

**Depicting The Eye (Optical Origen) in Coptic art until 13th century
A.D. in Egypt.**

تصوير العين (عضو الإبصار) في الفن القبطي حتى القرن الثالث عشر الميلادي في مصر

公元 13 世纪前埃及科普特艺术中的眼睛（光学起源）描绘

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ملخص

ظهرت العين كعضو إبصار في سياق إيجابي كعين حامية مثل عين حورس، كما ظهرت بشكل آخر كعين شريرة (حاسدة)، وأول إشارة لذلك كان في متون الأهرامات حيث تم الإشارة إلى عين أبوييس عدو الإله رع كعين شريرة واستمر ظهور العين كعين حامية وعين شريرة في العصر البيزنطي، لذا حاول الباحث التعرف على الاختلافات في تصوير العين في سياق إيجابي عن العين في سياق سلبي، فضلاً عن معرفة رأي آباء الكنيسة في العين الشريرة والعين في سياقها الإيجابي ورمزيتها في الحالتين؛ حيث أنه في السياق الإيجابي كان للعين رمزية هامة، لذا فقد تم تتبع الاختلاف وتطور تصوير العين في السياقين من خلال الجداريات والبرديات السحرية المزودة بالصور الإيضاحية .

الكلمات المفتاحية: العين – العضو البصري – قبطي

Abstract

In Ancient Egypt the eye as (Optical Organ) appeared in two contexts firstly in a positive context, as a protecting eye such as the eye of Hours, secondly it was in the negative context as an evil eye and first mention was

the eye of Apophis the Enemy of god (Ra), as well as in byzantine Egypt so I tried to notice the difference between appearing of evil eye as well as eye in positive context and find out the reason of its appearance, find out what fathers of the church think about that, the symbolism of the eye in positive context have had an important symbolism so throw the mural painting and magical papyrus I will find out the differences between the evil eye and eye in a positive context.

Keywords: eye – optical organ – Coptic.

1- Introduction

The eye had an important role as a symbol in ancient Egyptian art and religion for example “Udjat” eye(protecting eye) in the amulets and in coffins and the walls of the temples and the eye of (Ra) had a devastating effect when he was angry at humans in addition to evil eye of Apopis⁽¹⁾ the anomy of god (Ra) and that belief persists in the Christianity until modern times as an ornaments or amulet looks like a necklace with an eye pierced by an arrow to avoid the envy.

2- Depicting the Optical Origen(Optical Organ)

It was normal to be depicted in the face however what I want to discuss with research depicting Optical Origans there are two for an evil eye in a negative context and in a positive context as an eye refers to divine knowledge.

2-1 Depicting the evil eye:

The first refers to the evil eye (Optical Organ) in the coffin texts in the book of Dead⁽²⁾ chapter 108 which talks about Apopis the enemy of the Ra god when he turns his eye against Ra boat and it causes a delay in sailing for a while in the right coarse so Seath stand and said Ha you close your eyes, so the sailing continued on its normal course (Faulkner, 1985).

In the first millennium 30c it was common to refer to someone has an evil eye so many spells appeared to protect from evil eye one spell referred to goddess Sikmet⁽³⁾ who fired an arrow to defeat an evil eye (pinch, 1993) and in the ball ritual in ancient Egypt the ball was a symbol of evil eye that ritual depicted in the walls of temples the king hit the ball as a symbol of Apopis eye in front of one of the goddess mostly goddess Hatthour (Borghouts, 1973; Koenig, 1994).

That fear of the evil eye persisted in the Byzantine era so we found many Coptic texts about the evil eye and it contained an illustrated of the evil eye (Optical Organ) divided by a cross and pierced by four Holes

(kropp, 1930) in the papyrus 8331 in Berlin library in one raw H 17, W 11.5 founded in Arsinoites (Fayum) Faymic Coptic, one column recto and it is reused and it's in Berlin Istattlich museum no 8831 magical papyrus for sizing the eye every single eye and per their eyes depicted on with a cross in every sited in four spots Fig. (1).

