. 182-183)

Fig. 116: **Relief with eagles flanking an interlace crown**

Material: Limestone

Dimensions: 32 x 44 cm.

Location: Unknown provenance

Era: 7th century

Description: A pair of eagles, probably imperial symbols of triumph, turn inward to flank an interlace that forms a wreath-like crown, another symbol of victory. At the center, between the interlace and a rosette, there is another circlet of faceted, bead-like shapes. Below the wreath, vines scroll symmetrically outwards and then turn back and in upon themselves, each ending with a pomegranate. The fruit was a pagan symbol of fertility adopted by Christians who reinterpreted its many seeds to illustrate the communion of countless believers. All the elements of the relief protrude sharply above the surface. But the rounded undercut eagles contrast with

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

the flat surface of the vines on which they perch. The technique of the interlace and the elements it encircles occupies an intermediate position between these extremes. [370]

Fig. 117: **Wooden panel with an eagle**

Material: Wood

Dimensions: 39 cm in height, 33 cm in width

Location: Saqqāra, monastery of St. Jeremiah - currently in the Coptic Museum, Cairo

Era: 6th-7th century



Figure 117. Wooden panel with an eagle (Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006, p. 71)

Description: The eagle, poised for flight with wings spread, turns its head back over its shoulder. An angular interlace pattern serves as a border for the bird with simple plant forms filling the space between it and the bottom and top of the panel, which served as the door to a cupboard set into the wall. The frame is decorated with a foliate ornament. Similar panels were discovered in Bawīṭ too. The eagle on this door was a symbol of the Resurrection. [371] The eagle motif continued as an imperial symbol in the Byzantine Empire. An extensive legendary association between eagles and emperors can also be traced in Byzantine sources where figures of emperors and their families are offered protection in the shadow of the wings of an eagle. [372]

Fig. 118: **Tombstone with an eagle perched on a looped cross**

Material: Sandstone

Dimensions: 65 cm in height, 34 cm in width

[370] Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006: 183.
[371] Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006: 71.
[372] Muthesius 2004: 235.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

Location: Unknown provenance - currently in the Coptic Museum, Cairo

Era: 7th century

Description: The sculptor here reused a piece of a door frame or pillar. An eagle, wings poised to ascend, perches atop a richly decorated looped cross. Floral motifs fill the arms and 'foot' while the loop, which looks like a jeweled wreath, holds a small cross. The eagle, as a symbol of the Resurrection, is regularly encountered on funerary stelae from Upper Egypt. The tree elements that radiate symmetrically from either side of the eagle's claws probably depict its tail feathers. [373]



Figure 118. Tombstone with an eagle perched on a looped cross (Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006, p. 46)

Paintings:

Fig. 119: **Bird worshipping a cross**

Material: Tempera

Dimensions: 45 x 50 cm.

Location: Kellia, Quṣūr al-ʿIzaliya, site 19/20, room 2

Era: 7th century

Description: The bird is one of a pair depicted on either side of a large cross painted in imitation of a sumptuous gold cross inlaid with gemstones. The rounded beak could suggest that the bird is a duck. It is debatable, whether the painter intended to depict any specific type of

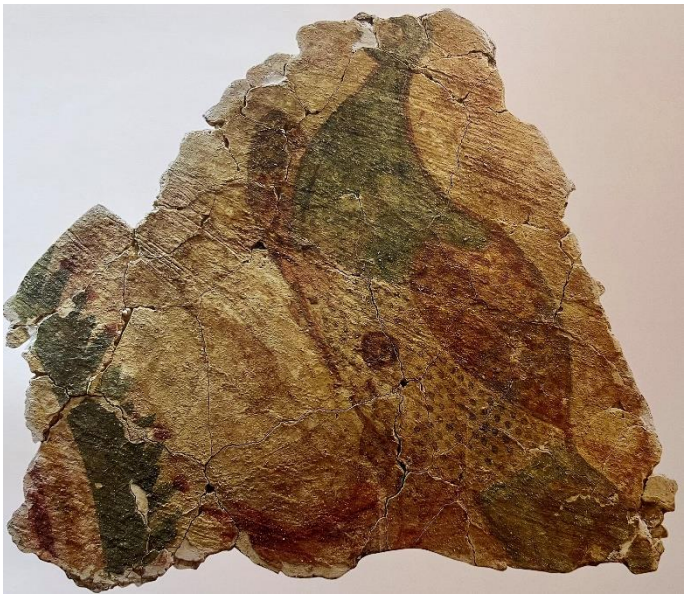


Figure 119. Bird worshipping a cross (Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006, p. 62)

[373] Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006: 45-46.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

bird or simply created one from his imagination instead. Certainly, neither the markings (including the concentric circles on the breast) nor the stubby, rounded tail can be reconciled with identification as a duck.[374]



Figure 120. Summit of a niche (Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006, p. 27)



Figure 121. Cornice block with a shell and looped cross (Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006, p. 48-49)

Shell:

[374] Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006: 62.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

Fig. 120: **Summit of a niche**

Material: Limestone

Dimensions: 55 cm in height, 91 cm in width

Location: Probably from Ahnas - currently in the Coptic Museum, Cairo

Era: 4th-5th century

Description: The central motif of the relief, which once fitted into the top of a niche, is a strongly modeled shell flanked by dolphins diving downwards to conveniently fill the available space on either side. A scroll pattern arches above the shell while a rudimentary variant of the Greek egg-and-dart molding frames the entire relief. This type of composition, which is frequently attested among the reliefs associated with Ahnas, would seem to refer to the goddess Aphrodite who was born from the foam of the sea and transported to land on a shell. Christians appropriated the shell from Greco-Roman iconography as an architectural ornament for churches, adding a cross or eagle sometimes as a symbol of Resurrection. [375]

Fig. 121: **Cornice block with a shell and looped cross**

Material: Limestone

Dimensions: 21.8 cm in height, 34.5 cm in width

Location: Probably from Bahnasa (ancient Oxyrhynchus) - currently in the Coptic Museum, Cairo

Era: 5th-6th century

Description: The motifs decorating this weathered block are very similar to those found on several cornices at Oxyrhynchus, suggesting that it served the same purpose and could have come



Figure 122. Relief with a cross (Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006, p. 190)

[375] Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006: 27.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

from that site. So, it may well have once decorated the tomb of a prosperous Christian buried there. The shell in the center of the relief is a symbol of the Resurrection, appropriated by Christians from classical mythology. The Greek letters *alpha* and *omega* are tucked under the arms of the looped cross at the right. Its message of sacrifice and redemption is reiterated by a smaller cross inserted below the *omega*. Ornamental interlace fills the field to the left of the shell, and a bead-and-reel molding runs across the bottom of the block. [376] While the Greek influence has clearly represented here in the shell, the presence of a pure Egyptian element such as the looped cross (*ʿankh*) cannot be denied.

Fig. 122: **Relief with a cross**

Material: Limestone

Dimensions: 27 x 32 cm

Location: Unknown provenance

Era: 6th-7th centuries

Description: The relief features a cross on a pearl-studded shell whose appearance looks like the fan-like tail of a peacock. Sculptors recognized the potential of both the peacock's tail and the shell for decorating semi-circular spaces well before the beginning of Christianity. The idea inspired Christian sculptors, who sometimes were adding a cross to the composition, as in this case. The original context of the relief is not known. Possibly, it was a decoration at some part of a church. [377]



Figure 123. A niche from the basilica of Dandara, retrieved from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Christian_Basilica_in_Dendera#/media/File:Dendera_Basilika_05.JPG

Fig. 123: **A niche from the triconch church in the temple complex of Dandara**

[376] Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006: 47-48.
[377] Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006: 190-191.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014



Figure 124. Fragment from a frieze of animals (Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006, p. 140-141)

Location: Dandara

Era:

Description: The rich decorations of the narthex are enhanced by niches with carvings in bas-relief. This niche is crowned with a decorative shell motif contains an eagle within the shell.[378] The shell seems to refer to the goddess Aphrodite who was born from the foam of the sea and transported to land on a shell. Christians appropriated the shell from Graeco-Roman iconography as an architectural ornament for churches, adding a cross or eagle sometimes as a symbol of Resurrection.[379] In this case, an eagle was added.

Animals:

Sculpture

Fig. 124: **Fragment from a frieze of animals**

Material: Limestone

Dimensions: 34 x 69 cm

[378] Capuani 2002: 224.
[379] Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006: 27.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014



Figure 125. Frieze with animals (Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006, p. 191)

Location: Minya

Era: 6th-7th centuries

Description: The sculptor dealt impressionistically with the topic of relief. Tails, claws, and manes, indicated by two overlapping rows of leaf-like forms at the neck, identify two of the animals as lions. One of the predators has caught an antelope by a hind leg. In a panic, the animal (that wears a bell around its neck) tries to jump away. The animal in front of the fleeing antelope could be a hound. It bites the ear of what might be another antelope. Only its forepart is preserved at the edge. The way its head is twisted back over the shoulder suggests that it has stumbled and fallen to the ground. The small animal in the lower left corner seems to be eating, unaware of the action. The sculptor used foliage to fill the space between the animals. Their limbs, ears, and tails overlap the leaves to create an illusion of depth. The slightly raised border continuing around the left edge of the fragment shows that it represents the end of the frieze which continued another block to the right. [380]

Fig. 125: **Frieze with animals**

Material: Limestone

[380] Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006: 140-141.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014



Figure 126. A wall painting from the funerary chapel of St. Shenoute Archimandrite in the White Monastery, retrieved from https://www.360cities.net/it/image/tomb-of-st-shenoute-white-monastery-sohag-egypt?pano_detail=true&portfolio_view=false

Dimensions: 38 x 76.5 cm

Location: Faiyūm

Era: 6th-7th centuries

Description: Twining acanthus divides the block into compartments, each containing an animal. An antelope stands in the central part. The flanking lions open their jaws and bare their teeth. A full mane identifies the lion at the right as the mate of the lioness with a short ruff nursing her cub at the left. With heads in high relief and bodies decreasing in plasticity toward the hindquarters, which are not shown at all, the animals seem to rush forward, out of the picture plane. Scenes of wild animals threatening and attacking other animals were popular in the art of the Mediterranean from earlier times, from textiles to painting and sculpture, in the Roman and Byzantine periods. For Christians, wild animals may have personified evil that threatened the meek, as embodied in the antelope. The prominent cross on a similarly decorated block of the same size in Berlin suggests that such friezes may have been decorating a church or Christian mausoleum. [381]

[381] Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006: 191.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

Paintings

Fig. 126: **A wall painting from the funerary chapel of St. Shenoute Archimandrite in the White Monastery:**

Location: White Monastery

Era:

Description: In the triconch funerary chapel discovered by YALE, on the walls of the entryway, vestibule, and burial chamber are images of gemmed crosses, birds, and grazing animals, interspersed among geometric designs. Eagles and peacocks, deer, and gazelles are painted predominately in shades of ocher and cream, with darker outlines, but other colors (light yellow, rose, pale green, and blue) add highlights elsewhere in the visual program.[382]

GEOMETRIC: -

Paintings

Fig. 127: **Three painted panels from a dado**

Material: Tempera on mud plaster

Dimensions: 164 x 168 cm; 177 x 177 cm; 182 x 180 cm

Location: Bawīṭ, Monastery of St. Apollo – currently in the Coptic Museum, Cairo



Figure 127. Three painted panels from a dado (van Loon 2014, p. 196-179; Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006, p. 88)

[382] Davis 2012: 14-15.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

Era: 6th century



Figure 128. The ceiling of the quarry church of the Virgin- Dayr al-Ganadla (van Loon 2014, p. 201)

Description: Twenty square painted panels alternated with narrower rectangular panels to form a dado in a long-vaulted room used as a refectory. The geometric design of each square panel is unique, whereas the simpler patterns on the rectangular panels show less variety. These three squares represent the intricate patterns, which were produced using a compass. A range of colors is properly employed. The most sophisticated painted dados with panels of geometric motifs are those from Bawīṭ. The paintings were inspired by mosaics in variegated stones. The designs reached Egypt from Syria and Palestine. This system of a dado with a geometrical pattern and a figurative frieze above is familiar in Late Antique Egypt, and one can see it not only in many churches and monastic buildings but also in a temple, a tomb, or a private house. Inscriptions on the east and west walls of the room name the painters: John, Elias, and Papnoute. [383]

Fig. 128: **The ceiling of the quarry church of the Virgin**

Location: Dayr al-Ganadla

Era: 6th century

[383] van Loon 2014: 197.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

Description: *Khurus* decoration has rarely been preserved. Vaults and domes were probably painted but their decoration has not usually survived. An exception is the beautiful ceiling of the quarry church of Dayr al-Ganadla. [384]



Figure 129. Composite pediments, not to the same scale-Red Monastery (Kinney 2016, p. 86)

Sculpture

Fig. 129, 130: **The niches with pediments of the triconch Basilica of the Red Monastery**

The walls of the triconch and its facade have semicircular and square-based niches crowned by composite or broken pediments. This typical Egyptian shape seems to combine parts of two pediments: a steeply angled one at the corners and another of a lesser slope, or an arch, in between. All the pediments are made of limestone monoliths set into the brick walls, but they differ in shape and structure depending on the type. Elizabeth S. Bolman divided them into three types: A, B, and C. Seven niches are preserved on the triconch facade. Two of them are in the tympana above the doors leading from the aisles to the side rooms, two above the doorway to the north and south apses, two flanking the spandrels of the sanctuary arch, and one above the apex of the arch. [385]

Type A

[384] van Loon 2014: 200-201.
[385] Kinney 2016: 86-87; Krumeich 2003: 125-131; Severin 1993; Severin 2008: 93-97.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

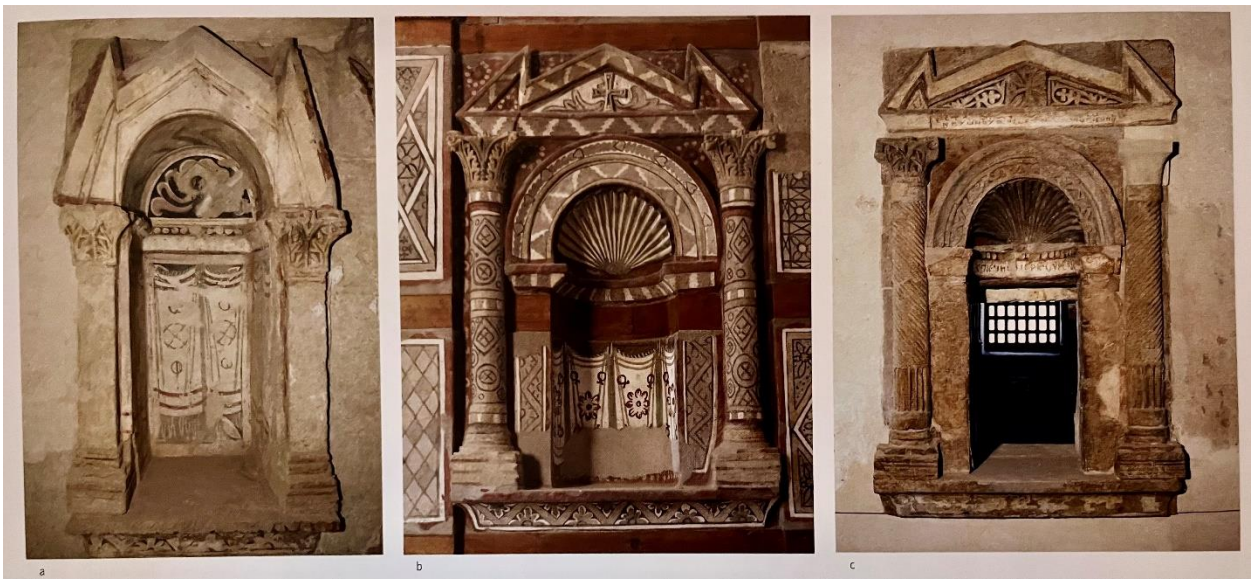


Figure 130. Types of niches on the sanctuary façade-Red Monastery (Kinney 2016, p. 87)

Type A, which occurs over the niches on the first level of the triconch, has sharply rising lateral triangles and a central gable whose sides meet at an angle of about 135 degrees *(fig. 129. a)*. The design is compact, and the steep lateral points give it a vertical thrust. These pediments rest on limestone half-columns holding the small type of Corinthian capital. The Type A pediments above square-based niches are with barrel vaults. They have simple beveled surfaces and were decorated only with paint *(fig. 130. a)*. [386]

Type B

Type B pediments, above the niches on the second level, are vertically compressed, becoming low and broad enough to occupy almost the entire width of the space between the limestone columns separating the niches *(fig. 129. b)*. These pediments are wider than the niches below them, and they seem to float above the half-columns and pilasters. Type B pediments cover semicircular niches with semidomes *(fig. 130. b)*. Their cornices are also plainly beveled,



Figure 131. Detail of the slit-modillion cornice on a pediment-Red Monastery (Kinney 2016, p. 86)

[386] Kinney 2016: 86-87.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

but the niche heads below are more sculptural, with a conch shell in relief framed by an arched frieze. The pediments rest directly on small-type capitals, and they contain crosses carved in relief. [387]



Figure 132. Fragments of a slit-modillion cornice, maybe from the entablature over the nave colonnade-Red Monastery (Kinney 2016, p. 86)

Type C

Type C pediments appear only above the passages on the first floor of the northern and southern apse *(Fig. 129. c)*. Unlike the type A pediments on this level, they combine lateral triangles with an arch. Below the arch is a recessed tympanum framed by an archivolt. There is no lintel. The pediment rests directly on the medium capitals above the supporting pillars. The archivolt and the cornice of the pediment both form parabolic arches, and the cornice has a concave profile. The concavity results in a slight bulge where the arch meets the lateral points, the faces of which are also rotated a few degrees toward the center *(fig. 131)*. These manipulations are echoes of the much more three-dimensional pediments found elsewhere in Egypt. However, these overdoors are unusually flat. The eastern overdoors are decorated with paint, but the western ones have a carved "slit-modillion cornice" on the pediment and a raised cross *pattée* in the tympanum *(figs. 129. c, 131)*. The slit-modillion cornice is an allusion to a classical low-relief cornice in which square panels filled with rosettes or other motifs alternate with elongated bodies slotted along their vertical axis, representing classical modillions. Normally, slotted modillion cornices include a knuckle with bead and scroll ornamentation on the underside, but this component is missing from the overdoors. [388]

[387] Kinney 2016: 86-87.
[388] Kinney 2016: 86-87; Severin 1993: 80; Krumeich 2003: 116.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

The slit-modillion cornice was a common feature of Egyptian composite gables and probably in architecture as well. It is found throughout the White Monastery Basilica, both on the pediments and the cornices on both levels of the triconch, on the walls of the nave, and on the exterior wall of the long south hall. Fragments found in the area of the nave of the Red Monastery prove that slotted modillion cornices also occurred there, possibly in the cornices above the colonnades of the nave *(fig. 132)*.[389]



Figure 133. Four friezes, decorated with Nilotic motifs (Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006, p. 39)

The window framing at the apex of the facade is paradoxically (because of its distance from the viewer) the most elaborate. It is almost unique among the niche frames of the Red Monastery in having relief ornamentation on the half-columns under the pediment and in the semi-dome, archivolt, and pediment itself *(Fig. 130. c)*. The column shafts are partly fluted and partly spirally fluted; the archivolt has a pattern of crenellations and spheres, and the semi-dome contains a three-dimensional scallop shell. In the pediment, a cross *pattée* is flanked by symmetrical patterns, possibly alluding to leaf scrolls ending in clovers reminiscent of one of the patterns on the capitals of the triconch *(see fig. 99. h)*. [390]

NILOTIC SCENES: -

[389] Kinney 2016: 87; Krumeich 2003.
[390] Kinney 2016: 87.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

Fig. 133: **Four friezes, decorated with Nilotic motifs**

Material: Wood (Tamarisk)

Dimensions: 20 x 95.5 cm, 17 x 82 cm, 20 x 68 cm, 17.8 x 53.5 cm.

