

## THE INFLUENCE OF THE ANCIENT EGYPTIAN ART ON THE ICONS

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### ABSTRACT

*The Copts inherited a lot from their ancient Egyptian ancestors, which led to the preservation of the ancient Egyptian identity, and the most important example of that is Coptic art, which had ancient Egyptian roots that stemmed from the cultural and artistic heritage, which is a reflection of the ancient Egyptian with his thoughts and beliefs. Artistic symbolism was the appropriate language to express those beliefs. And the axis of inspiration for the ancient Egyptian faith, and this is what Coptic art inherited from its predecessor, ancient Egyptian art. Some of these symbols were used, but in line with the new religion that is far from paganism, but Coptic art resorted to using those symbols to facilitate understanding of the new religion. We also find in Byzantine art some of these influences by using these ancient Egyptian symbols and beliefs to express the new religion. Therefore, this research paper sheds light on some icons as an example of the use of ancient Egyptian symbols, but with a new thought that is in line with the Christian faith, and also shows the influence of ancient Egyptian art on icons.*

*This paper also highlights that the icons painters used the same materials that were commonly used in ancient Egypt such as inorganic pigments, binders, Sycamore wood, and linen. The icons were carried out by using the same tempera technique, where used by the ancient Egyptians and the Greco-Roman painters.*

**KEYWORDS:** Egyptian identity, Coptic art; Coptic Icons, Pigments, Sycamore, Cartonnage.

### INTRODUCTION

According to many historians, the Copts have preserved the traditions and customs that they inherited from their ancient Egyptian ancestors. The legacies were not limited to customs and traditions, but also art. Therefore, Coptic art is the legitimate heir to ancient Egyptian art<sup>1</sup>. Some researchers, such as Zaki Hassan, believe that Coptic art was influenced by ancient Egyptian art and Greek art, forming a folk art in Alexandria, which formed the principles and rules of Coptic art, and thus served as a nucleus for this art<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Puică, Ilie Melniciuc. "Biblical Elements in Coptic Icon." European Journal of Science and Theology 2, no. 2 (2006), p.37.

<sup>2</sup> Nagy Ali Hassan, A. "Coptic art style (Its features and developments through the presented artistic models)." مجلة المعهد العالي للدراسات النوعية no. 2 (2022): p.661.

Coptic art is distinguished as the fruit of the Egyptian people's seeking to express themselves in the light of the new religion with spiritual thoughts and values that dispense with the mortal values of the world in the hope of salvation, and this is completely different from paganism. Coptic art used symbols from ancient Egyptian art as well as Greco-Roman art, but it dyed these symbols with a new spiritual thought. In addition, Coptic art inherited the painting from ancient Egyptian art. The ancient Egyptian art was the first to use the art of painting<sup>3</sup>.

Painting has continued to be used in Coptic art, whether icons or murals, Coptic art also continued to use symbols expressing religious identity from ancient Egyptian art, but at the same time, it expressed the ideas of the new Christian religion. Also like all Coptic art products, the art of icons was influenced by ancient Egyptian art. Coptic artists preserved the religious methods of ancient Egypt on wooden icons. The emergence of icons was not new, but the ancient Egyptians knew drawing since the dawn of history, and painting and carving also continued in the Greco-Roman era, and there are many artistic products from those two eras, whether mosaics or painted in the form of wall paintings, most of which represent religious stories and themes. Most scholars agree that the icons date back to the first three centuries AD, as icons were found in Roman tombs in Alexandria dating back to the first centuries. In subsequent centuries, icons became abundant, among which there are some Byzantine icons, which were also influenced by ancient Egyptian art and beliefs.

## **EXAMPLES OF THE INFLUENCE OF THE ANCIENT EGYPTIAN ART ON THE ICONS:**

### **ICON OF DOG-HEADED SAINTS, SAINT AHRAQAS AND SAINT AUGANI**

A left wing of a triptych representing Saint Ahraqas and Saint Augani are standing with their dog-like faces and sacred halos appear around their heads indicating that they are saints, as well as Arabic writing with their names (**Fig.1**). This icon shows an ancient Egyptian influence, by representing saints with dog faces<sup>4</sup>. In ancient Egypt, the dog was depicted as a jackal, and the most important form of the jackal is Anubis, who guided souls on their way to Osiris, the judge of the dead, and the protector of graves<sup>5</sup>.

As for the representation of the saints with the faces of dogs, there were many opinions about this representation, but the researcher tends to the opinion of Muhammad Kafafi, who stated that the representation of the dog symbolizes the saints who are characterized by honesty and sincerity in guarding the faith<sup>6</sup>, so the researcher believes that this strengthens the connection between the representation of saints in this way and deity Anubis Who was one of his most important duties to protect the bodies of the deceased and guard the cemeteries and his sincerity in helping the deceased in their journey.

Also, Anubis is considered one of the most famous Egyptian deities because, in the belief of the ancient Egyptians, he was associated with the most important processes related to the afterlife. He was the divine embalmer, so the priests who supervised the mummification of the dead wore Anubis masks. Also, Anubis had the duties of protecting cemeteries and the bodies of the dead, as he guided the dead to their path to trial, supervised the weighing of the heart, and made sure the weighting was fair. Therefore, the ancient Egyptians believed that he was seen as a protector after death<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> مصطفى عبد العزيز, نهى, سالى محمد على شبل, يارا مجدى فواد بشرى. "جماليات الشكل الأدمى لدى الفنان القبطى لتنمية مهارة التصوير". المجلة المصرية للدراسات المتخصصة. 21 (2019): ص 153, 154.