(<https://www.coptic-magic.phil.uni-wuerzburg.de/index.php/manuscript/kyp-m115>)



Fig. (1) After: <https://www.coptic-magic.phil.uni-wuerzburg.de/index.php/manuscript/kyp-m115>, 28/07/2024, 2 p.m

The evil eye (Optical Organ) appeared in a mural painting in St. Appollo monastery in Bawit it's extinct and what remains of it is a watercolor by Clédat in a weak of discovering the St. Appollo monastery in 1904 dating back to 6-7 century A.D, It shows, St. Sisones as cavalier with a spear attack Female figure above her head evil eye attacked by two serpents and scorpion, Aibis and from top pierced with daggers, and the hours black and white and bells hanging on the nick of the hours above St. Sisones century and hybrid with a human torso and snak body hold a spear Fig. (2) (Meyer, 2000).



Fig. (2) After: Meyer, 2000, 103.

It is worth mentioning that the evil eye (Optical Organ) attacked by beasts and pierced by arrows and daggers were depicted in a lot of amulets in Palestine and Syria to protect pregnancy and the babies on the other side in Egypt it is depicted rarely in amulets and papyrus put it were mentioned a lot in magical texts

Bronze amulet to protect from Ebyzo ⁽⁴⁾ founded in Palestine and preserved in Walter art gallery no 54.2653 obv depicted a galloped cavalier spearing a female demon. Rev an evil eye pierced by knives and swords and attacked by lions and Ibis and the serpent and scorpion Fig.(3)(<https://art.thewalters.org/detail/22369/amuletic-pendant/>)



Rev



Obv

Fig. (3) After: <https://art.thewalters.org/detail/22369/amuletic-pendant/>, 28/07/2024 2:15 p.m.

And about putting the knife in the head of A pop is it was the origin of piercing it with knife, Since in spell (17) an illustrated of Five squatting ram-headed gods carrying ankhs are named as Re, Shu, Tefnut, Geb and the soul of Mendes. The cat of Re cuts up the evil serpent Apopis before the sacred ished-tree of Heliopolis. Fig. (4) (Faulkner, 1990), and we noticed the round of Aoppis in a sphere shape.

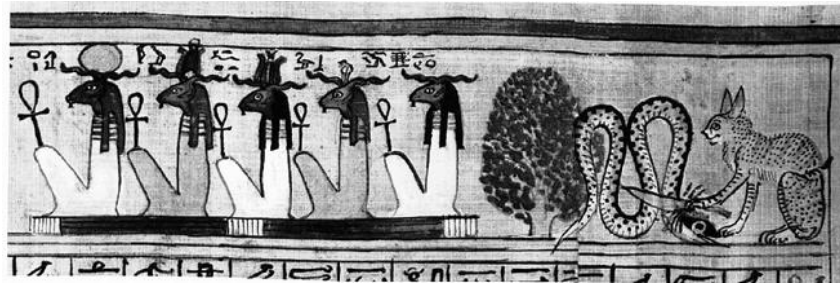


Fig. (4) After: Faulkner, 1990, 48.

2-2 The Over view of Christian Fathers about evil eye:

The Pagan intellectuals thought they believed in the evil eye whereas they didn't deny the existence of believers in the evil eye, despite the clergy denying the existence of the evil eye, Basilios⁽⁵⁾ in his homily on envy (*De invidia*), and John Chrysostom⁽⁶⁾ said that the devil harmed the envied by the evil eye which doesn't harm in itself in his commentary on Gal. (*In episulam ad Galats Commentarius*), either Jirome⁽⁷⁾ go to that the evil eye can't harm when he took about the Glathia message whereas he said it can harm the babies and children but he isn't sure about that and as a result, he will leave that to god to decide in his commentary in Gal. (*Commentarius, in Epistulam, Paulinam ad. Galatas*), As well as (Teratullian)⁽⁸⁾ go to that devil intentionally harms the Lucky ones when they were surrounded by people who can be accused of the evil eye and as a result the clergy go the refuse the belief in evil eye in general and they said the harm comes from Satan (*De virginibus velandis*)(Dickic, 1995).