Location: Unknown provenance

Era: 5th – 6th centuries

Description: All four fragments preserve Nilotic elements. Two of them feature a crocodile. Pharaonic artists first used the crocodile to typify an aquatic environment in the Third Dynasty (c. 2650 B.C.). Neither crocodile in these reliefs is particularly true to nature. On the uppermost fragment (which may date somewhat later than the others, to the sixth century), the head is dragon-like, and the scales are rendered by cross-hatching. Open blossoms or seed vessels of the pink lotus and other plants evoke an aquatic environment. A pillar separates the scene from an extended human leg which probably belonged to one of a pair of *erotes* flanking a medallion or some other object. The crocodile in the third frieze has crawled up on the riverbank to lie under a palm tree. His head, a plant held firmly in his jaws, is turned back over his shoulder. A fish is all that is left of the rest of the relief. The decoration of both remaining friezes suggests streams full of fish and aquatic plants. A single preserved bird shows that waterfowl were also part of the composition on the second frieze, while the fish of the fourth frieze swim above and around a floating floral garland. [391]



Figure 134. Segment of an archivolt with a Nilotic scene (Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006, p. 37)

Fig. 134: **Segment of an archivolt with a Nilotic scene**

Material: Limestone

[391] Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006: 39.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014



Figure 135. Two panels with winged figures and Nilotica (Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006, p. 36)

Dimensions: 48 x 33 cm.

Location: Probably Coptos

Era: 5th century

Description: A fisherman squatting in a coracle-like boat is about to land a large fish. A second fish swims in the water where lotus and papyrus flourish. The group of two ducks sitting back-to-back on a papyrus umbel dwarfs the fisherman and his catch. There are similar pharaonic depictions of birds nesting on papyrus umbels. The frieze of heart-shaped ivy leaves with interspersed beads that border the archivolt's outer edge is Greek in origin. It occurs frequently in Coptic textile design, as well as in relief. Nilotic motifs, common in Coptic textiles and wood carvings, are quite rare in stone sculpture. There are only two other fragmentary archivolts like this example, one in London and one in Paris. Both are edged with the same frieze. [392]

Fig. 135: **Two panels with winged figures and Nilotica**

Material: Wood (Tamarisk)

Dimensions: 19.3 x 109 cm, 15 x 59.

Location: Unknown provenance

[392] Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006: 36.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

Era: 5th – 6th centuries

Description: Both panels show two winged figures carrying a medallion between them. Only one of a pair of columns with a retracted curtain is preserved in both cases. This stage-like backdrop may have been intended to depict the scene as a vision. Elements evoking a Nilotic landscape fill the space behind it. The winged figures on the longer frieze are decoratively dressed, while their counterparts on the shorter frieze are nude. Although that, they too represent angels. The medallion worn by the clothed couple features an eight-petaled rosette symbolizing the universe. A wreath surrounds a bust held aloft by the nude angels. Small wings on the shoulders of the bust identify the figure as an archangel. The sculptor has adopted the late antique image of winged women holding up a wreath in celebration of victory to convey the message of the triumph of Christianity. [393]



Figure 136. Relief plaque with a youth riding a centaur (Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006, p. 30)

OTHER FIGURES: -

Sculptures:

Fig. 136: **Relief plaque with a youth riding a centaur**

Material: Limestone

Dimensions: 42 cm in height, 47 cm in width

Location: Unknown provenance - currently in the Coptic Museum, Cairo

Era: 6th century

[393] Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006: 36.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

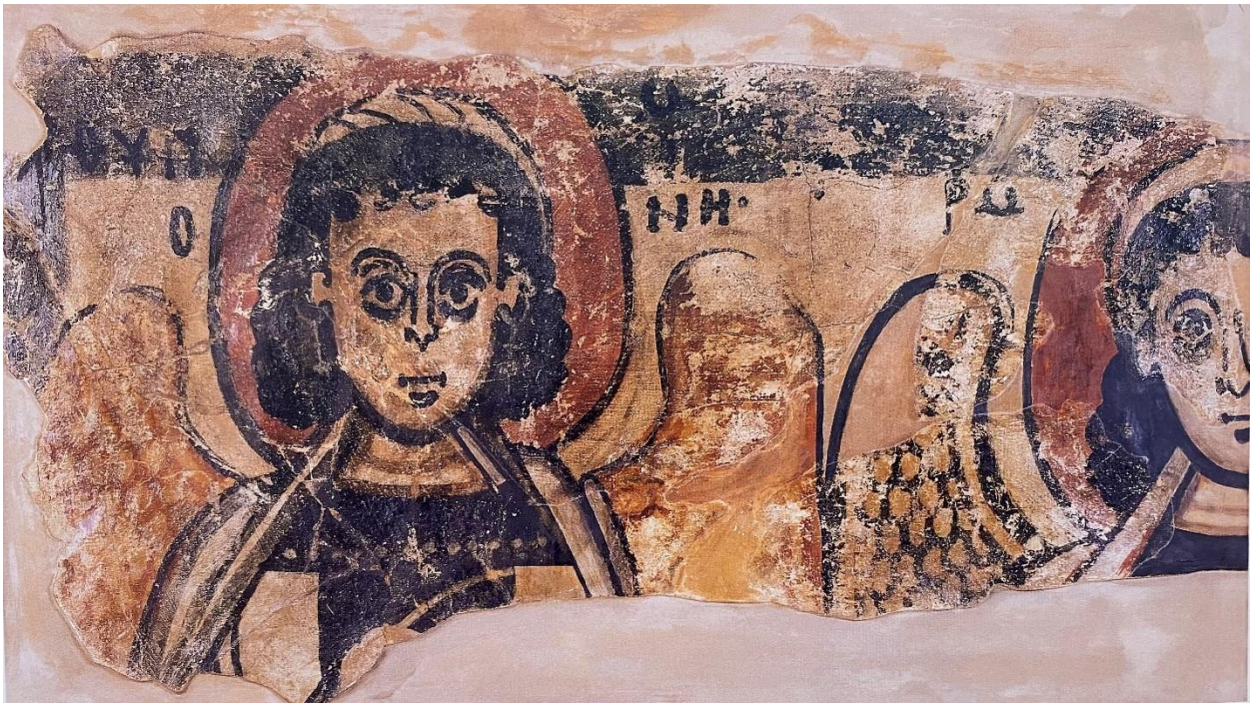


Figure 137. Perseverance and Wisdom (Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006, p. 66)

Description: The relief depicts a nude youth astride a centaur, who holds a basket full of fruit in one hand, and an object that looks like a shepherd's crook in the other hand against his chest. Both figures look at us, but the youth's head is turned back over his shoulder, and his visible arm is improperly crooked to depict him holding pan pipes to his lips. A wide meander pattern frames the scene. Centaurs appear in this relief. Usually, Centaurs are a common element in the design of Coptic textiles but are rare in sculpture. The centaur in this relief has been identified as Chiron, the tutor of the Homeric hero Achilles, who is presumably the rider here. [394]

Paintings:

Fig. 137: **Perseverance and Wisdom**

Material: Tempera

Dimensions: 37 cm in height, 69 cm in width

Location: Saqqāra, monastery of St. Jeremiah, cell 709 - currently in the Coptic Museum, Cairo

Era: 6th-7th century

[394] Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006: 30.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014



Figure 138. Winged figure holding a wreath (Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006, p. 30)

Description: This fragment is the best preserved of the paintings depicting the twelve virtues that were discovered from the walls of cell 709. It was removed during excavations at the site between 1907 and 1908. There were 13 half-length personifications distributed over the four walls of the cell. Patience was portrayed twice. All the figures are depicted frontally, and each holds an orb, symbolizing the universe. In common with other depictions of virtues, wings and halos assimilate them into angels. All wear the same costume, but the painter varied the patterns of the decorative bands on the tunics, coiffures, and plumage in adjacent figures. Perseverance (on the left) wears earrings, and her diadem is patterned, details absent from the partially preserved figure of Wisdom (on the right). [395]

Fig. 138: **Winged figure holding a wreath**

Material: Painted wood

Dimensions: 24.7 in height, 44.3 cm in width

Location: Unknown provenance - currently in the Coptic Museum, Cairo

Era: 6th-7th century

[395] Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006: 66.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

Description: The panel preserves half of a symmetrical scene. This type of composition is derived from Roman prototypes depicting winged victories carrying the bust of the emperor. Typically, the flying figure glances back over her shoulder. No traces survive of whatever the wreath once encircled here. A bust or probably a symbol such as a cross. Holes at the beveled edge show where pegs once joined the halves of the composition. Another hole at the left end may have served to secure a frame or attach the panel to another surface. [396]

TOMBSTONES: -

Fig. 139: **Tombstone**

Material: Limestone

Dimensions: 42 cm in height, 34 cm in width

Location: Unknown provenance - currently in the Coptic Museum, Cairo

Era: 5th-6th century



Figure 139. Tombstone (Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006, p. 43)

Description: This type of tombstone is common in many cemeteries in Upper Egypt. Looped crosses are obviously featured in the decoration. The architectural framework of this piece is based on Greek prototypes. A Greek cross stands under the summit. The name of the deceased person, which is "Pamonthes" is written under that cross on the architrave. The two looped crosses are depicted under the architrave. Inside the loop of each cross, there is another small Greek cross depicted inside the loop. The Greek inscription between the column bases and the depicted tools between the looped crosses informs us that the deceased was a carpenter. [397]

Fig 140: **Tombstone of Plenis**

[396] Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006: 30.
[397] Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006: 42-43.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

Material: Sandstone

Dimensions: 67 x 61 cm.

Location: Unknown provenance - currently in the Coptic Museum, Cairo

Era: 6th century



Figure 140. Tombstone of Plenis (Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006, p. 57)

Description: The architectural design of this stela features fluted columns, as in the Pamonthes's stela *(see fig. 139)*. Two palm fronds fall from the middle of the top of the stela parallel to the sides of the pediment, which is decorated with a pair of leaves. The part that shows the stems bound together and pointing upwards is, however, a common feature in other pieces too. Between the columns, looped crosses flank the *staurogram*. The first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, alpha and omega, are cut deeply in the upper corners of the stela and repeated in high, but unmodeled relief below the architrave. The reference is to Revelations 1: 8, affirming God's existence in perpetuity. The Greek text on the pediment names the deceased (Plenis) and tells us that he was a cleric. The inscription also includes the wish that he "rest in peace" and the date of his death. [398]

Fig. 141: **Tombstone with an invocation**

Material: Limestone

Dimensions: 43 cm in height, 88 cm in width

Location: Unknown provenance - currently in the Coptic Museum, Cairo

[398] Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006: 46-47.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014



Figure 141. Tombstone with an invocation (Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006, p. 44)

Era: 6th-7th century

Description: The general format of this piece is quite exceptional. Two richly ornamented looped crosses flank a structure with columns supporting the roof that protects a cross. Lots of grapes hanging from the ends of the architrave, and the vine leaves that seem to grow from the crosses' arms, refer to Christ and his sacrifice for the redemption of humankind, while the shell within the central arch expresses the hope of the Resurrection. *Alpha* and *omega* are close to the central cross. Below it, one can see the traces of the figures of two confronted doves, symbols of peace. The composition as a whole testifies to an ambitious iconographic program focused on the triumph of the cross, designed with acumen, and implemented with remarkable skill. The Greek inscription across the top names the deceased (Apa Biham or probably Abraham) who makes the standard declaration of faith: "One god, the Savior". [399]

Fig. 142: **Tombstone of Petros**

Material: Limestone

Dimensions: 38 cm in height, 29 cm in width

[399] Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006: 44-45.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

Location: Unknown provenance - currently in the Coptic Museum, Cairo

Era: 6th century

Description: The technique of this tombstone is simple. The sculptor used incisions with only minimal modeling. He divided the surface roughly in half. In the upper part, he cut a pediment with an undetailed wreath flanked by foliage. No columns support the pediment. The area below it is divided into three fields. The central field is occupied with the staurogram. In the bottom half of the stela, there is a boat with a sail in the form of the Greek letters; chi and rho, the first two letters in the name of Christ. This Christogram is the oldest of all the symbols evoking the Savior. Boats had always played a crucial role in religious imagery, especially in funerary beliefs, [400] This is obvious, for instance, in the so-called Boats of Sun in the ancient Egyptian civilization.



Figure 142. Tombstone of Petros (Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006, p. 48)

Fig. 143: **Tombstone with an orant**

Material: Limestone

Dimensions: 77 x 52 cm

Location: Unknown provenance

Era: 5th century

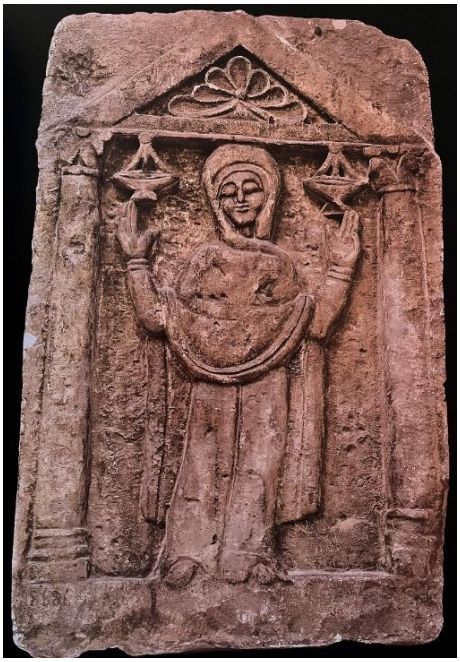


Figure 143. Tombstone with an orant (Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006, p. 173)

[400] Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006: 48.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

Description: The owner of this stela was a woman, who is depicted on it as an orant. The ends of her *palla* draped over her head and shoulders, hang down below her elbows to frame her lower body. A single, unbroken line economically delineates eyebrows and nose. The bulging eyes, round cheeks, pinched mouth, and square chin look almost as if they had been molded in clay, rather than worked in stone. The lady stands within an architectural framework of columns and a pediment decorated with a schematized shell. The lamps hanging from the pediment to either side of her head make the structure looks like a chapel or prayer niche in a church. [401]

Fig. 144: **Tombstone of a mother with her child**

Material: Limestone

Dimensions: 71 x 35 cm

Location: Unknown provenance

Era: 5th century



Figure 144. Tombstone of a mother with her child (Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006, p. 175)

Description: This stela resembles a type common throughout the Mediterranean world in Late Antiquity. The owner is depicted in an architectural setting, under an arch supported by two columns. There is no architrave here, but the shell below the arch floats inappropriately above the woman's head. It looks unfinished, in contrast to the precise details of the woman's face, which include curls across her forehead below two nearly horizontal ridges, perhaps representing coils of hair on top of her head, and the sharp edge of her palla. The irises of her large eyes are rendered in relief. Her head is quite large in relevant to the body. Her stubby right arm is raised at shoulder height. Her lost left arm cradled the fully clothed child (now headless) on her lap. The woman herself sits with curved legs on a seat that is not centered beneath the columns. Her slippered feet seem to dangle above the ground. The right arm raised at the elbow and open hand could be understood as an

[401] Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006: 172.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

orant's gesture, but it has also been interpreted as an expression of greeting as if she were hailing passers-by. [402]

Fig. 145: **Tombstone of Phoibamun**

Material: Limestone

Dimensions: 39 x 29 cm

Location: Unknown provenance

Era: 6th-7th centuries

Description: The stela shares an architectural setting with the anepigraphic stelae *(see figs. 143, 144)*. Here a cross replaces the human figure(s) between the columns, and the design is executed in flat raised relief, by contrast to the very plastic technique of the two uninscribed examples. Foliate forms (possibly stylized palm fronds) radiate from the center of the Latin cross. The tenon projecting from under the foot was a common feature of processional crosses; with it, they could be attached to a staff. The zigzag edge of the shell below the arch is far removed from the undulating outline of a shell in nature. Foliate acroteria complement the frieze which decorates the arch. The inscription on the architrave names "Phoibamon, the faithful." [403]



Figure 145. Tombstone of Phoibamun (Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006, p. 179)

Fig. 146: **Two tombstones**

Material: Sandstone

[402] Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006: 175.
[403] Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006: 178.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

Dimensions: 50 x 27 cm, 57 x 29 cm.

Location: Unknown provenance

Era: 6th-7th centuries



Figure 146. Two tombstones (Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006, p. 178)

Description: Many stelae of this type have been recovered at Armant, just south of Luxor. They are cut from sandstone quarried in the vicinity and seem to have been made in series and inscribed as needed. These two examples are nearly the same size. When complete, the slightly smaller stela had the same shape as the larger one. The lower decorative field on both features a cross combined with the Greek letter rho to form the Christogram set inside a wreath. On one stela, the group takes up almost the entire available surface. On the other one, it is shown above another cross flanked by palm fronds to evoke Christian martyrdom. A palmette within a plain border decorates the triangular apex of the larger stela. A middle zone on both stelae is inscribed. The short text in Greek on the smaller one reads: "Christos, son of Eulogios." The larger one has a Coptic inscription giving the day and month (but not the year) when the owner, the "craftsman monk," Onophrios, died. [404]

Discussions

The iconographic representations in a church are not passive illustrations. The people who commissioned and used these pictorial programs believed that the act of creating figural subjects brought these personages into the church as living presences. The privileged viewer in the sanctuary could see depictions of Christ, angels, prophets, and saints all around him. On the

[404] Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006: 178.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

other hand, they believed that these figures could see them as well. The monastic context, the ritual and social importance of the church, and the expense of its decoration, along with the carefully chosen subjects, indicate that highly educated individuals sometimes designed iconographic programs. Important lay associates of the monastery may have contributed money, but the monastic leaders of the monastic communities were ascetic aristocracy, and it seems therefore in some cases that an outsider, whether patron or artist, would have been involved in selecting iconographic subjects. They represented usually the doctrine that the incarnation, resurrection, and ascension of Christ created a path to everlasting life for humans. They used images as expressions of ideas about place, time, and matter. These are only some of how the paintings could have interacted with their monastic creators and audiences. This is how the early Christians expressed their culture. Quite similar is how the architectural ornaments evoked certain cultural influences, based on the diversity of the collective Egyptian heritage. As Dale Kinney observed, the architecture, with its tiered arrangement of columns and pedimented niches, belongs to a type of Roman monument that conveyed abundance and euergetism. [405] Hereunder is an iconographic discussion in a slightly typological order.

Christ in Majesty

In his sermons, Shenoute Archimandrite identified Christ as God, and said that "when we say 'Jesus, we speak of the consubstantial Trinity". He also explained how Christ was God before time. "If we understand that the Son works with his Father for the purpose of [creating] humankind, we will also know that he works with him for the purpose of [creating] the sky, the earth, the moon, the stars, the sea, the heavens of the heavens, and all the things below." Scholars have many interpretations for the iconographic type of Christ in Majesty, but as Joseph Engemann and Paul van Moorsel have noticed, there is no need to limit it to the representation of a single event, such as the Ascension or the second coming of Christ. Church apses are sites for theophanies, and the grand enthroned figure in a mandorla, with angelic attendants, conveys one such divine appearance in human form. The usual inclusion of the sun and moon shows that God is in a place beyond earthly time and space and expresses his sovereignty over the cosmos. [406]

[405] Bolman 2016 a: 123, 129-130.
[406] Bolman 2016 c: 134.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

Few depictions of Christ in a divine field, surrounded by angels and *zodia*, are known from the early Byzantine world. Many examples were discovered in Egypt, probably because of the better climatic conditions there for preservation. Art historians define this type as Christ in Majesty. The image perhaps resulted from the desire of Christians to visualize the divine. It shows Christ as God, drawing mainly on Revelation and the vision of the Old Testament prophet Ezekiel. Liturgical prayers contemporary with the painting describe Christ seated on a throne of "glory," a common component in art. He is usually encircled by a mandorla and sometimes with flaming wheels, which are carried by angels or *zodia*, or both. The four creatures have the heads of a man, an ox, an eagle, and a lion, and wings covered with eyes (Ezek. 1:5-11; Rev. 4:7-8). “In the middle of the living creatures, there was something that looked like burning coals of fire, like torches moving to and among the living creatures. The fire was bright, and lightning issued from the fire” (Ezek. 1:13). “When they moved, I heard the sound of their wings like the sound of mighty waters, like the thunder of the Almighty, a sound of tumult like the sound of an army” (Ezek. 1:24). [407]

From another aspect, from time to time, art historians raise doubts as to the influence of the *sacrae* imagines, for instance, the official images of the sovereigns and consuls, on the iconography and theology of the Christian icon. In his book on the origins of Christ’s iconography, Thomas Mathews argues for an iconographic and functional continuity between pagan icons and the Christian icon and strongly contests the impact of the *sacrae imagines*. The comparison of early sixth-century consular diptychs with the earliest Sinai icons, which seem to have belonged to the original equipment of the church of Iustinianus, may reaffirm the traditional theory of the connection between the sacred image of the enthroned emperor or empress and the enthroned Christ or Mary. The icon of St. Petrus at Mount Sinai illustrates the impact of the official consular effigy type. The Byzantine Book of Ceremonies describes the adventus of the images of the Western Emperor Anthemius in Constantinople in 476 and the subsequent dispatch of the joint images of Anthemius and his eastern colleague Leo to the cities of the Eastern empire. The Book also presents a vivid description of the joyful reception and acclamation of the sacred images and the proscynesis of the population before them. According to Gregory the Great, the painted portraits of Emperor Phocas and Empress Leontia which were sent in 602 from Constantinople to Rome were displayed first in the Lateran Basilica and then on the

[407] Bolman 2016 c: 133-134; Spieser 1998: 12-15.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

Palatine, where they were incensed and adored. The life-size late sixth-century icon of St. Petrus was similarly carried in processions, kissed, incensed, and worshipped as a visual embodiment of the divine. Its function as a vehicle of intercession is articulated through the small images of Christ, and Mary. [408]

Ascension of Christ

The most detailed New Testament account of Christ's Ascension describes him being lifted to heaven in the presence of the apostles, while "two men in white" promise his eventual return (Acts 1:10-11). A depiction of two angels raising the enthroned figure of Christ to heaven fills the upper zone of the semidome of the triconch of the Red Monastery. Another pair of angels, the "men in white," stand on the ground below Christ, with six apostles on each side, in various poses. In the sanctuary, the scene of the Ascension links the terrestrial and celestial spheres through the person of Christ. [409]

Cyrillus of Alexandria described a “new pathway [that] the Word made for us” between earth and heaven, as a result of both his incarnation and how he returned to God. The Ascension is the event that completed the mission begun with the incarnation and sealed the redemption of humanity. Thus, this depiction means something too far more than a single event, and it had continuous relevance throughout the year. On the day of commemoration of this specific feast, the painting would have had special importance. [410] The combination of the Entry into Jerusalem with the Ascension in some cases, such as the wooden lintel from the Church of al-Moʿallaqa in Old Cairo, repeats an iconographic trend emerging in the fourth century and employed in various contexts in the East as well as the West. [411]

Many early iconographic variations of the subject exist, including versions with a standing figure of Christ carried upward by angels, but most depict him seated on a throne. Usually, Christ is enclosed in a mandorla, surrounded by the four incorporeal living creatures, while Mary stands below in the middle of the apostles. The New Testament accounts do not mention these additions. Also, they are not in the Red Monastery Ascension, which follows the biblical

[408] Török 2005: 299-300; Belting 1994: 109, 113; see more also in Grabar 1969: 77; Falck 1986: 252; Elsner 1998.
[409] Bolman 2016 c: 130.
[410] Bolman 2016 c: 130.
[411] Török 2005: 351.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

narrative more closely than most other examples from the early Byzantine period. So, it may belong to an earlier, less codified moment in the depiction of this subject. [412]

The composition depicts the Incarnation, “God’s historical manifestation”, and the divinity of Christ in a symbolic visual discourse on the ascent of Christ towards God and, as well as, of mankind towards Christ, as a discourse on salvation. This representation type is known from various renderings in different media from the western as well as the eastern Mediterranean, including splendid examples such as the much-quoted representation from the Rabbula Gospels (dated 586) and representations on ampullae (pilgrim’s tokens) from Jerusalem. [413]

Nursing Virgin Mary

Large-scale depictions of Mary do not seem to have been created before the first Council of Ephesos (431), at which her title *Theotokos* was confirmed, although a few survive since not long thereafter. [414] While the theologians were neutralizing Mary's possible role as the heavenly mother by disputing her role in the birth of Christ, many cults of goddess-mothers persisted, at least at a popular level. In the eastern part of the Roman Empire, this was true, particularly of Cybele, the "mother of the gods," who has already been mentioned, and of Diana of Ephesus (the virginal all-mother), whose cult reached its zenith in the third century A.D. She was a mother figure who could bestow salvation like Isis, described by Plutarch as "the justice which leads us to the divine because it is wisdom." Isis, "the one who is all," with her "thousand names," was endowed by myth as the mother to the boy Horus, with whom she appears on an Egyptian mural, with qualities that could readily be transferred to Mary, in that they inspired the trust of those in need of protection. Some of the temples of Isis that had been closed were reconsecrated as churches of the Virgin, such as the one in Philae. The heavenly mothers were the focus of mystery religions, whose initiates sought redemption and practiced personal piety. These figures also acted as oracles, rainmakers, and protectors of crops. [415]

One need only think of the boy Horus at the breast of Isis. The tension between two completely different, opposing pictorial concepts cannot be resolved in the image of the virgin. The image seemed to repeat the divine appearance of the heavenly Child, and yet it was dependent on the

[412] Bolman 2016 c: 130; Belting-Ihm 1992: 102-108.
[413] Török 2005: 345; Grabar 1969: 114.
[414] Bolman 2016 c: 145; Shepherd 1969: 92.
[415] Belting 1994: 32-33.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

human circumstances of his being made flesh. The variants of the early image of the Virgin sometimes put the accent more on the divine aspect, and sometimes more on the human aspect, of the selfsame Jesus. As a sacred, enthroned figure, the Mother of God resembles the empress-mother who presents the new sovereign. [416]

The depiction of the *Theotokos* holding Christ flanked by angels is a metaphor for the Eucharist. The angels perform the ceremony, Mary is the table, and Christ is the sacrifice. The nursing image highlights this interpretation. It is usually assumed that images of breast-feeding express the helplessness and human frailty of the child. However, in the early Byzantine Egyptian construction of the nursing Mother of God, the milk that the Christ Child drinks was, understood to be the Logos, which comes from God in heaven. According to Clement of Alexandria, writing circa 200, milk represents Christ's flesh and blood. “It is again milk which the Lord promises the just, to show clearly that the logos is at one and the same time the alpha and omega, the beginning and the end.” This belief in the special understanding of milk continued in Egypt. In a Discourse on the Virgin Mary, preserved in a tenth-century Coptic manuscript, Cyrillus of Alexandria explained that her breasts received their milk from God in heaven. The nursing image thus pointed to Christ's future sacrificial and salvific role as the “medicine of immortality,” a phrase used to describe the Eucharist, and thereby displayed an encoded visual expression of the ritual enacted in the sanctuary below. [417]

Beyond Egypt, there is a small number of early Byzantine images of Mary and the Christ Child, among which there is considerable iconographic variation. They include three mosaic apse compositions, at the Basilica Euphrasiana in Porec, and Lythrankomi and Kiti in Cyprus. In addition to an Egyptian tapestry icon now in Cleveland, two semidome paintings are in the Suryān Monastery, Wādi al-Naṭrūn. In Rome, there is an unusually large icon in Santa Maria in Trastevere and a mosaic in the San Venanzio Chapel at the Lateran. [418]

Angels

[416] Belting 1994: 58.
[417] Bolman 2016 c: 144; see also Davis 2008: 191-197.
[418] Bolman 2016 c: 145; Belting 1994; Belting-Ihm 1992.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

Flying angels appeared earlier, in the early Theodosian period in Constantinopolitan sepulchral art, where they were represented carrying a wreath with an inscription of a motif of the cross or the Christogram. [419]

In the late 4th and 5th centuries, church decoration not only adopted forms and iconographic themes from contemporary representative secular architecture but was also executed by artists working for private clients - both pagan and Christian - as well as for the church. The thematic homogeneity of their works was the result of shared classical training and the versatility of the iconographic formulas used. The ceiling beams were decorated with friezes consisting of repetitive units. Most of the preserved carvings have the same basic structure: Pairs of hovering erotes, genii, victors, or angels holding a crown with an engraved portrait, personification/apostle, bust, or cross, framed by columns and curtains. [420]

A fragmentarily preserved frieze from Bawīṭ was decorated with floating pairs of angels holding jeweled crosses in wreaths. Between the pairs of angels were busts of apostles in wreaths. The characteristic depiction of the angels' curls, wings, feet, and costume, as well as the curtains and draperies around the wreaths, indicating the sacred context of the wreaths, are reminiscent of limestone reliefs from the same site, suggesting that the craftsmen who executed the reliefs in wood were closely associated with the stone sculptors involved in the same building project. The stone reliefs and the wooden panel can be dated to the first half of the 6th century. [421]

The figural carvings on the walls of the South Church of Bawīṭ were elements of a comprehensive iconographic program as shown by the string course on the eastern "front", where the acanthus scroll frieze is interrupted by a figural block in the middle of the wall, just below the round window that gave light to the altar standing on the other side of the wall. The block bears a depiction of two hovering angels carrying a wreath with an engraved cross, alluding to the liturgy on the other side of the wall as a Christian variant of the particular iconographic device identified as part of the "grammar" of Pharaonic temple decoration called "wall transparency" in modern literature. [422]

[419] Török 2005: 196-197; Strzygowski 1904: 46.
[420] Török 2005: 243; Rutschowscaya 1986: 342.
[421] Török 2005: 242; Rutschowscaya 1986.
[422] Török 2005: 322-323; Severin 1977; Kurth 1994: 64; Török 2002: 88.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

The iconographic types of hovering angels carrying a wreath enclosing the bust of a personification, or a clipeus with the portrait of Christ or the cross also occur repeatedly on Constantinopolitan diptychs of the period. [423]

Within the composition of the Ascension of the Red Monastery, there are two flying angels raising an enthroned Christ into the heavens above a row of figures. Two standing angels are in the center, flanked by the twelve apostles, all rendered in red. The two flying angels seem remarkably graceful and organically coherent. The one at the viewer's left has unique features, such as double outlines for the wings. The angel on the right and another one standing directly below seem to have been painted by a different hand. This artist has used minimal paint for the facial features, suggesting three-dimensionality and movement in space. He also outlined the upper angel's wings with only a single line, distinguishing them from the opposite figure. [424] The largest area where the last layer of the painting is preserved shows the clothing of the standing angel on the right from about the hip to below the knees. The style is characterized by a securely rendered illusionism (this will be discussed in more detail in the analysis of this chapter). This fragment and the other smaller surviving segments of the final painting layer indicate that the palette of the finished painting consisted mainly of very light colors, ranging from white to pink to red, contrasting with the dark ground. The painter also used yellow and light brown hues to suggest the shadows on the angel's robe. The width of the lines varies, but none is wide. The pale pink fabric is stretched across his right thigh and falls in several folds in front of his left leg. A slight shadow, rendered with a translucent light brown layer, indicates the swelling of the thigh beneath the pink fabric. A red outline or accent emphasizes the leftmost edge of the figure. A dark pink and numerous thin white lines curve from the left edge of the thigh to the right, reinforcing the impression of three-dimensionality. Despite the restrained color palette, a range of pinks, reds, whites, tans, and rare dark browns suggest the chiaroscuro of falling fabric folds. Highlighting washed-out colors creates the impression of mass. To the right of the angel is a small section of the final background, showing white flowers against a dark charcoal gray field. In another area, some of the final layers of paint are still in relatively good condition. [425]

Christian Figures

[423] Török 2005: 324-325; Volbach 1976.
[424] Bolman 2016 b: 151-153.
[425] Bolman 2016 b: 154.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

As Christianity was a religion of antiquity that lived into a new era, the Christian icon was nothing but a branch of ancient panel painting that, unlike other branches of ancient art, became predominant in the era to come. It profited from Christianity's rise to universal recognition and, in the long run, served new ends. Nevertheless, the icon is, in short, clearly the heir of the portrait of the ancients. Examples from ancient portrait paintings and Byzantine icon paintings are evidence of a continuity that persisted long beyond the end of antiquity as well as evidence of a change that was caused by new demands and functions. A mummy portrait such as that of a young woman (Louvre) has many features in common with an eleventh-century icon of Philip the Apostle and thus allows for unexpected comparisons, despite the gap in time and the difference in function, the former being a pagan portrait and the latter a Byzantine icon. Physical space is excluded from both of them, and in both cases, the head stands out against an ideal, flat picture plane. Nevertheless, the icon has a character of its own and presents not just a common person but a saint. It is not simply a portrait but a venerated portrait, representing a person to be worshipped by the beholder. Indeed, it was the cult of saints that prepared the way for the development of the icon, in form and function. Since it is the earliest and most significant cult image that Christianity brought forth, it raises the question of how it came about and to what extent its ritual function led to its formal properties. [426]

However, the depictions of Christian saints are too much different in terms of themes. One can say simply that they painted both the Old Testament and the New Testament according to a certain system. The prominence of the four prophets in various paintings emphasizes the typological significance of the *Galaktotrophousa* and indicates that this subject is no simple narrative or genre representation *(figs. 87, 88)*. The system of using Old Testament prophecies to enrich and amplify the meaning of Christ's ministry found common expression in the New Testament, as well as in early Christian writings and images. This composition is an early example of the iconography found frequently in later Byzantine art that makes typological reference to the Virgin Mary and the incarnated Christ. The four prophets proclaim Mary as the Virgin *Theotokos*. Their scrolls each begin with the word Christ, followed by an Old Testament text. Ezekiel (44:2-3) reads: "The Lord said to me, “This gate is shut, it will not be opened. No one will go into it. The Lord God of Israel will go into it].” The gate is Mary's virginity. Jeremiah's text (31:4-5) is a very rare typological association of Miriam with Mary. “I will build

[426] Belting 1994: 78.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

you, and you, Virgin of Israel, will be built. You will take your timbrels and go out in the congregation of the joyful. And you will plant vines." Miriam, Moses' sister, prefigures Mary through an association of virginity, name, and the fact that both women sang in praise of the Lord.8 Additionally, the vines may have a Eucharistic valence, the sacrificial Christ being the product of the "planting." Isaiah 7:14-15 points to the virginity of Mary and the incarnation of Christ with a reference to consumption that may suggest the nursing subject: "Behold, the virgin will conceive and bear a son, and you will call his name 'Emmanuel? He will eat curds and honey until he understands how to distinguish good and evil." Daniel's scroll (2:34-35) reads: "I was watching as a rock was cut from a mountain without hands, and it struck the statue on (its] feet." This passage also refers to the incarnation, the virgin birth, and Christ's victory over evil, as the following passages make clear. In the first half of the fifth century, Proklos of Constantinople associated Daniel 2:34 with the Virgin Mary, writing: "Behold the stone, hewn without hands from the virgin mountain, which ground the devil into dust." An acrostic hymn to the Virgin Mary is more explicit. "This is the stone which Daniel saw, that was cut out without hands, which is Christ, whom the Virgin brought forth." [427]

The smaller figures seemingly attached to the four major piers of the architectural framework punctuate the image visually and conceptually *(figs. 87, 88)*. Elijah, at the left, recognized the falseness of Baal in favor of the one true God (1 Kings 18:20-46). He was also understood as a type of Christ. Since he is paired with Moses, on the opposite end of the semidome, the emphasis on Christ's divinity comes to the fore, because these two prophets witnessed the transfiguration (Matt. 17:1-8). Saints Peter and Paul, foremost among the apostles, Rank the nursing pair. Like Moses and Elijah, they together point to Christ's divinity. Known as the first and last of the apostles to see the risen Christ, they underscore the reality of the resurrection. The following passage from a discourse, *On the Birth of Our Lord and the Virgin Mary*, attributed to Demetrios, the third-century archbishop of Antioch, provides another rationale for Paul's placement next to Christ and the *Theotokos*. This encomium is preserved in Coptic, in a manuscript dated to 1005 C.E. "After these things the Only begotten hearkened unto the command of His Father, and of His own free-will made Himself ready to come down upon the earth, to fulfill the work which had been announced by the Law and the Prophets. For Paul, the chosen vessel, said, 'When the time was fulfilled, God sent His Son, He proceeded from a

[427] Bolman 2016 c: 144.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

woman, [and] He made Himself to be under the Law, that He might purchase those who were under the Law'" (Gal. 4:5). This passage emphasizes the choice made by Christ to assume human flesh, foreseen by prophets, and cancel the original sin of Adam and Eve. Moses "the Lawgiver" stands at the far right. The reference to the law points to the typological significance of Moses in this program because he first brought the word of God in the form of the tablets of the law, which Christ now fulfills, as I discussed above. The acrostic hymn already considered expands on this subject. The author addresses Mary, saying, "Hail, ark of joy". Moses received the word of God on Mount Sinai and was told to put it in the Ark of the Covenant. Similarly, Mary held the word of God in the form of Christ, in her womb, which thus becomes an ark for the new covenant. The poem also mentions the burning bush. "For also Moses, the prophet, tells of the honor of Mary, the queen, when he beholds the bush, as it burns with fire and is not consumed." [428]