2-3 Depicting the Optical Origen Coptic Art in positive context:

It was an important symbol in ancient Egyptian art. It is worth mention that the first eye was mentioned Ra eye as a cosmic healing symbol as well it was mentioned in the religious rituals (Hope, 1948), in addition to the “Udjat” eye it was a symbol of protection and it was a symbol of the sun (Becker, 1994).

And it was a strong relationship between god (Touth) and the moon his eye was a symbol of the moon further in the myth of Osiris he treated Horus's eye (Koenig, 1994).

Since ancient times it was common to see eyes on the prow of ships in the Mediterranean Sea basin as a protecting symbol (Wilkinson, 2008), and as a result it depicted on the prow of boat model on board the sailors without oras in the middle and in the prow stand three men, and there are three squatted men in tiny cabin in the rear, it is of a painted wood preserved in Fondazione Museo delle Antichità Eqizie, Turin, dated back to XI dynasty fig. (5) (Cartocci, 2009).



Fig. (5) After: Cartocci, 2009, 134.

The protective eye continued to appear in Ancient Egypt, as it appeared on many amulets, like a pendant for king Tutankhamen with an Ugat⁽⁹⁾ in the solar boat between two Uraeus and raised by a winged kheper beetle which hold the louts and papyrus the symbols of the two lands, and the Ugat surmounted by full moon disk which include the king stand

between god Tuth and Ra, and in the bottom of the pendant a floral ornaments it made of gold and semi-Precious stones, it founded in Tutankhamen Tomb, preserved in the Grand Egyptian Museum and it date back to King Tutankhamen (1332 – 1322 B.C.) region and continued to appear on coffins and on the walls of temples. Fig. (6) (Cartocci, 2009).



Fig. (6) After: Cartocci, 2009, 256.

As well as it portrayed in the coffins as a rectangular coffin for Lady Henu the exterior decorated with a massive pair of Ugat in the eastern side to enable her to see the sun raise, and there is a lot of hieroglyphic Prayers, it made of painted wood and, from Beni Hasan, 1.85 m, preserved in British museum No. EA32051, dated back to 12th dynasty fig. (7) (1802-1991 B.C.) (<https://www.britishmuseum.org/>)



Fig. (7) After:

<https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/search?keyword=EA&keyword=32051>, 18/01/2025, 3 p.m.

In the bible (The first animal was like a lion, the second animal was like a calf, the third animal had a face like a human face, and the fourth animal was like a flying eagle; And the four living creatures, each of them having six wings, were full of eyes within, and did not cease day and night, saying, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come) (Rev. 4: 7-8) the eyes in the wings of the Sharopiam, Cerafiam was a symbol of them massive divinity knowledge, (Becker, 1994).

2-3-2 Depicting eyes in the wings of incorporeal beings:

It was, portrayed in moral painting in the monastery of St. Appollo in the Aps of Chapel 6 at the upper part shows the enthroned Christ hold a codex in his left hand, and blessing with his right hand in a medallion accompanied with incorporeal creatures with three pairs of wings full of eyes (Optical Organ) combine with eye brow almost looking to the same side the incorporeal creature look to and in the bottom four wheels the seen refer to Accenting of Christ in the lower part depicted the virgin and the disciples and two of local saints the virgin carry the Christ in childhood chapel 6, preserved in Coptic museum no 7118, dated back to (6-8 A.D.) Fig. (8) (Gabra, 2002, 118-119, Van loon, 2014).



Fig. (8) After: Torok, 2005, PL XXXII..