The Old Testament narratives about Moses include two references to snakes. The first appeared while Moses spoke to God in the burning bush. Moses feared that his people would not believe that God had appeared to him. Accordingly, the Lord enabled him to transform his staff into a serpent, to prove his authority (Exod. 4:1-5). The second snake was a metal sculpture. "The people became impatient.. [and] spoke against God and against Moses... Then the Lord sent poisonous serpents among the people, and they bit the people so that many Israelites died. The people.. [asked Moses to] pray to the Lord to take away the serpents from us! So Moses prayed for the people. And the Lord said to Moses, Make a poisonous serpent, and set it on a pole; and everyone who is bitten shall look at it and live" (Num. 21:4-9). [429]

In an important study of the mosaics in the Monastery of St. Catherine on Mount Sinai, Jas Elsner argued that the images of Moses and the burning bush, Moses receiving the law, and the transfiguration of Christ, all located above the altar, form a "hierarchy of theophanies" designed to help the viewer ascend spiritually. The first represents "the call to prophetic ascent," the second shows "the summit of mystical vision," and the third, in the semidome of the apse, permits the viewer to "see God as Christ, face to face." Although the iconographic subjects of the semidomes at Sinai and the Red Monastery differ, both are theophanic representations of Christ as God, flanked by identical events in the life of Moses. The Red Monastery images could have

[428] Bolman 2016 c: 144-145.
[429] Bolman 2016 c: 136.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

performed the same function for their monastic audience as the Sinai ones, making them directly pertinent to the monks' spiritual lives. Another contemporary parallel for the Moses iconography is at San Vitale in Ravenna. The pairing of a theophanic image in the semidome with these two events in the life of Moses was clearly a popular choice in the 6th century. [430]

Floral architectural sculpture

Török László states: "The carvings with acanthus foliage represent the highest quality of Egyptian late antique decorative sculpture. Their stylistic homogeneity is obvious, and they also share the luxurious effect achieved by a daring undercutting of the figures and ornaments. The standard measurements of the friezes (height 36–38 cm) corroborate the impression that their sculptors were not only contemporaries but also worked in the same workshop probably. However, the sculptors of the figural reliefs and capitals were unable to produce carvings of similar quality. Some carvings were not made by the same hand for the whole relief. The sculptors, nevertheless, possessed skills of a technical rather than artistic nature. They worked in a workshop in which sculptures of higher quality were also produced and where they could not only acquire the knowledge of iconographic models but also become acquainted with recent stylistic trends and mannerisms. The rendering of the eyes in the figural carvings suggests that the workshop in question was identical to the workshop in which the architectural carvings with acanthus scroll decoration were executed. The modestly skilled sculptors of the mythological reliefs were not only influenced by the excellent sculptors of the peopled scrolls; the latter may also have executed certain details in the works of the former. Though this actual cooperation may have been accidental, a division of labor between specialists in figural and decorative sculpture and between supervisors and subordinates was probably part of the organization of the work in the larger workshops. Also, to be mentioned is that the imitation of good quality models by less skilled craftsmen sometimes led to poor results. However, though the distance in quality is enormous, the connection is not impossible." [431]

For a better understanding of the argument of Török László, regarding the variations in manufacturing sculptures with floral depictions, it is worth mentioning two different views of two other prestigious scholars. Based on his recent typology, Severin dated the Corinthian

[430] Bolman 2016 c: 136; Elsner 1994: 93-94.
[431] Török 2005: 193-195; see more in Naville, Lewis & Griffith 1894; Bergmann 1999.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

capitals of the transept basilica of Hermopolis Magna *(fig. 12)* to the 5th century, and the Corinthian capitals of the Red Monastery to the Iustinianus time, the second third of the 6th century.[432] In contrast, Dale Kinney argues that neither Hermopolis Magna's capitals nor Red Monastery's capitals look Justinianic stating: "The Sohag capitals do not look Justinianic. There is no attempt to imitate the allover patterns and a jour carving, orientalization motifs and new formations (impost capitals, basket capitals, folded capitals) that are a hallmark of the era of Iustinianus. Red Monastery capitals do look very much like capitals in the ruins at Hermopolis Magna." However, they are not similar. On the same page, Kinney proposes that "at least one of the sculptors who worked at the Red Monastery had experience at Hermopolis Magna. He brought with him the basic design of the Corinthian capital, the method of carving its components, and the sense that this ages-old form was no longer invariable. The other stone carvers who worked with him were not compelled to follow the template exactly but were allowed to improvise according to their own experience and varying degrees of skill. At least one of them may also have worked at the White Monastery, if the resemblances to the capitals in the narthex there are not fortuitous. This sculptor was aware of innovations in marble ornament made in the second half of the fifth century and tried to reproduce their effects in limestone."[433] But, when it came to details, on the other hand, she states: "The template is similar: *ima* and *secunda* folia, *cauliculi*, sheath leaves, volutes but no inner helices; the principal difference is that the *Ashmunayn* capitals have a more visible (though still recessed) abacus and its traditional flower ... The carving of the acanthus leaves varies at Hermopolis Magna, from flexible lobes with elongated teeth that grow in multiple directions to the uniform serration, closed contours, and internal sickle-shaped cuts seen at the Red Monastery..."[434] What one can conclude from this comparison is that there was no one typical system to be followed as a spatial or a temporal trait.

The triconch of the Red Monastery contains three versions of the type, classified as large, medium and small. The fourteen large capitals sit atop the reused column shafts on Level I and support the lower entablature. The medium capitals are located above the limestone shafts on Level II and support the upper entablature. The small capitals are located above the half-columns and pilasters flanking the niches on both levels, and in the square drum under the dome. The

[432] Kinney 2016: 93; Severin 2008: 106-110.
[433] Kinney 2016.
[434] Kinney 2016: 93.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

large capitals must have been specially made for the spolia shafts below and carved on site, since their lower perimeter matches the upper perimeter of the shafts and compensates for their irregularities. It follows that the medium and small capitals were also made on site. [435]

Nevertheless, from another aspect, it is agreed that many of the monastic complexes reused remains of earlier temples in the vicinity. For the 5th-century cathedral at Hermopolis Magna, blocks from earlier local structures were reused within the foundation, but visible ornamental features of the capitals were in the Graeco-Roman tradition, including red-granite columns reused in the nave and limestone Corinthian capitals carved in contemporary forms as found in cities of Greece, Italy, as well as in the capital city of Constantinople. In the round church at Pelusium Proconnesian marble capitals combining small Ionic volute scrolls and finely carved acanthus undercut to create densely shadowed surfaces appear to be imported from Constantinople. [436]

From the monastery of St. Jeremiah, locally developed forms such as palm or lotus capitals were used alongside Corinthian and other forms of the Greco-Roman repertoire. However, the capitals preserve painted details, such as shadows and veining in the leaves, and much bold color that was not limited to naturalistic patterns. [437]

Creatures (Animals)

Remarkably, sheep, gazelles, antelope, and peacocks were painted in both the White Monastery and the second phase of the paintings in the Red Monastery, set within abbreviated landscapes. The animals on the first and second levels of the eastern lobe look very different from each other because the paint surface is not well-preserved on the first level. The outlines of the lower group stand out due to the lack of color. These creatures give a strong sense of life and physical presence. The depiction of the delicate legs and hooves of the quadrupeds demonstrates a particularly good knowledge of anatomy, and the white lights contrast with the shadows to convey a sense of liveliness and mass. The paintings in the Shenoute tomb from the mid-fifth century *(see fig. 126)* and the depictions of horses and other animals (no longer extant) in Chapel

[435] Kinney 2016: 79.
[436] Thomas 2010: 1054.
[437] Thomas 2010: 1054.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

XVII at Bawīṭ, generally dated between the 6th and 7th or 8th centuries, are in a similar stylistic range. [438]

Nilotic scenes

Several fragments of wooden friezes that are datable between the 5th and 7th centuries depict winged figures alongside Nilotic motifs, and some pastoral elements as well. Information on the circumstances of discovery is lacking for most. Some will have come from townhouses or villas where they were attached to beams supporting the roof or decoratively set into walls of mud brick. [439] Beams decorated with Nilotic motifs survive from the Church of Iustinianus which was built between 548 and 569 in the Monastery of St. Catherine, Mount Sinai, showing that such friezes were not restricted to profane architecture. For Christians, they came to be understood as a symbolic scene of paradise. Similar scenes exist in the ceiling mosaics of the Mausoleum of Sta Costanza in Rome or of the chancel of S. Vitale in Ravenna. It may be presumed that in Egypt as well as in other parts of the Empire, the decoration of roof beams with reliefs and the cassettes of the roof with painted scenes had originally been a feature of the decoration of the houses of the pagan aristocracy. The aquatic as well as the harvest and vintage scenes could be read with a pagan as well as a Christian meaning in the mind. The openness of their interpretation was, however, obviously restricted as soon as they were complemented with Christian images and symbols, which turned them into Christian allegories and symbols. [440]

Niches

While it is obvious that the niche heads constituted the architectural, iconographic, and cultic foci of these buildings, their actual architectural context remains largely unknown. The documentation of the funerary edifices found by Naville at Heracleopolis Magna and Petrie and Breccia at Oxyrhynchos is poor. Thanks to Hans-Georg Severin's analysis of the excavation photographs and the surviving architectural decoration, a relatively more detailed picture of two elite mortuary edifices is available: the "south church" at Bawīṭ and the "tomb church" at Saqqara. Niches of types deriving from those associated with late antique mortuary architecture continued to be used in ecclesiastical architecture. Niches in churches range from the niches

[438] Bolman 2016 b: 158; Clédat 104-106.
[439] Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006: 36.
[440] Gabra & Eaton-Krauss 2006: 36; Török 2005: 273-274.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

carved around 440 C.E. for Shenoute's Deir Anba Shenouda and the niche reused in the "south church" at Bawīṭ through the niches carved for, or, more probably, reused around the middle of the 5th century in the basilica of Hermopolis Magna (Ashmūnayn) to the sculptured niches carved for the church built in the second half of the 6th century in the temenos of the Hathor temple at Dandara or, to quote a more provincial example, the niches of the fifth- or sixth-century rock sanctuary at Deir al-Ganadla south of Assiut. [441]

Within their two basic types, the semicircular and the broken pediment, Egyptian niche heads exhibit great typological, stylistic, and qualitative diversity. In both basic types, the niche head may be framed with simple vegetal and/or ornamental friezes as well as more elaborate entablatures containing modillion cornices, egg-and-dart and astragal members, simple or multiple ornamental/vegetal friezes, acanthus or peopled scroll friezes. The class of broken pediments includes half pediments with figures in the center and other subtypes in which the center of the pediment is triangular or curved. In both basic types and in all subtypes, the interior of the niche head may be decorated with a shell *(figs. 46, 47)* and/or vegetal motifs and symbols, and/or figures and figural scenes in high or low relief. Broken pediments may be complemented with wreaths enclosing symbols (a cross) or heads, or animal (dolphin) and human figures on the two sides of the pediment. [442]

A significant aspect worth discussing is the phenomenon of reusing *spolia* and/or regenerating classic themes or designs. In the Oxyrhynchos, sculptors' workshop(s), the production of geometrical and interlace decoration which emerged within the second half of the 4th century, spanned the 3rd third of the fourth, the 5th, and the first half of the 6th century. Geometric and interlace patterns occur on niche pediments in association with vine scrolls which imitate the work of second-rate artisans who were, in turn, imitating the master of the friezes in. [443] The phenomenon of not only reusing but also re-orienting earlier architectural remains is a common trait of the architecture of Late Antique Egypt. In this context, four niche pediments, probably from Heracleopolis, may be taken as examples for the process of re-orientation in a workshop with strong local traditions. One of them displays a conventional broken pediment cornice, while

[441] Török 2005: 115-117; see more in Thomas 1990; Török 1998; Thomas 2000; Severin 1998; Navilleet al, 1894; Petrie et al, 1925; Severin 1977; Severin 1982.
[442] Török 2005: 117; Strzygowski 1904; Thomas 2000.
[443] Török 2005: 211, see more in Krumeich 2003; Breccia 1933.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

its conch is decorated with an image of Dionysos, which though undercut in the traditional Late Antique manner, is rendered as if it were removed from a low relief and fixed vaguely in front of a conch surface. [444]

Török László argues that the niche pediments produced in different workshops in the first half of the 5th century no longer display marked differences that could be ascribed to local traditions. A niche head and *geison* fragments from Oxyrhynchos rendering of the modillion cornice are stylistically so close to a pediment from Heracleopolis that they could be works of the same hand. There are many similar cases that show that the two workshops produced architectural carvings displaying the same reduction and simplification of traditional forms. [445] In Török's view, the decorated niche frames and conchs of the White Monastery and the capitals, niches, and door pediments of the Red Monastery *(fig. 130)* are closely related formally and stylistically and may be ascribed to the same workshop, even if not always to the same generation of artisans. And that both decoration programs are characterized by a structural comprehension of Classical forms, on the one hand, and, on the other, by an autonomous reduction of the same forms into elegant ideograms and ornament the graphic effect of which was further enhanced by painting. [446] However, this point will be discussed in more detail in the analysis of this chapter, with reference to other scholars' views.

In the book on the Red Monastery, Dale Kinney suggests that the semicircular and square-based niches crowned by composite (or "broken") pediments of walls of the triconch basilica are distinctively Egyptian form appears to combine pieces of two pediments: a steeply angled one at the corners and another of lesser slope -or an arch- in between. All of the pediments are limestone monoliths set into the brick walls, but they differ in form and structure according to type. Seven niches survive on the triconch facade: two in the tympana over the doors leading from the aisles to the side rooms, two over the passageways into the north and south apses, two flanking the spandrels of the sanctuary arch, and one over the apex of the arch. [447]

The master design of the ornament is intimately related to the architecture. This is best illustrated by comparing the composite pediments in the triconch with those in the White Monastery, its

[444] Török 2005: 212-213; see examples in Breccia 1932; De Villard 1923; Török 1990; Severin 1993.
[445] Török 2005: 213.
[446] Török 2005: 214.
[447] Kinney 2016: 86-87.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

presumed model. While the Red Monastery triconch exhibits three types of pediments, the White Monastery triconch has only one, Type A. Elizabeth S. Bolman classified them into three types; A, B, and C *(figs. 130)*. The Type C pediments at the Red Monastery have a particular function: they elevate the over-doors to the level of the Type A pediments crowning the niches in the adjoining walls. Had the over-doors been designed with semi-round rather than parabolic arches, they would have risen lower than the niches; as it is, all pediments on the first level rise to a line just below the entablature. On the second level, the vertical compression of the Type B pediments causes them to expand laterally to fill the intercolumniations. This creates an effect very different from that at the White Monastery, where the compact Type A pediments are surrounded by large, flat areas of the wall. The type B pediments, by contrast, work like the parabolic arches on the first level to obscure as much of the planar surface as possible. The more crowded design produces a striking evocation of a late Roman "tabernacle facade". [448]

Tombstones/Stelae/Funerary/Mortuary??

Coptic funerary stelae were found in many regions of Upper and Lower Egypt, for instance, Alexandria, Antinoé, al-Faiūm, Abydos, Bawīṭ, and Aswan. [449]. The excavations at Bawīṭ began by Jean Clédat, Chassinat, Palanque, and Gaston Maspero at the beginning of the 20th century. The Monastery of Apa Apollo from Bawīṭ was established towards the end of the 4th century (385-390), [450] and it was prosperous in the 6th century and reached its peak in the 7th century. [451] It declined after the Arab conquest of Egypt. Estimates for its decline vary from the 10th to the 14th centuries. However, it is currently assumed that the monastery fell into inactivity in the 12th century. [452] The first two cemeteries in Bawīṭ date solely from the time of the monastic inhabitancy of the site, the southern cemetery was still in use in modern's times. [453] The funerary inscriptions that have been found in Bawīṭ so far date between the 7th and the 8th centuries. [454]

The funerary stelae had lost their ancient Egyptian function during the Coptic period because of the new religion, Christianity. Yet, the Copts were still affected by the ancient traditions

[448] Kinney 2016: 91; Severin 1993.
[449] Amin 2022: 22; Dijkstra 2021: 39-46; Pleşa 2017; Munier 1930: 257-300.
[450] Amin 2022: 22; Gabra & Takla 2015.
[451] Amin 2022: 22; Gabra & Tim: 22; Bénazeth 1997: 44.
[452] Amin 2022: 22; Gabra & Takla 2015: 12; Tudor 2011: 66.
[453] Amin 2022: 22; Tudor 2011: 66.
[454] Amin 2022: 22; Tudor 2011: 229.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

inherited from their ancestors. Coptic artisans soon abandoned the scenes of Egyptian deities, but at the same time, they simply continued some of the traditions of their ancestors. [455]

One of the earliest conceptions of the Ancient Egyptians was that they regarded the funerary stela as a real door that communicated the burial chamber of the dead with the outer world, or the opening through which he, the dead person, passed when entering or leaving his eternal life in order that he might receive the offerings which were heaped before the stela. This idea stayed in mind from one generation to another. [456] In the Coptic Stela, a small opening was often executed deeply in the middle upper part of it. Concerning the doctrines of Christianity, this aperture has no function at all, but it was traditionally made under the belief that the invocations and the incense burnt at the funeral service might reach the soul of the deceased through this opening. During the early centuries of Christianity, Copts were much affected by the tradition of Ancient Egyptians, and they executed their funerary stelae in the form of a big slab of stone, in the center of which is a cavity enclosing a life-size statue of the deceased or half the body of the dead. [457] It could be noted that the imitation is quite remarkable, although there are some slight changes that are hardly observed. These changes include the outer frame surrounding the statue. The frame had a pointed top like an obelisk with a cross depicted or the frame might consist of two outward carving columns with foliate capitals and a flat arch decorated with laurels. It is noted generally that Christian symbols were always added to such stelae. [458]

In the Coptic period, funerary stelae were part of the architectural layout of tombs, and funerary inscriptions kept alive the memory of the deceased among the living. They were usually placed inside a niche dug out of the mound that covered the tomb or arranged within burial chapels, and they were sometimes placed directly on the ground to cover the pit. [459] Coptic funerary stelae were usually cut out of limestone and sandstone. They were rarely made of marble, wood, clay, terracotta, or pottery. [460] Epitaphs written on ostraca most probably served as preliminary drafts for the guidance of the stone cutters. [461]

[455] Amin 2022: 22; Tudor 2011: 111.
[456] Amin 2022: 23; Du Bourget 1991: 280-282.
[457] Amin 2022: 23; Pleşa 2017: 2-3.
[458] Amin 2022: 23; Tudor 2011: 26.
[459] Amin 2022: 23; Tudor 2011: 214.
[460] Amin 2022: 23; Tudor 2011: 214.
[461] Amin 2022: 23; Crum 1922: 59.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

ICONOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

Within the previous illustrations, in the annexed iconographic database as well as the discussions of this chapter, one can distinguish relatively certain features of the ecclesiastical art of Egypt during this period, between the 5th and 7th centuries. But before analyzing these features, it is worth shedding the light on the theological vision behind such an approach. The early Coptic monastic leaders believed that alongside architecture, iconography is an authentic part of the notion of meaningful, spiritual representations. As I have previously mentioned, they believed in the personal connection between the viewer and the depicted figure. Early Byzantines typically prioritized sight over the rest of the senses. It developed a link between the viewer and the surrounding world. The Pachomian and Shenoutean rules include specific instructions about what should and should not be looked at, and this is not an accident. Shenoute himself said, "What the eye sees, it appropriates," for good or ill. A fifth-century homily attributed to Makarios of Egypt highlights these concepts, using artistic creation and contemplation as metaphors for spiritual transformation. Christ, "the good Iconographer", saves those who look at him ceaselessly by painting his own light and image into their souls, enabling them to "wear" Christ and obtain eternal life. Thus, images could be powerful, and looking could actively assist with salvation. [462]

Theologically, this idea is not without foundation in Christianity. Shenoute often referred to Paul's epistles in his sermons, as well as to the standard readings in the Sunday services of the White Monastery Federation, so the community as a whole probably knew them well. Paul pointed to the dynamic power of sight and imagery in his second letter to the Corinthians when he compared the glory that radiated from the face of Moses (Exod. 34:29-35) to that of Christ. "Now if the ministry that brought death, which was engraved in letters on stone, came with glory, so that the Israelites could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of its glory, transitory though it was, will not the ministry of the Spirit be even more glorious?.. And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory" (2 Cor. 3:7-8, 17-18). The sight is transformative. The viewer in the church could have looked at the paintings to become Christ; he could have done so while

[462] Bolman 2016 c: 129; Elsner 1994; Davis 2008: 106-107.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

partaking in the Eucharist, thus employing two strategies to conform himself to Christ.[463] Also, in 2 Corinthians, Paul writes that words on stone become the logos, the living word that is Christ, inscribed in the hearts of believers. "You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts" (2 Cor. 3:3). Thus, the boundaries between words and flesh collapse. The text undergoes a metamorphosis into living words that are also the divine and human Christ, who writes in the hearts of believers. For instance, looking east in the Red Monastery sanctuary, one can see the old and new words that lead to salvation. The paintings express the divine plan, but they might also have functioned more personally. When a monk thought of this text, he could both look to Christ and offer his heart as a writing surface for the Logos. [464]

In sum, Byzantines believed that sight was the highest and most reliable of the physical senses and that it could have a transformative effect on the viewer, whether positive or negative. Thus, the act of seeing was charged with power and tension. [465]

Within this context, one can get closer to understanding the religious idea behind the frontal depiction of figures during the early Byzantine era, which is the era of the prosperity of Christianity. Actually, the developments of Christian devotional images in Egypt between the 6th and 7th centuries were linked to the developments within the Byzantine domain, especially as concerns associations to patterns of worship for the cult of saints. [466] Moreover, an understandable, religious-based interpretation for depicting wide eyes, almond-shaped eyes, and dark outlines is existing. Obviously, the aim was to highlight the figure's image. The function of the dark outlines was to encircle the elements within the painting, especially the figure. Painters created also the contrast between light and shadow, using not only bold streaks of paint but also using different colors and different degrees of colors. Generally, it also has similarities with surviving paintings in Rome, which display a similar interest in frontality and outlining. So, these features are more temporal and regional rather than local, thematical rather than spatial. [467] Nevertheless, this is to be discussed in detail shortly within this chapter, when it comes to the character of Coptic art.

[463] Bolman 2016 c: 136.
[464] Bolman 2016 c: 137.
[465] Bolman 2016 b: 163.
[466] Thomas 2010: 1059.
[467] Bolman 2016 b: 162-163, 157.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

However, theologically, this vision was up to change later. The present Coptic monuments, regardless of how many they are, do not represent the authentic quality of Coptic Art. The most prized and valuable pieces were ruined in unceasing waves of persecution, as the Arabic historian al-maqrīzi describes. [468] Not only persecution but also some Christian movements tended to demolish icons. Although the main function of iconography is liturgical and the icons are an integral part of Coptic worship, inspiring and teaching the faithful the mysteries of the Christian Church, icons have been sometimes misused. Coptic Iconography reached its peak during the Coptic period between the 4th and 7th centuries. But soon, Christians began to venerate the icon itself and to forget the event or person it portrays. So, due to the incorrect form of worship, in the 8th century, a movement called the Iconoclast Controversy began. These Iconoclasts used the verse, "You shall not carve idols for yourselves in the shape of anything in the sky above or on the earth below or in the waters beneath the earth; you shall not bow down before them or worship them," (Ex 20:4-5). [469]

The exaggerated use, and misuse, of icons in one part of the empire and the rejection of icons in another part soon led to the explosion of iconoclasm. The feverish promotion of images may have divided church and society even before, but the conflict began in the open when the state officially banned the images and thus opened hostilities that were to last more than a hundred years and at times amounted to a civil war. The public debate, which was the immediate result of the first acts of violence was the hour of the first doctrine of images, which up to then had mattered only for Greeks living outside the frontiers under Arab rule. It needed the crisis to introduce the question of the image into the debate of theologians, whether they supported or attacked the icon. [470] Although the events of iconoclasm began in 726 C.E., the first quotation of the narrative was from the late second-century apocryphal Acts of the Apostle John. The Acts describe how Lycomedes, a disciple of John, asked a painter to make a portrait of the apostle without his knowledge. Lycomedes put the portrait in his bedroom, crowned it with garlands, and placed an altar and candles in front of it. Discovering the painting, but not identifying its subject, John asks his pupil: “Lycomedes, what meanest thou by this matter of the portrait? can it be one of thy gods that is painted here? For I see that thou art still living in heathen fashion.”

[468] Cooney 1941: 10.
[469] Ramzy, https://www.suscopts.org/mightyarrows/art.html (2022.03.06)
[470] Belting 1994: 146.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

Lycomedes replies: “My only God is he who raised me up from death with my wife: but if, next to that God, it be right that the men who have benefited us should be called gods—it is thou, father, whom I have had painted in that portrait, whom I crown and love and reverence as having become my good guide.” John’s comment is: “ . . this that thou hast now done is childish and imperfect: thou hast drawn a dead likeness of the dead.” [471] Moreover, the patriarch Theophilus (385-412) of Alexandria explains the sanctity of the image of the Theotokos, the Mother of God, through the example of the imperial image: ". . . if violence is committed against anyone, and he goes and takes hold of the image of the emperor, then no man will be able to oppose him, even though the emperor is naught but a mortal man; and he is taken to a court of law. Let us therefore, my beloved, honor the eikon of Our Lady, the veritable queen." [472] Some decades later, the charismatic abbot Shenoute condemned the pagan worship of images in the provincial town of Plewit, a community which may stand for many other polytheist communities in and outside Egypt: “Woe upon those who will worship wood and stone or anything made by man’s handiwork (with) wood and stone, or (molded by putting) clay inside them, and the rest of the kind, and (making from these materials) birds and crocodiles and beasts and livestock and diverse beings! . . . Consider your foolishness, O pagans who serve and worship (things) that have no power to move whatsoever (and) especially (no power) to do something prodigious!” [473]

Often images were merely the surface issue for deeper conflicts existing between church and state, center and provinces, central and marginal groups in Eastern society. The court and the army struggled against the monks along a constantly shifting front. [474] Nevertheless, the survival of a series of icons dating from perhaps as early as the sixth century until the present day at the Monastery of Saint Catherine on Mount Sinai may have been possible because the monastery was not subject to imperial iconoclastic decrees and because the monastery has remained in use until today. [475]

Coptic art has been subjected to so many disputes. Strzugowski states that it is just a local continuation of Hellenistic art. Maspero and Gaet looked at Coptic Art as an offshoot of

[471] Török 2005: 289; Lipsius & Bonnet 1891; James 1960; Grabar 1969.
[472] Török 2005: 292; Coelestius I et al., 1923; MacCormack 1981; Haas 1997.
[473] Török 2005: 293.
[474] Belting 1994: 146.
[475] Thomas 2010: 1059-1060.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

Byzantine Art, while Elbera defined it as authentic national Egyptian art. [476] This confusion is a logical result of the political position of Egypt at that time. Egypt was ruled successively by the Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, etc., who had their own cultures and arts. These rulers had their own districts inside the cities of Egypt, where they left their impact mixed with the local one. [477]

In terms of the analysis concerned with the character of Coptic art that involves iconography and stylistic elements, one of the clearest and most important examples I have discussed in this research is the Red Monastery. Not only because it is a standing edifice but also because of the good condition of its architectural sculptures and paintings. In this context, Elizabeth S. Bolman has a certain view. But before explaining her view, I tend to clarify her interpretations of the terms she used to explain her suggestion. Bolman interprets "naturalism" in art as forming a three-dimensional environment on a two-dimensional surface, using (light and dark) and color to give the impression of forms in space. She continues: "this type of rendering is also described as illusionism". On the other hand, Bolman defines the term "abstraction" in art stating: "abstraction, in this context, does not refer to abstract art, which typically lacks identifiable subjects, but instead indicates a mode of representation that tends to portray figures in a more stylized, motionless, and formal manner". Elizabeth suggests that the first three phases of painting chart a stylistic movement from naturalism to abstraction. Strong outlines that tend to flatten the images are a regular component of this style. Nevertheless, the figures are immediately identifiable and can appear emotionally compelling and organically plausible. [478] Illusionism was existing in other regions of the Byzantine empire, apart from Egypt. From the 7th century, the best surviving monumental parallels for the most illusionistic of the figures, the flying angel to the right of Christ, at Santa Maria Antiqua, Rome, and even later, at Santa Maria in Castelseprio, near Milan, from the 10th century. [479] The illusionistic elements of the Red Monastery Ascension, including both the underpaintings and the surviving areas of the final paint layer, attest to a very high level of skill. This naturalistic style requires careful consideration. Its appearance in the late fifth-century Red Monastery, the seventh-century Santa Maria Antiqua, and the tenth century Castelseprio, along with numerous smaller-scale, portable examples of various dates, suggests that it should be thought of as pervasive and long-lived,

[476] Strzygowski 1904: XXIV.
[477] Atiya 1968: 122.
[478] Bolman 2016 b: 151.
[479] Bolman 2016 b: 155; Eaton-Krauss et al, 2011; Mitchell & Leal 2013: 311-312.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

rather than as a series of local revivals. [480] The Red Monastery is not an exceptional case in Egypt, however. A fifth- to the seventh-century fragment of a painting on ceramic, from Antinoupolis, shows a technique very similar to that of the underpainting of the angel to the right of Christ in the Red Monastery. [481] Moreover, images from Kom al-Aḥbāriya, to the west of Alexandria, dated to the second half of the 6th century, fall between the illusionism of phase 1 and the somewhat more stylized character of phase 2. The lines in these paintings are red, not dark brown. The color palette is also lavish, but it includes several hues not found in any of the phases at the Red Monastery, such as dark pink and strong aqua green. [482]

Not only paintings, Architectural sculpture also, between the 5th and 7th centuries, was not away from illusionism. The deep reliefs of the Egyptian niche heads break their architectural frame in an illusionistic manner. They give the impression of sculptures in the round, standing in front of the conch of a niche or seen through an opening in an ornamental architecture. The lavish sculptural idiom is that of Hellenistic relief sculpture as it was revived in the 2nd and 3rd centuries and then reinterpreted Empire-wide in the 4th century. Yet the illusionism of the sculptures applied on the niche heads was also conceptually determined. [483] The models of the niche head type with broken pediment were first sought in the architecture of the eastern Roman provinces. [484] Niches of types deriving from those associated with late antique mortuary architecture also continued to be used in ecclesiastical architecture. For instance, the niches of Suhāg monasteries from the 5th century and the reused niches at Bawīṭ. [485] László Török explains that the transformation of natural forms into the "invented nature", namely illusionism, of geometrically rendered surface decorations which give a two-dimensional impression through the *Tiefdunkel* of the carving and the polychrome painting of the carved motifs is also apparent on other capitals from Bawīṭ. [486] At Saqqāra also, the type capitals experienced great freedom, as is shown by a capital in the Coptic Museum, which still retains its original painting that substituted for the carved detail in a remarkably illusionistic way. [487]

[480] Bolman 2016 b: 156; Mitchell & Leal 2013: 327.
[481] Bolman 2016 b: 155; Pintaudi 2008: 281.
[482] Bolman 2016 b: 158; Witte Orr 2010: 112-113.
[483] Török 2005: 121; see more about mythological imagery in 4th–6th-century elite houses in Muth 2001.
[484] Török 2005: 118; Strzygowski 1904; Török 1970.
[485] Török 2005: 116; Clédat 1902.
[486] Török 2005: 330.
[487] Török 2005: 333.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

László Török has hypothesized that the shared characteristics found in monastic examples derive almost exclusively from Alexandria and Constantinople. [488] He states also: "the fifth-century products of the Heracleopolis and Ahnas workshops and the carvings decorating the splendid churches at Sohag represent no more than a stylistic trend in architectural sculpture the course of which was modified before long. Meanwhile, the Classical tradition of late antique art was uniterrupted in other areas of artistic production … It also remains a somewhat biased hypothesis that the changed orientation of architectural sculpture culminating in the carvings of Shenoute's monastic churches was a purely Egyptian development. Though Hans-Georg Severin is probably right in suggesting that no direct formal prototypes from Constantinople may be detected in the decoration of the churches at Sohag, the abandonment of illusionism achieved by boldly undercut deep reliefs also occurred as a—however insignificant—trend in early fifth-century Constantinopolitan sculpture". [489]

In the same context, John Beckwith states: "With regard to the representation of the human form Coptic sculpture in the fifth and sixth centuries is merely the last stage of a Hellenistic art. The subject matter was derived largely from the Greeks, the forms were Greek: the patrimony just atrophied. The disintegration of the classical canons of the human form prevalent throughout the Roman empire in the fourth and fifth centuries became final in a province where there was no constant and compelling metropolitan impetus. It would seem, in fact, that whether Alexandria was capable or not of conserving classical traditions up to the Arab Conquest, she was incapable of reviving the arts in the hinterland. Such artefacts that may with some plausibility be assigned to that city all show a conservative, classical art steadily on the decline. With[o]ut a court to keep up standards, to initiate fashion, to create periods of renewal, there could be no progress, only a contraction into abstract and rigid form . . . [T]he Coptic Patriarchs, even less the abbots of the monasteries in the deserts, had little interest in the maintenance of aesthetic standards. Consequently, nothing grew out of the late antique style current in Egypt or from the injections of court style from Constantinople". [490]

However, Elizabeth S. Bolman does not agree with László. Elizabeth states: "A more complex model for artistic creativity is called for than this traditional one, which sees a few major urban

[488] Török 2005: 342-343; Bolman 2016 b: 163.
[489] Török 2005: 215; see also Severin 1998.
[490] Beckwith 1963: 32; Török 2005: 311.

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centers as the source of all innovation and quality. Panopolis had a very high level of literary culture and was a center of textile production. It was also the home of leading government and military officials. Surely skilled painters lived and worked there as well. The Red Monastery church, a monument fixed in place, cannot be assigned to Alexandria. One might argue that the artists who created the illusionistic first phase came from that city, but even if so, the fact remains that they were commissioned to do the work in Upper Egypt by a local monastic community". [491] In the Red Monastery, different hands of artists in the same painting were recognized, not only throughout time but also within the same phase. For instance, in the second phase of the paintings of the eastern lobe of the triconch, at least three different artists were recognized. [492] On the other hand, with reference to the depiction of patriarch Dioscorus in the southern dome of the triconch of the Red Monastery, it seems proven that they re-painted a third phase, soon after the second one, which is, logically, interpreted as a pro-Miaphysite statement. Even if the hand was not Egyptian, the concept is pure Egyptian, replacing an earlier unknown theme. [493] One cannot consider this, however, a kind of iconoclasm since they kept the rest of the semidome paintings homogeneous with the newly added one of patriarch Dioscorus. One can name it evolution.

Nevertheless, in the same book, László states: "The changes occurring in the structure and details of the Corinthian capital in the course of the fifth and sixth centuries may be followed in the imported material and in the Egyptian capitals carved from local stones". [494] That can mean that László does not deny the existence of the idea of an Egyptian impact and a transformation process. Moreover, in the context of the architectural sculpture at Bāwīṭ, László explains, as I have above-discussed, a block bears the representation of two hovering angels carrying a wreath with an inscribed cross, clarifying that it is an alluding thus to the liturgy performed on the other side of the wall, presenting a Christian variant of the special iconographic device identified as part of the "grammar" of pharaonic temple decoration and called "wall transparency" in the modern literature. [495] In addition, on his way analyzing old-school hypotheses, who did not deny local impact alongside Hellenistic charter, such as Kitzinger, László states: "Surveying the

[491] Bolman 2016 b: 163.
[492] Bolman 2016 b: 157; see more in Bolman 2016 b: 151-163.
[493] Bolman 2016 c: 149.
[494] Török 2005: 316.
[495] Török 2005: 323; Kurth 1994: 64.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

evidence from the period between the late third and the late fifth century, we have found that the survival of the Classical tradition of Egyptian Hellenistic art was a complex process of transformation that occurred in and was determined by changing cultural and social contexts. It was a process of transformation that was articulated on different interactive levels and in different forms evolving in the cosmopolitan context of the artistic production in the late Roman and early Byzantine empire." [496] Undoubtedly, this statement confirms the existence of local impact rather than confirming a complete Hellenistic character.

In my opinion, it is still more tangible, the hypothesis of Elizabeth S. Bolman, particularly alongside the old-school hypotheses shown by László: "In his "Notes on Early Coptic Sculpture", Kitzinger asked two questions: First, did Alexandria remain "a stronghold of Hellenistic art throughout the Christian period, and . . . maintained the highest Classical standard" or did Alexandrian art sink "as early as the fifth century to the level of provincialism"? and, second, is "Coptic" art to be explained as "some sort of violent reaction . . . against the Greek tradition of Alexandria"? Kitzinger concluded that there is little evidence for the continuity of "a genuine Hellenistic tradition . . . through all the crises of the Late Roman and Early Christian period" and suggested that "Coptic" art represents an Egyptian form of "subantique", a "blending of Classical, provincial, and oriental features"". [497] I agree with the description of Coptic heritage as a so-called "subantique" civilization that could accommodate the various civilizations of Late Antiquity and added its own value as well in a transformative cultural process.

Thelma K. Thomas restates, after László Török: "Just as Late Antique art is both universalizing and intensely local through the ways in which Graeco-Roman traditions were adapted in combination with local traditions and those from elsewhere, Egyptian art of Late Antiquity was receptive to multiple historic legacies and to exotic artistic trends, and grounded in an aesthetic that was capacious, adaptive and, ultimately, transformative". [498] Thus, most of the theories seem to be on the same page.

As I have previously discussed in this research, similarities existed between different sites, such as the monasteries of Suhāg and Hermopolis Magna. The factor of reused architectural pieces

[496] Török 2005: 312.
[497] Kitzinger 1938: 181; Török 2005: 311.
[498] Thomas 2010: 1063; Török 2005.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

existed in most of the known ecclesiastical edifices from this period. All these factors could play a role together in creating such a rich, mixed artistic character.

As for the nursing Mary scenes, though these paintings have a conceptual Christian root and meaning, one cannot deny that the way they were depicted is reproduced from the earlier Goddess Isis nursing her son Horus Harpokrates. That is an obvious Egyptian Non-Egyptian artistic combination. On the other hand, though the mummy portraits of Faiyūm dating to the first to third century were a tradition of pagan icons, they had a clear impact on the Coptic iconography during the 6th and 7th centuries. Thelma K. Thomas: "Sixth- to seventh-century developments of Christian devotional images in Egypt were linked to developments within the Byzantine realm especially as concerns associations to patterns of worship for the cult of saints as well as, during the turbulent eighth and ninth centuries around phases of state-sponsored iconoclasm, the development of a theory of icons. Much of an icon's effectiveness came to depend upon a transparency of the sacred image providing immediate devotional access to the holy person, who was made recognizable by likeness to known features, attributes, or even inscriptions." [499]

Elzabeth S. Bolman: "we can nevertheless conclude that the people who commissioned and painted this work in Upper Egypt were very much in touch with cultural and artistic trends in the wider early Byzantine world". [500]

Before illustrating the results of the computerized data analysis, it is worth summarizing the suggested influences that affected Coptic art in Egypt during this period.

Egyptian Influence

[499] Thomas 2010: 1058-1059.
[500] Bolman 2016 b: 156.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

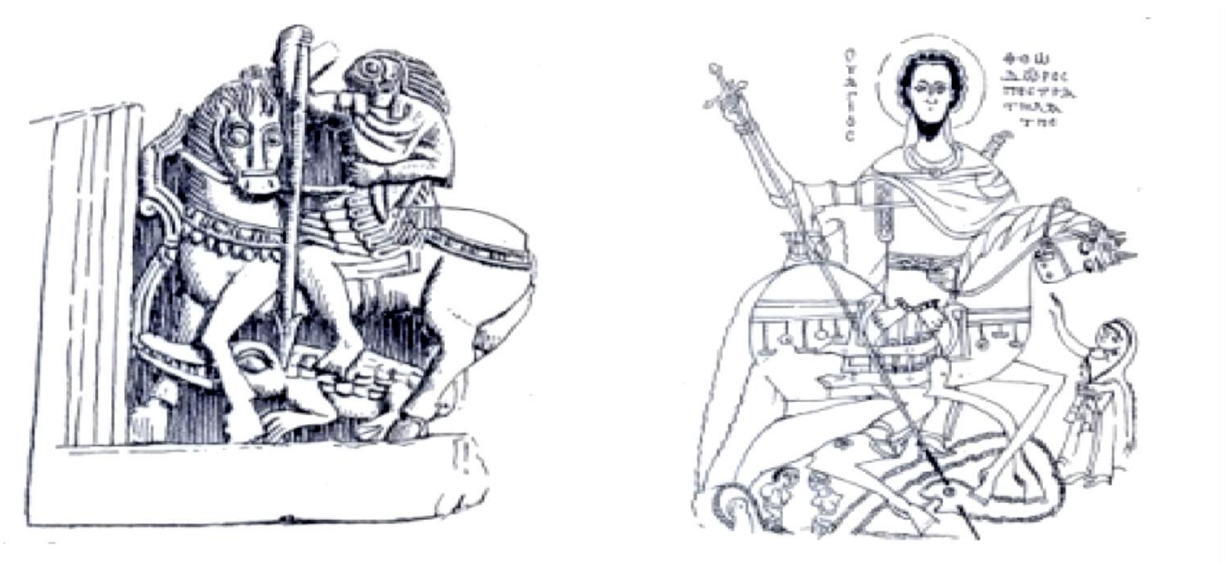


Figure 147. Horus killing the crocodile in the Musée du Louvre in Paris & Saint Theodore the Stratelates killing dragon, coptic manuscript (Badawy 1949, p. 59-60)

One of the most important representations that suggest an Egyptian influence is the breastfeeding Virgin Mary (Galaktorophousa). This scene recalls that one that depicts the Ancient Egyptian goddess Isis suckling her 'savior' son the god Horus Harpoccrates.[501] Another common, suggested Egyptian influence is the equestrian saint motif which appears on the Coptic wood carvings, icons, wall paintings, and textiles. It is the scene of a cavalier saint riding a horse and killing, with his sword, a dragon, or a serpent under his horse's legs. J. Doresee thinks that such a representation was at first the Salomon piercing the demons and later, he mentioned, as some other scholars such as C. Ganneau, that it is a continuation of the pharaonic topic referring to Horus who killed and convinced his uncle Seth. W. De Grüneisen suggests that this is the pharaoh, standing in its char to kill his enemies. But according to A. Badawy, it may be the Christ Victorious of the aspic which is found in the decoration of the catacombs of Karmūz. This may be also the idea of good against evil which enters the Christian perspective of the history of the world. Also, the introduction of the horse in Egypt took place at the beginning of the 19th dynasty, and since then, it was normal to see the pharaohs standing on their chariots to kill their enemies. Later, Roman emperors appeared in the same position of winners on some Alexandrian ivory objects. A stone relief depicting the falcon god Horus as a Roman horseman lancing a crocodile is in the meuseum of Louvre in Paris. On the other hand, it is common to see the same

[501] El-Gendi 2012: 2; Zandee 1962: 19; Tran & Labrecque; Langener 1996.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

scene of saints depicted as warriors of cavalier saints like Theodore the Stratelate *(fig. 147)*. That was common in Bawīṭ, for instance. [502] Another common feature is the orant (the praying position), which appears in the Coptic funerary depictions and wall paintings. According to S. J. P. du Bourguet, it is originally taken from the Ancient Egyptian sign '*Ka'*. [503] Also, Tetramorphs, or the four creatures holding the throne chariot of God, or the Savior bust mentioned in the Old Testament are recalling the four goddesses who were holding the Egyptian sky or the Zodiac in the decoration of several temples in Ancient Egypt. [504]

One of the clearest Egyptian impacts appears in the Coptic art of this period in the looped cross *'ankh'*. W. De Grüneisen suggests that the Coptic artist drew the saints in the same way as the defuncts shown inside the judgment temple of the ancient Egyptian god Osiris, holding in their hands the symbols of faith. De Grüneisen suggests that the Coptic artist transformed the *'ankh'* key into a cross. The ankh key sign is one of the most curious exceptional decorative survival elements of the ancient Egyptian civilization, which became the crux ansata. J. Doresse wrote about this sign to clarify how it was transformed from its pagan value to its Christian significance. After the demolition of the Serapium, all the Serapis busts, which were graved in front of the entrances of the houses or below the windows, were destroyed in the city. The sign of the cross was traced in its places. Other examples of this cross are shown on various Coptic bas-reliefs preserved in the Coptic Museum in Cairo, the Egyptian Museum in Berlin, and the Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts in Moscow. In the Coptic Museum in Cairo, the decoration of other limestone funerary stelae shows the monogram of the Christ within a bark with several *ansata* crosses. Such decoration may lead us to Ancient Egypt life in which the defunct usually needed a bark to be associated with the solar Egyptian god Raʿ during his journey in the sky. [505]

Besides the acanthus capital, the Copts knew Egyptian forms, especially the platform types dating back to the ancient times used in al-Bagawāt cemetery. On top of that, the capitals of the columns having the form of the rams' heads recollect the use of the symbolic animal of God Amon Ra in Ancient Egypt, but in Coptic art, the ram is one of the most important symbols of

[502] El-Gendi 2012: 2-4; see more in Jones 1974; Clermont-Ganneau 1876; de Grüneisen 1921; Badawy 1949; Zandee 1962.
[503] El-Gendi 2012: 4; de Grüneisen 1921: 68; Badawy 1949: 62.
[504] El-Gendi 2012: 5; de Grüneisen 1921: 41, 72-73; Badawy 1949: 61.
[505] El-Gendi 2012: 6, 11; de Grüneisen 1921: 36, 74; Zandee 1962: 25.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

Jesus Christ. [506] In floral depictions also, papyrus and lotus merely appear in Nilotic representations, which I have discussed in more detail above. [507] Moreover, the hunting scene, which may be a topic taken from Ancient Egyptian art, continued to appear in Coptic art until or even after the Arab Conquest. [508]

The Coptic palette is as rich as it was in Ancient Egypt, and more different tones and various degrees of colors are taken from mixing together the basic colors taken from natural ochre. As colors were an important part of the Coptic artistic collections ornament, the Copts used the same colors which were used by the pharaohs in paintings and icons. One cannot omit to mention that the tempera technique used in wall paintings and icons is purely borrowed from the Ancient Egyptians. It consists of gouache colors mixed with gelatin material or glue. Then the artist started to put this mixture on the back of gypsum or stucco. [509]

Graeco-Roman Influence

Greek inscriptions giving proper names, dates, hymns, and biblical verses complete sometimes the decoration of the Coptic artistic objects. In Christianity, the Alpha and the Omega, which are the first and the last letter in the Greek alphabet, refer to the following Christ speeches: "I am the beginning and the end". The two letters are frequently shown suspended from crosses on the Coptic wall paintings, textiles, and funerary stelae. According to L. Del Francia, in Middle Eastern astrology, these two signs are in relation to the cosmos, the zodiac, and the twenty-four hours of the day. [510]

In Greek art, the conch shell was usually in connection with the goddess Aphrodite, and it was associated in addition to the Nereid Thetis and, in general, the sea divinities. In Alexandria, the Copts artist borrowed it originally from the Greek artists. That Is why it is very common in the decoration of several Coptic textiles and stone sculptures. It was a frequent decorative element inside different chapels in the monastery of Saint Jeremiah at Saqqara. The Coptic artist replaced

[506] El-Gendi 2012: 11; Badawy 1949: 16.
[507] El-Gendi 2012: 9.
[508] El-Gendi 2012: 10.
[509] El-Gendi 2012: 12; see more in Badawy 1949: 11.
[510] El-Gendi 2012: 16.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

the figure of Aphrodite with a small cross or sometimes an eagle to symbolize the resurrection of Jesus in Coptic art. [511]

The dolphins didn't appear in the art of the Ancient Egyptians, but the Egyptians borrowed its figures from Graeco-Roman art. The dolphin which is one of the symbols of Jesus Christ is the savior of the shipwrecked. Together with the Nymphs or the cupids shown in some cases on its back, this is the decoration of several Coptic artistic objects displayed today in the Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts in Moscow, the Egyptian Museum in Berlin, and the Coptic Museum in Cairo. [512]

One of the clear Roman traditions, especially for the urban elites, was to paint the face of the person during their lifetime in a wax technique and probably used and hung on the walls of the houses. These are the drawings known as the 'Faiyūm mummies' portraits', which may be the imitation of the masks produced in Ancient Egypt. These portraits date back to the first three centuries A.D., and they are distinguished by their surprising and vivacious style, in addition to their surpassed dynamism. Simpler and more modest examples exist from the 4th century too. The Faiyūm portraits, which undoubtedly descend from Hellenistic paintings, are an excellent example of the Graeco-Roman artistic influence. [513]

Byzantine Influence

Wall paintings discovered in the monastery of Saint Jeremiah at Saqqāra and in the monastery of Saint Apollo at Bawīṭ are depicting saints or monks with garments that match examples found in the chapels of Ravenna. It is worth also mentioning the semi-circular fresco wall painting discovered at Bawīṭ because of its decoration depicting the Christ face with Byzantine art features: The long hair on His shoulders, the thin and long nose, the fine mustache, the thin laps, and the short beard. Jesus is drawn in a bust within a wreath carried by two winged angels in movement. The martyr Selbane is visible on the left side of the wall painting. In contrast, Coptic art features appear on the angels' faces. Above Jesus' halo, the word savior is written in Coptic.

[511] El-Gendi 2012: 16.
[512] El-Gendi 2012: 16.
[513] El-Gendi 2012: 19.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

The Greek words *angelos kiriou* (angels of the Lord) are legible on the wall painting dating from the 6th century A. D. [514]

From the aspect of architectural sculpture, dating most probably to the 6th century, one of the most important marble columns capitals preserved in the Coptic Museum is imitating the conically-shaped capitals existing now in San Vitale church in Ravenna. The capital looks like a basket. In the center of the capital, the union of papyrus and lotus illustrates the Egyptian influence. This is a rich combination. It may also have the form of basket baptismal font discovered in the Old Cathedral of Alexandria, dates to the 5th century. Moreover, some of the decorative elements in Coptic monasteries and churches may have been taken from the Byzantine decoration, including the foliated scrolls which appear on some limestone friezes. In Middle Egypt, the interior walls of the main church of the Coptic monastery dedicated to Abū Fāna in Malawi, which dates to the 6th century A. D., are also decorated with crosses in Byzantine style. Furthermore, plant branches elements with vine leaves and buds springing from a vase is also taken from both Roman and Byzantine arts and can be seen in the decoration of one of the two leaves of the sycamore and the pine wooden door discovered in the church of saint Barbara in Old Cairo, dating to the 6th-7th centuries A. D. [515]

Nevertheless, undoubtedly, in Byzantine art, Christianity was a main pillar in the formation of the character of such an artistic influence. Christian topics and scenes dominated iconography. Christ, Virgin Mary, and Christian characters were the Holy figures and the main elements who beautified the ecclesiastical Coptic iconography between the 5th and 7th centuries. [516]Christian symbols are also essential elements in the decoration of most of the Coptic artistic collections in several archaeological museums. It is normal to see these symbols on the interior walls of Coptic monasteries and churches. For instance, the cross at right angles of two lines of equal length, which was influenced by the Greek cross, appeared. In addition, the crux ansata inspired by the ancient Egyptian ankh was depicted in Coptic collections ornamentation, as it was above-mentioned. The importance of the eagle figure started first in Hellenistic and Roman art. It grew after Egypt became a Christian country as it is considered in funerary art as a symbol of Jesus. As I have previously mentioned, it may have expressed the symbolic meaning of Christ's

[514] El-Gendi 2012: 20.
[515] El-Gendi 2012: 21-22.
[516] El-Gendi 2012: 20.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

resurrection. Its figure is depicted on wooden doors, friezes, and limestone sculptures in the Coptic Museum in Cairo. The fish was seen early as being the regeneration symbol in the decoration of the ancient Egyptian artist as it was in relation to the Nile and the Osiris legend. It is shown also in Graeco-Roman art. Later it became very popular in Coptic art. As it is one of the Christ symbols, it appears in the Annunciation and the Baptism scene of Jesus Christ on different icons and in the decoration of several chapels in the monastery of Saint Apollo at Bawīṭ. The letters of the Greek word meaning fish *ikhtius* are the abbreviations of the Greek name of Jesus which mean "Jesus Christ son of God the Savior". The nimbus also is a remarkable Christian symbol. It is easy to know Jesus because his halo is usually decorated with a cross having three equal branches. [517]

Sassanid Influence

As Egypt was invaded by Khosrow II from 619 to 629 A.D., it is normal to see some Sassanid influence in the early Coptic art. Mostly it appears in textiles. However, Persian wearing is already seen in chapel number 37 in the monastery of St. Apollo at Bawīṭ. [518]

Results of the digital analysis

Eventually, the digital analysis examined 76 artifacts. In another experiment for a limited number of 14 artifacts, surprisingly, the general results were almost the same. That may suggest that the analysis was reliable enough due to the digital method used in it. However, it is not totally computerized, as my role was first to recognize the influences that emerged in each piece. Based on the above-discussed examples, a database that includes detailed information about each piece was created. Using this information and through the library 'pandas' of the programming language 'python', I could obtain the following results: 36% of the examples have early Byzantine/Christian alongside Graeco-Roman influences, 24% have early Byzantine/Christian with Graeco-Roman and local influences. The rest of the examples are: early Byzantine/Christian 18%, early Byzantine/Christian with local 11%, Graeco-Roman 9%, and Graeco-Roman with local 3% *(figs. 148, 149)*. Generally, the percentage of solo non-Egyptian influences is 63%, while the percentage of dual character influences, namely non-Egyptian with Egyptian is 37% *(fig. 150)*. Nevertheless, interestingly, though the non-Egyptian characteristics occurred alone,

[517] El-Gendi 2012: 26-27.
[518] El-Gendi 2012: 27.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

the local influence is never alone in any example. The total number of models used is 76. The percentage graphs represent an approximate percentage of a number of models or a group of types. Considering those analyses alongside the following scholarly discussion, the conclusion will be logically clear.

Once again, the analysis could prove cultural exchange and innate artistic evolution. Also, in the artistic analysis, Egyptian influence never appears solo without a non-Egyptian impact. Below are some of the obvious facts that prove tolerance and acceptance existence between Coptic culture as a part of the Late Antique world and the wider scope of the Late Antique different heritage beyond Egypt.

- *White and Red Monasteries*: along with the Egyptian touch, non-Egyptian influence appears clearly in iconography, niches, and sculptures, particularly in the capitals. This site is famous for being an important center for the non-Chalcedonian faith. Therefore, in my opinion, finding non-Egyptian along with Egyptian influences is an evident sign of tolerance and acceptance between both sides.
- *Nursing Virgin Mary 'Galaktotrophousa'*: I believe that these scenes imply an Egyptian impact. The boy Horus at the breast of Isis was a common scene in the Ancient Egyptian civilization. Some of the temples of Isis that had been closed were reconsecrated as churches of the Virgin, such as the one in Philae. I believe that, whether intentionally or not, these scenes of the Virgin Mary are influenced somehow by that ancient scene. However, the theme itself is still Byzantine Christian.
- *Christ scenes*: Few depictions of Christ in a divine field, surrounded by angels and *zodia*, are known from the early Byzantine world. From another aspect, Thomas Mathews argues for an iconographic and functional continuity between pagan icons and the Christian icon and strongly contests the impact of the *sacrae imagines*.
- *Angels*: flying angels appeared earlier in the 4th century in Constantinople. On the other hand, a depiction of two hovering angels carrying a wreath with an engraved cross is identified as part of the "grammar" of Pharaonic temple decoration called "wall transparency" in modern literature.
- *Floral architectural sculpture*: Corinthian capitals existed. A process of transformation existed. However, new developments emerged.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

- *Animals and Nilotic scenes* imply the melting of various cultures together. The same also was practiced in the *tombstones*, where one can find Egyptian, Roman, Graeco-Roman, and Byzantine symbolisms altogether on the very same stone.