Farther more in the eastern Neich in room 7 in Bawit enthroned Christ wore a purple costume on a jeweled throne with red jewels and held the codex written in it a Manuel in it and he blessing with his right hand in orange Mandoril, surrounded by a blue circle refer to the sky and there are two of the four living creatures, the man and the lion had three pairs of wings full of eyes (Optical Organ) and an angel in the further right of

enthroned Christ (Hadji – Minaglou, 2020). Date back to (6-8 A.D.), the eyes of the wings look towards the outside and the eyes with eye brow. Fig. (9)



Fig. (9) After: Hadji – Minaglou, 2020, 13, fig. 11.

Moreover a mural painting on the eastern semi-dome enthroned Christ depicted Christ surrounded by a mandorla, with the moon on his right and the sun on his left. He wears a decorated yellow tunic and a cloak decorated with crosses. The mandorla is decorated with a decorative band in the form of eight-pointed stars. Christ holds in his left hand the Codex decorated with a large cross, and blessing with his right hand, The mandorla is surrounded by four incorporeal creatures, each of whom has his head and three pairs of wings full of eyes. Combine with eye brow in the left and the right of the Christ an angel bowing to Christ. The wings are executed with what resembles fish scales to suggest the shape of feathers, The northern Church in the Monastery of the Martyrs in Asna, dated back to 9-11 A.D. fig. (10) (Leroy, 1975).



Fig. (10) After: Leroy, 1975, fig. 15.

On the other hand there is a depiction of enthroned Christ wearing a blue tunic and a red cloak, blessing with his right hand, and holding the Codex in his left hand. The head of Jesus Christ is surrounded by halo, the eyes are almond-shaped, with a bearded oval face. He sits on the throne inside a mandorla surrounded by a frame with geometric decorations of circles and dots inside it, and the four incorporeal creatures had three pairs of wings full of eyes combined with eye brow, and on the sides are two medallions, one above the other, and inside each medallions is one of the four evangelists, each one of them in a writing position, at the eastern semi-dome in the sanctuary, the white Monastery of Anba Shenouda Sohag, dated back to (1124 A.D.) fig. (11) (Gabra, 2002).



Fig. (11) After: La Ferrière, 2008, pl. 1.

In addition to there is a depiction of Cherubim with multiple heads, the human head is the main head, on the side the lion's head, on the other side the calf's head, and on top the eagle's head, the body is oval and an eggs-shaped tail, and the wings are filled with eyes accompanied by eyebrows, painted wood, Sanctuary of Benjamin, in the Church of Monastery of St. Macarius, dated back to (11 AD.) (Gabra, 2002), and it wroth to mention that the Cherubim were mixed with the incorporeal creatures and became a hybrid creature between them, perhaps this is due to the fact that each of them has wings filled with eyes fig. (12).



Fig. (12) After: Gabra, 2002, fig. 4.6

Moreover in a semi-dome there is a depiction enthroned Christ, surrounded by halo that is not crossed, and he had a round face, with almond-shaped eyes, thick eyebrows, pointed nose, and thick black hair and beard. He holds the Codex in his left hand, and blessing with his right hand, He wears a tunic. Behind the throne is a mandorla, but it does not completely surround Jesus Christ. It is surrounded on each side by two incorporeal creatures. To the left of Christ at the top is one of the incorporeal creatures with the head of an eagle, and at the bottom is the incorporeal creatures with the head of a calf. To the right of Jesus Christ at the top is the incorporeal creatures with the head of a human, and at the bottom is the being with the head of a lion, and their bodies and wings are full of eyes combined with eyebrow. To the right and left of Christ an angel with halo and holds a sphere in his hand, as a symbol of the world, in eastern semi-dome of the sanctuary of Saint Antonius in the Monastery of Saint Paul,

dated back to First half of the 13th century AD fig. (13) (Bolman, 2008; Van Morssel, 2002).