Actually, this chapter included two achievements; one was that with the guidance of my professors, I could successfully create this iconographic typology. The second achievement is that by applying the intended methodology for this chapter, successfully, I could reconfirm, relying on results of data analysis the supposed character of the Coptic art of Late Antiquity as "receptive [art] to multiple historic legacies and to exotic artistic trends, and grounded in an aesthetic that was capacious, adaptive and, ultimately, transformative."[519]

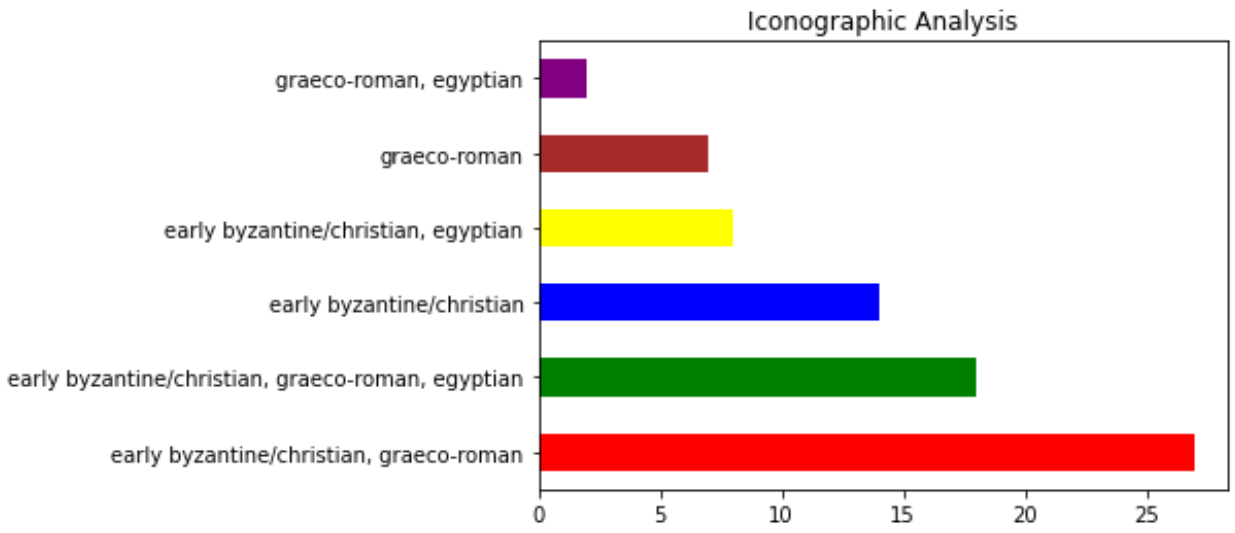


Figure 148. Iconographic influences graph (Produced by B. Gabra using Python)

[519] Thomas 2010: 1063; Török 2005.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

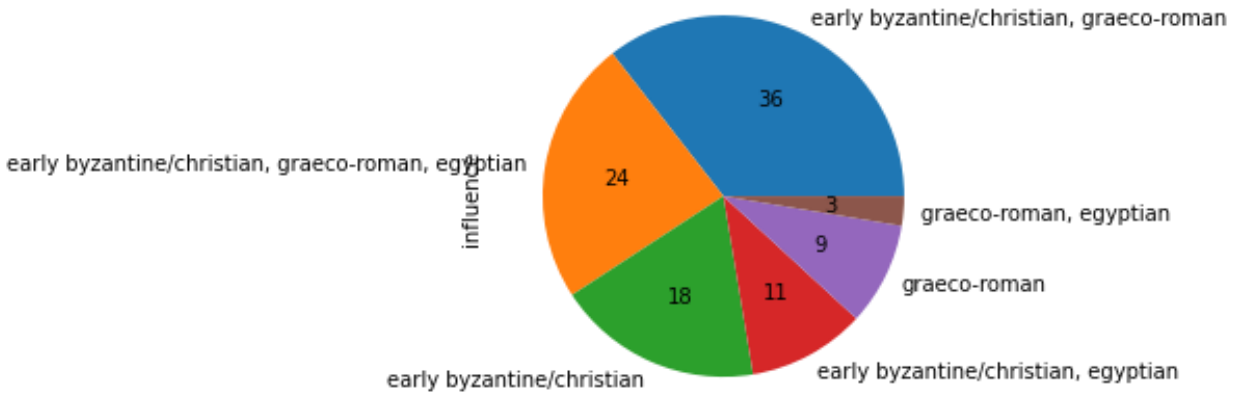


Figure 149. Percentage of iconographic influences graph [total number of models used is 76, the graph represents approximate percentages of numbers of models in groups of types], (Produced by B. Gabra using Python)

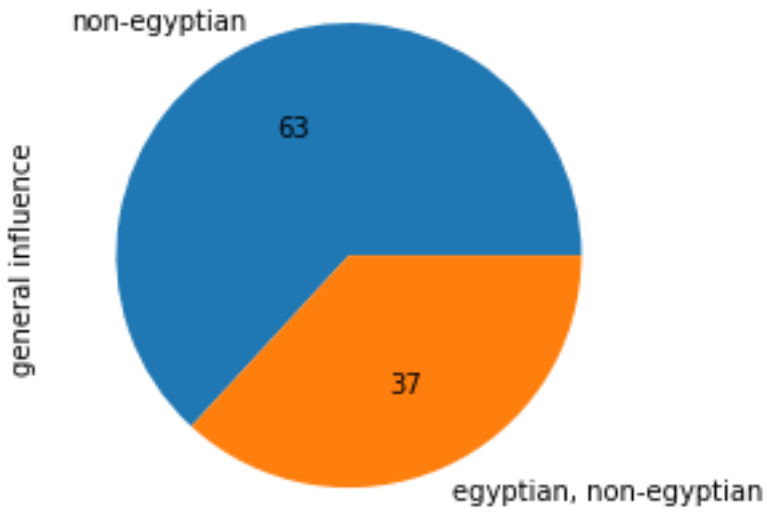


Figure 150. General percentage of Iconographic influences graph [total number of models used is 76, the graph represents approximate percentages of groups of various types], (Produced by B. Gabra using Python)

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

VIII. *ANNEX*: Preservation and management of Coptic Heritage

"In Egypt the care of all historic heritage, including ancient churches currently in use, is the responsibility and prerogative of the State, specifically the Ministry of Antiquities (MoA). While the Coptic Orthodox Church is able to use historic churches, official procedures and the complex and frequently restrictive regulations enforcing them have encouraged both clergy and local populations to lose interest in maintaining their religious buildings. Many sites have been abandoned, others left to decay, and it is considered the State's responsibility to take care of them. In recent years, numerous attempts have been made to address the various problems facing the preservation of heritage, but when maintenance or repairs occur, they frequently lack compliance with international standards for cultural heritage conservation. Additionally, many of those sites that have received proper treatment lack a maintenance program, and all too often there has been a tendency on the part of the conservation community to carry out conservation interventions focusing only on the material, tangible aspects while forgetting the intangible values associated with the religious importance of the heritage." Michael Jones [520]

In fact, to be able to conduct a serious heritage management and preservation process, reliable data about the archaeological sites and artifacts are required. Such a process must be implemented on a wide scale, not case by case or site by site. Many aspects must be taken into consideration, such as era, historical context, influence, and universal significance of such a site or artifact. Because of that, a reliable particular and specialized method(s) of recognition and data analysis techniques must be invented and used especially for this very exact purpose. Both archaeologists and Heritage Management professionals need consistent typology for both sites and typology. For instance, when it comes to Coptic civilization, if the Egyptian government plans to prepare the route of the Holy Family in Egypt for touristic and economic purposes, they need a clear typology to be able to recognize and analyze data to be able to create an attractive, convincing result for all who are interested in Coptic heritage in the whole universe.

Therefore, I tend in this annex to suggest using programming to create such highly-need digital typology. There are a few challenges that motivated me to approach such a technique. For instance, in architecture, there are different schools and theories suggesting different typologies,

[520] Jones 2016: XIII.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

each prioritizing a certain feature or an architectural influence. In Coptic architecture, Butler classifies the churches into two typologies; mixed half-basilican and half-byzantine, and the second non-basilican but yet not Byzantine, while Bishop Samuel and architect Badie Habib did another form of typology: The element of which the classification was focusing on the church dome and its shape and location within the roof of the church. The following is the output of their classification. In 2002, Capuani came out with a new typological classification. He splits the Churches of Egypt into two geographical zones. The first is the Mediterranean coast and Delta, where the church style is mostly affected by Byzantine architecture. The second is the Nile Valley, where the local cultural impact on the Church designs from his point of view is recognized. He further analyzes church designs chronologically. Nicolas in 2004 updated the church classification into a more detailed one and discussed the sanctuary design, and at sometimes mentioned the Dome roofing system and locations. In 2012, Sami Sabri published an article on the typologies of the Coptic Orthodox Historical Churches. His typology has classified the Coptic Orthodox churches into nine different types. The focal elements of classification are the nave together with its roofing type. Moreover, variations of the sanctuary area of the Basilican plan. No chronological order. [521] However, in my research, I have used the precious work of Peter Grossman, trying my best to take all that was mentioned above into consideration. In terms of Coptic Iconography, as I have already discussed above, I have been facing a challenge to find clear, sharp barriers between different types. Actually, features and influences are interlaced in most cases. In fact, the main purpose of my trial to invent such a digital typology was to apply it to art. However, due to the need for a longer time, more knowledge, and experience, as well as probably teamwork, I could apply it for now to the architectural ground plans. This technical aspect will be shortly discussed in more detail.

Undoubtedly, one can employ one of the hugest nowadays smart possibilities (Machine Learning) for a more reliable analysis of archaeological structures and artifacts, which can be definitely useful for such a Heritage Management process. The methodology is to provide ML baselines for the task of image recognition by an 'object-detector', namely a code/script written using specific libraries in a certain programming language(s), which can help ML researchers in developing new methods to tackle challenges in archaeology.

[521] Morgan 2016: A1-A13.

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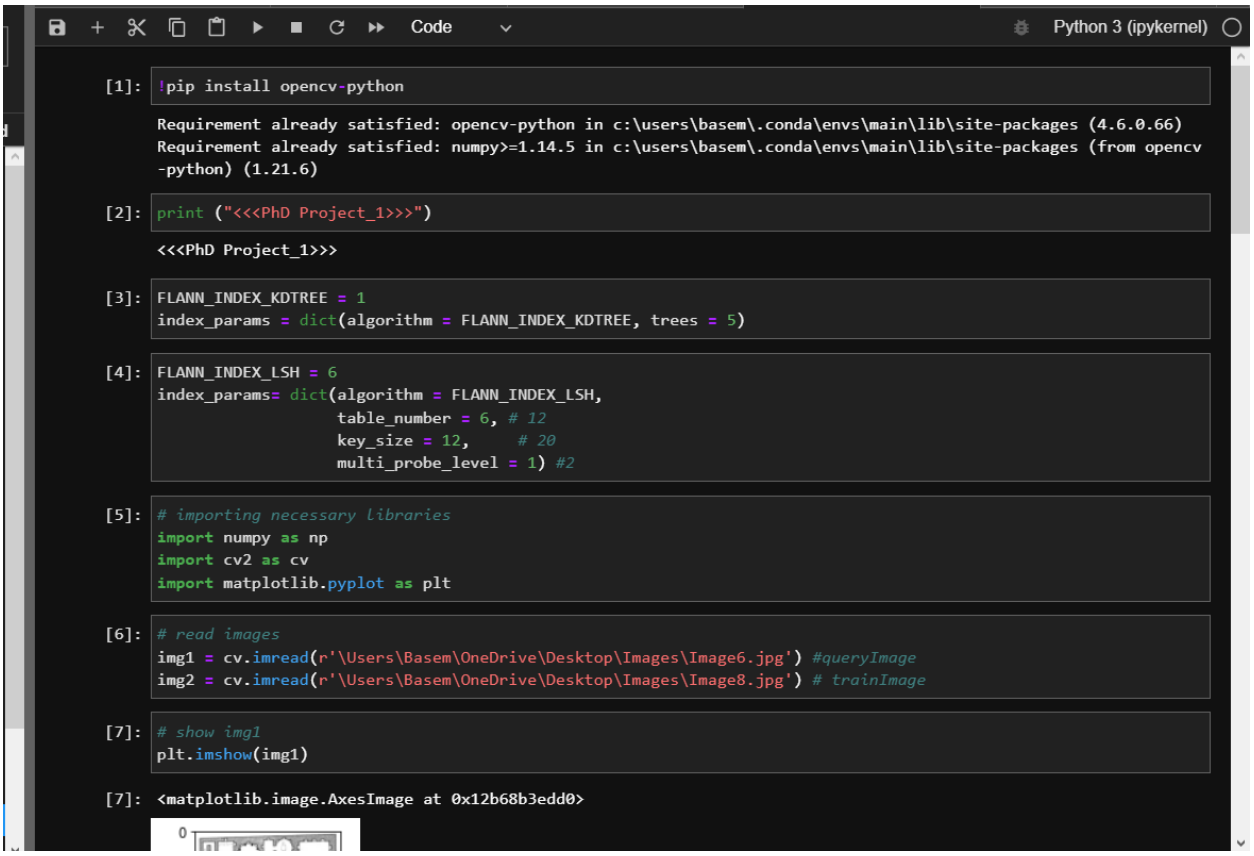
Technical implementation

- The goal is to compare features, between a source and an example.
- The method is to develop a feature detector and descriptor.
- Using a library called “OpenCV” using the programming language called “Python”, one can make it through 2 methods: Brute-Force matcher and FLANN Matcher.
- Brute-Force matcher is simple. It takes the descriptor of one feature in the first set and is matched with all other features in the second set using some distance calculation. And the closest one is returned.
- FLANN stands for Fast Library for Approximate Nearest Neighbors. It contains a collection of algorithms optimized for fast nearest neighbor search in large datasets and for high dimensional features. It works faster than BFMatcher for large datasets. [522]

As it is above-mentioned, the main purpose of this digital typology was to be applied to art. But art usually includes too many complicated details as well as a range of colors. To be able to train the program to recognize such an iconographic element in an image, the program would need thousands of professionally taken photos for each element, and sometimes with accurate parameters for each image. For the time being, that was unfortunately impossible. However, I am still on it. Nevertheless, in the meantime, the following code [523] illustrates how the program could recognize such as image ‘as a whole’. When the input was two different images for the same type of ground plan, the output was not recognizing the similarity as it was supposed to be expected *(fig. 154)*. But when the input was two exactly similar images, the output was exactly as expected *(fig. 158)*. Thus, proof of concept has been obtained. Using more details by redrawing the ground plans, such as geometrical elements, can provide us with more fruitful results. Not only this but using the same method with inputting accurate parameters as well as training the program on as many as possible images, can grant us also surprising results in terms of iconography too.

[522] https://docs.opencv.org/4.x/dc/dc3/tutorial_py_matcher.html
[523] https://docs.opencv.org/4.x/dc/dc3/tutorial_py_matcher.html

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```
[1]: !pip install opencv-python

Requirement already satisfied: opencv-python in c:\users\basem\.conda\envs\main\lib\site-packages (4.6.0.66)
Requirement already satisfied: numpy>=1.14.5 in c:\users\basem\.conda\envs\main\lib\site-packages (from opencv
-python) (1.21.6)

[2]: print ("<<<PhD Project_1>>>")

<<<PhD Project_1>>>

[3]: FLANN_INDEX_KDTREE = 1
index_params = dict(algorithm = FLANN_INDEX_KDTREE, trees = 5)

[4]: FLANN_INDEX_LSH = 6
index_params= dict(algorithm = FLANN_INDEX_LSH,
                   table_number = 6, # 12
                   key_size = 12,     # 20
                   multi_probe_level = 1) #2

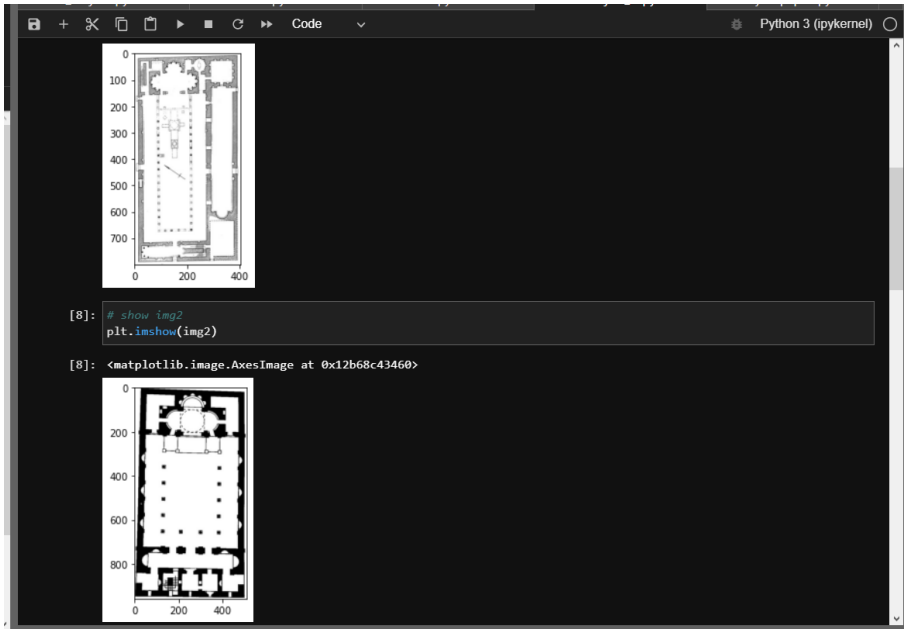
[5]: # importing necessary libraries
import numpy as np
import cv2 as cv
import matplotlib.pyplot as plt

[6]: # read images
img1 = cv.imread(r'\Users\Basem\OneDrive\Desktop\Images\Image6.jpg') #queryImage
img2 = cv.imread(r'\Users\Basem\OneDrive\Desktop\Images\Image8.jpg') # trainImage

[7]: # show img1
plt.imshow(img1)

[7]: <matplotlib.image.AxesImage at 0x12b68b3edd0>
```

Figure 151. Input code of the unsuccessful model (1)-digital typology using image recognition (Produced by B. Gabra using Python)



```
[8]: # show img2
plt.imshow(img2)