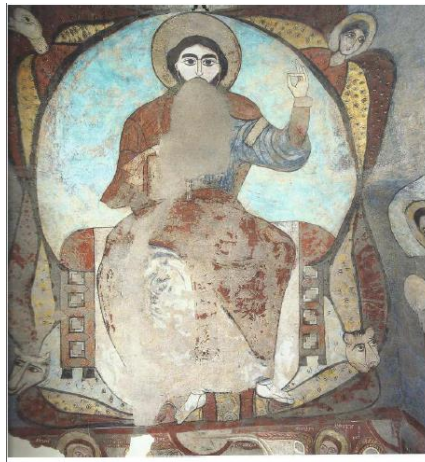


Fig. (13) After: Bolman, 2008, 182, fig.10.5

As well as in a mural painting there is a depictions of enthroned Christ inside a mandorla, with an oval face, almond-shaped eyes, a small mouth, and a pointed black beard. He wears a tunic and yellow cloak. Jesus Christ's feet rest on an architectural arch (on which is written in Coptic) "The heavens are my throne, and the earth is my footstool" (Isaiah 66:1). He holds the codex in his left hand, and blessing with his right hand, The mandorla has a black frame decorated with white flowers, and four angels support the mandorla. The wings are executed as circles resembling fish scales. On the right of the mural is a depiction of the moon and two incorporeal creatures, one with the face of a Calf and the other with the face of an eagle and three pears of wings filled with eyes accompanied by eyebrows, all eyes looking towards Jesus Christ. At the top in the right corner is a depiction of Saint John the Baptist with thick hair and beard, and halo surrounds his head, raising his hand in a position of worship or greeting. Underneath is written (The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, 'Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!') (John 1:29). He looks towards Jesus Christ. On the other side is a depiction of the sun and two incorporeal creatures, one with the face of a human and the other with the face of a lion and three pears of wings. At the top is a depiction of the Virgin Mary with a haloed face, with

almond-shaped eyes, a small mouth, and a long nose. She wears a cloak and raises her hand in a position of greeting or worship towards Jesus Christ. Underneath the Virgin is written (Then Mary said, “My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior) (Luke 1:46), The Chapel of the incorporeal creatures in the Church of Saint Antonius in the Monastery of Saint Antonius, dated back to 13th century fig. (14) (Gabra, 2002; Laferrère, 2008).

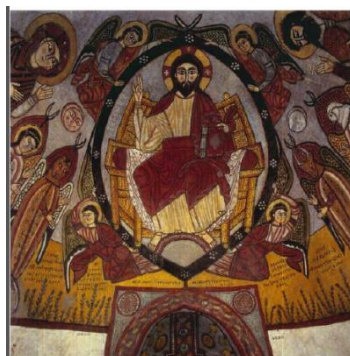


Fig. (14) After: Van Moorsel, 1997, pl. 103.

It Worth mentioning there are many planks with a pair of eyes as a symbol of the power of God dating back to 600 A.D., founded in Ma'aret En Noman Syria and its measurements 4.8 x 5.5x 0.6 cm preserved in Walter are museum no. 57.1865.560 with Greek inscription the translation Lord help, amen. Fig. (15) (<https://art.thewalters.org>), and all of them combined with eye brow



Fig. (15)

<https://art.thewalters.org/detail/9957/plaque-with-pair-of-eyes-symbolizing-the-all-seeing-power-of-god-2/>, 26/07/2024, 4 p.m.

3- The results:

1. Depicting the Optical Origen had a special role in ancient Egyptian art and religion and it have a positive role as a protecting amulet or a symbol of sun, and it was always combined with eye brow fig. (5, 6, 7), on the other hand in the negative context (evil eye), it was normally depicted as a spherical eye like the eye of Apopis fig. (4), and it was rare to depict since they afraid of its power.
2. The fathers of the church refused the power of the evil eye but they didn't deny its harmful effect.
3. It appeared in Coptic art in both negative contexts as in magical texts and it was depicted in a spherical shape and was divided by a cross and pierced as well it wasn't accompanied with an eye brow fig. (1), and it appeared in mural paintings in bow it attacked by bests fig. (2), and also it wasn't accompanied by eye brow, and it was rare to depict, because of their afraid of its power.
4. As well it appeared in a positive context as eyes in the wings of cherubs and seraphim and incorporeal creatures and it was referred to them massive divinity knowledge it was companied by eye brow fig. (8-14), like in ancient Egyptian art in depicting the Ugat.
5. It appeared in the negative contexts in Plantain and Syria without eye brow, and also pierced with sword and diggers fig. (3), on the other hand in the positive contexts, it portrayed with eye brow like fig. (15)
6. Sometimes appeared accompaniment between the cherub and incorporeal creatures like in fig. (12). it was by adding the lion's head

on the side of the neck the ox on the other side and the head of the eagle above the human head.

Footnotes:

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- (1) A huge snake personified the Chaos and the enemy God Ra, which Threatens Ra in his mighty journey in the Underworld, so he attack the solar boat of Ra every night, and Seth speared Apopis, and his blood stain with red sky at the sun raise (Wilkinson, 2005).
 - (2) Scroll of Papyrus was placed in the coffin with the mummy starting from the new Kingdom, the text of the Book of the Dead differs from one copy to another, it includes about two hundred spells, but it must include four main topics arriving at the cemetery and descending to the tomb along with supplications to Osiris and Ra flowing by restoring in the afterlife and the integration into the sun and in the end the dead coming during the daylight and return to the underworld, and in the end the scroll glorification of the dead, it was written by hieroglyphic or Hieratic script and the title, and the subtitles written by red ink, it was derived of the text of pyramids. (Shaw, Nicholson, 1995)
 - (3) It means she is the powerful, it was depicted in horrible of a women body with the lioness headed Sekmet had a lot of statues erected at Karnak Complex in the reign of Amenhotep III (Wilkinson, 2005; Shaw, Nicholson, 1995).
 - (4) An evil spirit that spread throughout the Near and Eastern Mediterranean and was considered the cause of maternal miscarriages and infant deaths. It was said to be driven by the evil eye and was known in Egypt as (Alabastdraya) and in Byzantium as (Gaylo) (Björklund, 2017).
 - (5) He was born in Kabadokia in 329 A.D. and studied in its school and got to know gregarious casinos and more to Constantinople to study rhetoric and philosophy and went to Athens to complete his studies and returned to his home to teach rhetoric after that he went to Egypt and Palestine to learn the monasticism and return to his home and gave what he owned to the poor people and be a monk, and latterly he became archbishop in 330 A.D. and exiled at the region of and died at the age of 45 years old the most important works "against Amonious" and a book about the holy spirit.
 - (6) He was the bishop of Constantinople (398-404) A.D. he was borne in Antioch Syria, and died in 407 A.D., he was born to a rich family and had an excellent education he involved in many political struggles, he was exiled in synod of oak at =Chalcedon in 403 A.D. to Koukousos in Armenia and died in 407, almost of his writings have survived in approximately 2000 books (Baldwin, Kazhdan, Nelson, 1991).
 - (7) Jerome: he was a saint and a translator, he was born in Dalmatia in 331 A, D, and died in 420 A, D., he had an excellent education in Christianity and Classical culture and he worked as a secretary to Pope Damasus (306-384) A.D. He translated the Bible into Latin (Baldwin, 1991).
 - (8) He born in Carthage in 160 A.D. and had a well Greek and Latin education he worked as a lawyer after studding law and rhetoric and became a Christian when he was thirty years old and became a theologies and great defender of Christianity and had wrote many books (1995، تادرس ملطي).
 - (8) The left eye of Hors that lost during his battle with Seth, whereas it was restored by Goddess Hathour, and Ugat was a symbol of Holiness, and it appeared in a lot of protecting emulate, and on the coffin which usually portrayed with Ugat eye on the head of deceased (Wilkinson, 2005).

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