[8]: <matplotlib.image.AxesImage at 0x12b68c43460>
```

Figure 152. Input code of the unsuccessful model (2)-digital typology using image recognition (Produced by B. Gabra using Python)

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

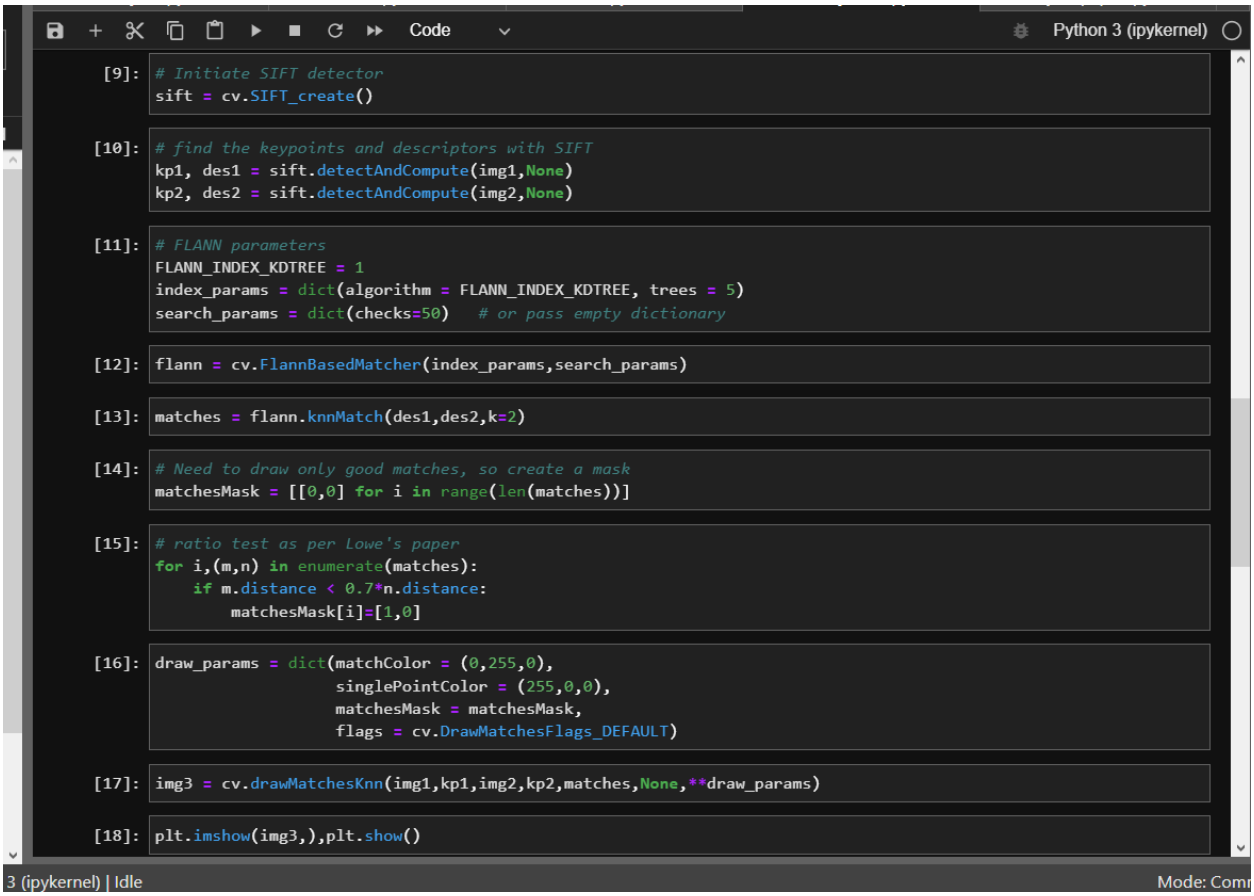


Figure 153. Input code of the unsuccessful model (3)-digital typology using image recognition (Produced by B. Gabra using Python)



Figure 154. Output of the unsuccessful model-digital typology using image recognition (Produced by B. Gabra using Python)

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

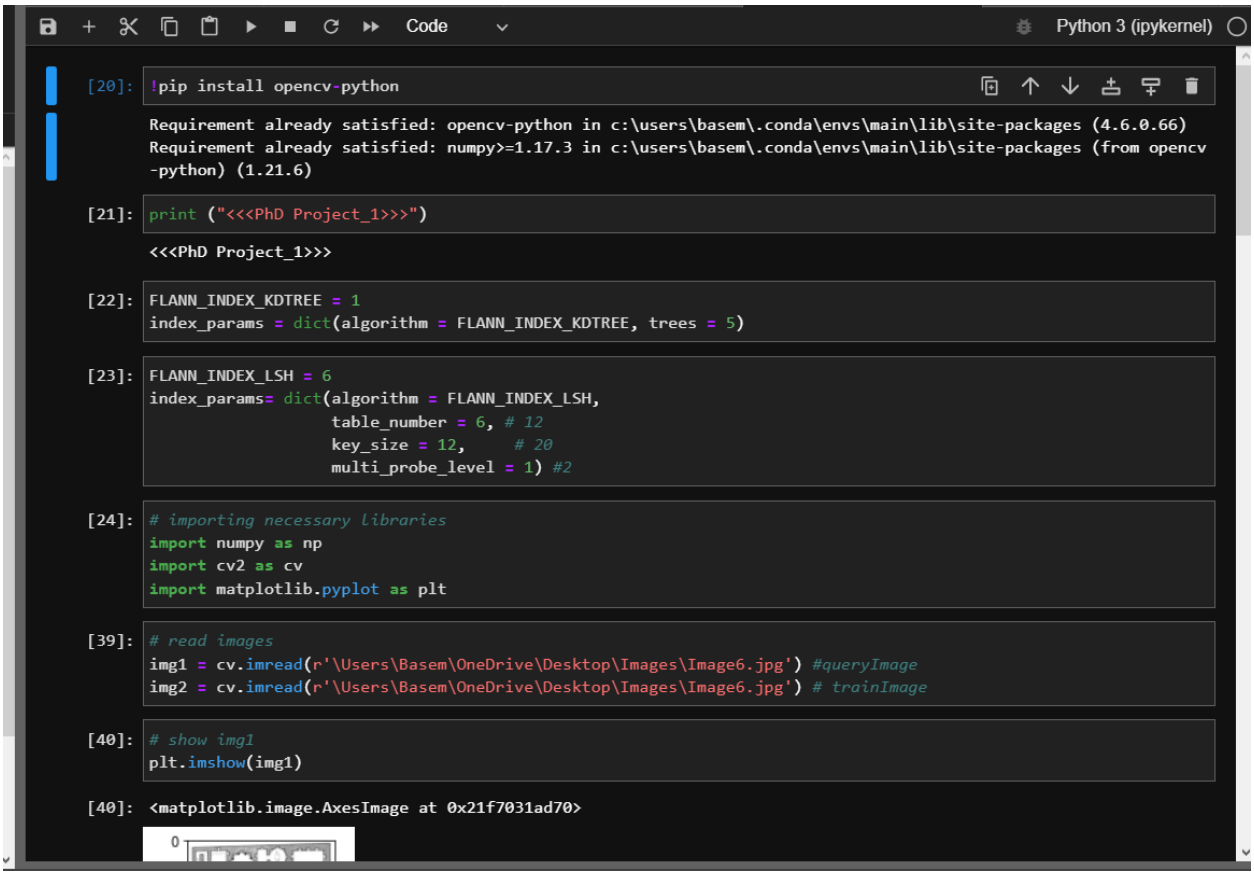


Figure 155. Input code of the successful model (1)-digital typology using image recognition (Produced by B. Gabra using Python)

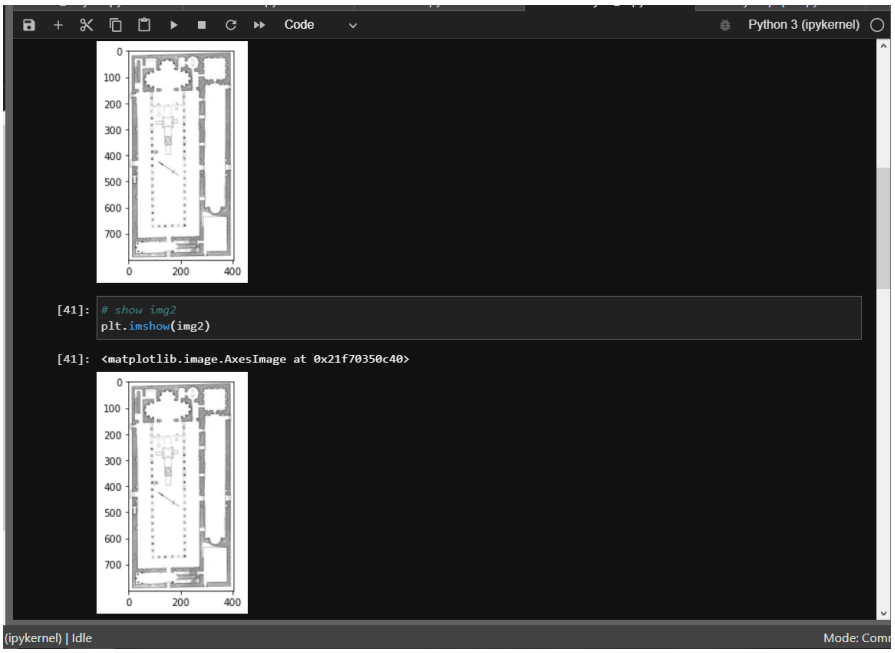


Figure 156. Input code of the successful model (2)-digital typology using image recognition (Produced by B. Gabra using Python)

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

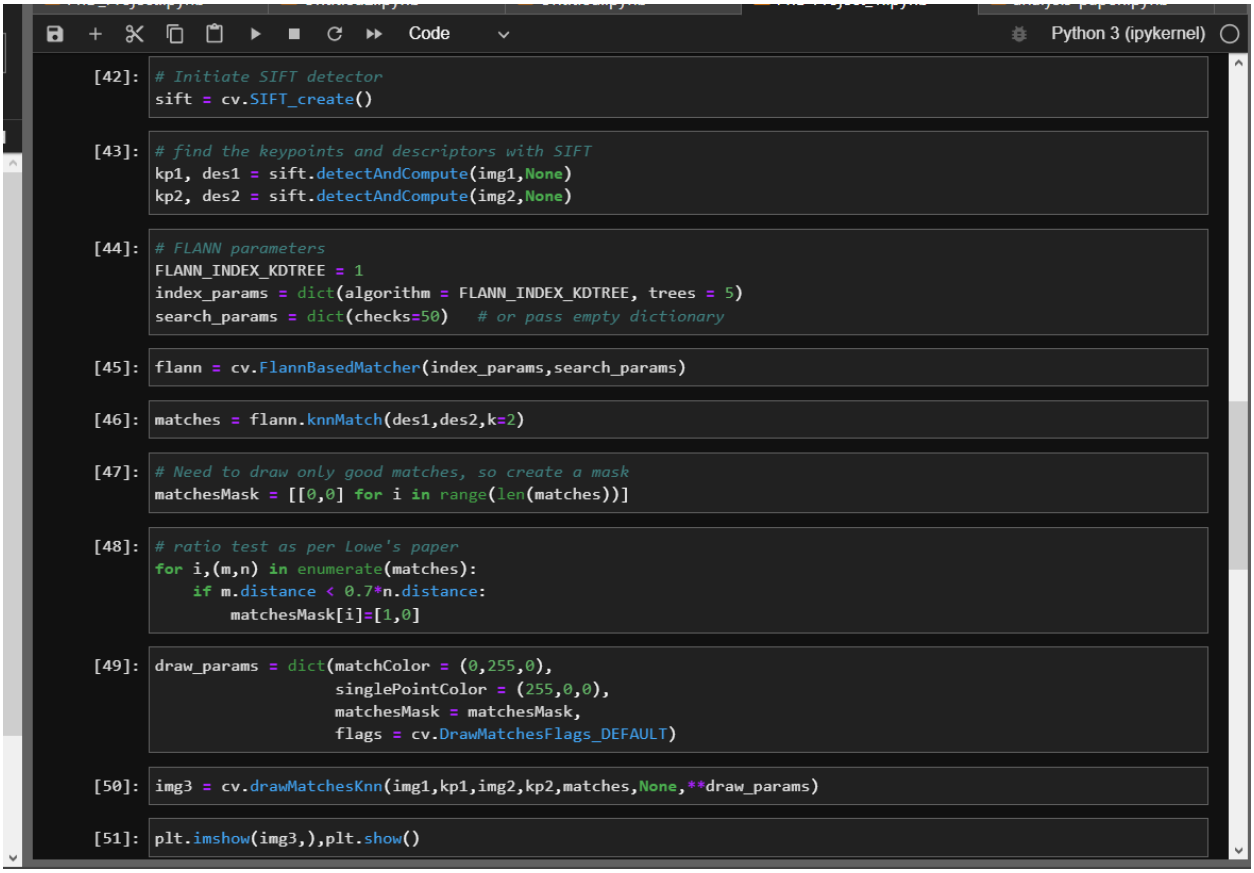


Figure 157. Input code of the successful model (3)-digital typology using image recognition (Produced by B. Gabra using Python)

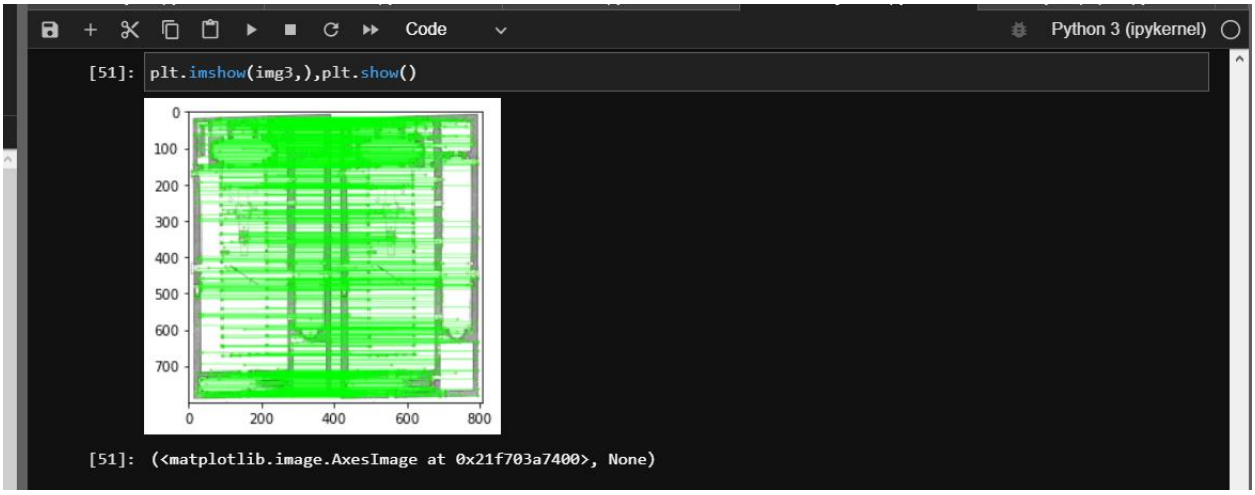


Figure 158. Output of the successful model-digital typology using image recognition (Produced by B. Gabra using Python)

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

IX. CONCLUSION

This research aims to illustrate, by facts, whether this so-called Great Schism that followed the Council of Chalcedon in 451 C.E. was motivated by theological circumstances or pushed by politicians under certain political conditions. Interestingly, the timing of writing this conclusion coincides with the visit of the Coptic Patriarch, Pope Tawadros II, to the Catholic Patriarch, Pope Francis, in the Vatican after a generous invitation from His Holiness, the Head of the Catholic Church. If there is one motivation behind conducting such a study, it is the dream of every real Christian believer, namely the convergence of views that may create one day a fragment in the body of the reunited Christian Church.

Therefore, this study asked specific questions. It investigates the traces of the so-called Chalcedonian or non-Chalcedonian suggested impacts on architectural and artistic life. Architecturally, the research surveys the spatial and typological architectural layouts of churches and monasteries at that time in Egypt, examining what was Monophysite or influenced by the Chalcedonian approach. Artistic, the study analyzes the iconographic characteristics of the depictions and architectural sculptures to recognize the local Egyptian character and the universal influences that existed.

As I have mentioned above, in addition to the quantitative and qualitative methods, digital solutions also played a significant role in reaching the current results and findings of this dissertation. That was by using data analysis using the programming language Python. As for the architectural typology, thanks to the great work of His soul Peter Grossmann, it was precise enough. While for the iconographic analysis, the work on it was challenging due to the lack of consistent typology, and due to the lack of sharp barriers between characteristics. However, overcoming this challenge motivated me to achieve as accurate as possible digital data analysis results.

As for the results, architecturally, the basilica form was dominant in all types of this period. However, simultaneously, the Egyptian architectural character was minded too. That is in addition to the newly emerged elements due to the liturgical needs matching the number of believers and nature or rites. Remarkably, several locations include different types of ground plans for churches. These different types indicate also different influences: Egyptian and non-Egyptian. Out of seven locations, six of them include both influences together. Such a

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

phenomenon may suggest relatively tolerance. For instance, in Abū Mīna complex, the north church, which is far from the rest of the churches of the complex, was non-Chalcedonian, whereas the other churches were Chalcedonian, under imperial support. Moreover, generally, Egyptian influence never appears alone without a non-Egyptian influence in any of the examined churches known so far. There is 65 % of the examples offer Egyptian with non-Egyptian influence, whereas 35 % offer only non-Egyptian influences. Nevertheless, influences varied, where the dominant percentage was for a dual character, namely Roman along with Egyptian influence with 27 %. However, the same percentage exists for the Roman influence alone. Then, 15% is the percentage of examples that offer the following influences: Byzantine with local influences, and Graeco-Roman, Byzantine, with local influences together. The Byzantine solely occupies 12 % of the examples, whereas Byzantine influence along with Roman influences represents only 4 %.

As for artistic results, the digital analysis examined 76 artifacts. In another experiment for a limited number of 14 artifacts, surprisingly, the general results were almost the same. That may suggest that the analysis was reliable enough due to the digital method used in it. 36% of the examples have early Byzantine/Christian alongside Graeco-Roman influences, and 24% have early Byzantine/Christian with Graeco-Roman and local influences. The rest of the examples are early Byzantine/Christian 18%, early Byzantine/Christian with local 11%, Graeco-Roman 9%, and Graeco-Roman with local 3%. Generally, the percentage of solo non-Egyptian influences is 63%, while the percentage of dual character influences, namely non-Egyptian with Egyptian is 37%. Nevertheless, interestingly, though the non-Egyptian characteristics occurred alone, the local influence is never alone in any example. Considering these analyses alongside the scholarly discussion, the conclusion will be logically clear.

The ‘Great Schism’, most probably, could not split communities, but rather it resulted in this artistic fusion that enriched this period. And since art is one of the true expressions of human conscience, then, I believe that it was nothing but a purely political schism that did not express the full will of either the people or even the clergy. People, eventually, exchanged their cultures, and this was expressed and proved by art. One of the clearest examples is the White Monastery and the Red Monastery. Although these two important standing monasteries were under the influence of St. Shenute Archimandrite, who is famous for his strong Coptic faith and for his

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

braveness in expressing his belief, both monasteries, architecturally and artistically accommodated non-Egyptian influences. Even, with the depiction of Pope Dioscorus which was in a later phase of depicting as suggested. Thus, it was an exchange rather than a controversy.

Futuristic approach: Regarding the challenge of dating artifacts and the recognition of architectural and iconographic characteristics, this study is annexed with a suggested approach using programming as well as other digital archaeological methods for better and more precise results that can help not only archaeologists but also Heritage Management Associations. It is highly recommended to utilize this approach and employ its suggested power for a futuristic vision of both archaeology and Heritage Management.

DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2024.014

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