<sup>4</sup> Puică, Ilie Melniciuc, op.cit. pp.37,39.

<sup>5</sup> Ragab Fadel, D. (2022). The Influence and Semantics of using Animals and Birds Symbols in Greek, Roman and Coptic Art. مجلة كلية السياحة والفنادق. جامعة المنصورة. 11(5),p.144.

<sup>6</sup> محمد مصطفى عبد السلام على. السمات التشكيلية والأساليب التقنية في المنسوجات القبطية بقرية الشيخ عبادة (دراسة تحليلية). بحوث في التربية الفنية والفنون, 19(3), (2019): ص 216-245.ص223

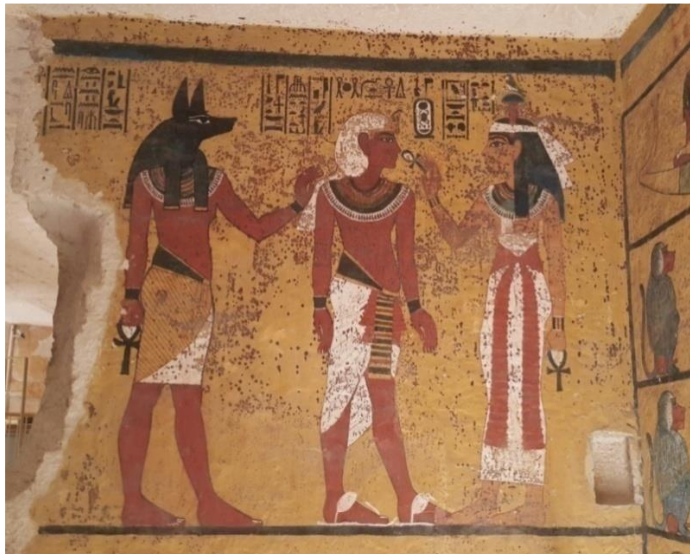
<sup>7</sup> Wilfong, Terry G. Death dogs: the jackal gods of ancient Egypt. Kelsey Museum of Archaeology, 2015.p.25.



**Fig.1.** Icon of Dog-Headed Saints, 18 century, Coptic Museum.

Source: <https://storyheartsjourney.tumblr.com/post/8462235260/saints-ahraks-and-augani-cynocephaly-coptic>, April 2023.

The ancient Egyptian artist was interested in depicting Anubis in different scenes and forms, including those that are represented on the walls of tombs, temples, coffins of the dead, sarcophagus, and others in the form of statues. And one example of the scenes depicted on the walls of tombs, a scene depicted on one of the walls of Tutankhamun's tomb, which is the southern wall of the sarcophagus room, depicts Anubis as a human figure with a jackal's head accompanying Tutankhamun to Hathor, the goddess of the West (**fig.2**).<sup>8</sup>



**Fig.2.** South wall of the Sarcophagus Chamber-C.R. Tarek S. Tawfik

The Egyptian Museum also displays a collection of distinctive statues of Anubis, including the Anubis Shrine, which is in the form of a black dog (**fig 3**). And also, another bronze statue of the anthropomorphic deity Anubis in the face of a kneeling worshiper. He has the head of a jackal and the body of a human male (**fig 4**).

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<sup>8</sup> Tawfik, T. S. "The Tomb of Tutankhamun Back to Osiris in plan and decoration." 14مجلة كلية الآثار. جامعة القاهرة. no. 26 (2023): 295-309. p.307.



**Fig.3.** Anubis, the Egyptian god of the dead from a chest in the form of a shrine, from the tomb of Tutankhamun-Egyptian Museum. Source: <https://egypt-museum.com/anubis-shrine-of-tutankhamun/>, April 2023.



**Fig.4.** Statuette of the god Anubis facing a kneeling worshiper. Source: <https://egypt-museum.com/statuette-of-anubis-facing-a-kneeling-worshiper/>, April 2023.

## ICONS OF SAINT KNIGHT

It was common in Egypt since ancient times, the presence of forces representing evil and the devil, and this belief remained firmly rooted in the minds of the Egyptians until now. And they attributed any bad things that happened to Satan, who hated good. Some of them even resorted to using magic, spells, and amulets to face the problems that threaten their lives, and they believed that evil forces are the cause of these problems. Coptic art expressed these evil forces in animal forms, and scenes of victory over those evil forces spread by stabbing them, as happens in the scenes depicting Saint Knight, and the scenes of victory over evil forces are a continuation of what appeared in ancient Egyptian art. Among the ancient Egyptian legacies in beliefs that found great acceptance in Coptic art is the link between Horus, the victor over evil, represented by his uncle Set, and the Lord Christ, or the knight saint<sup>9</sup>. Coptic art was famous for depicting the saint knight on horseback stabbing the dragon to defeat evil (**fig.5,6**).

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<sup>9</sup>نورة حسين. "مناظر الانتصار على قوى الشر في الفن القبطي في ضوء نماذج مختارة (دراسة حالة لأشكال الطيور والحيوانات)". Bulletin of the Center Papyrological Studies ,32(1) (2015): 179-197. pp.179,183.



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**Fig.5.** The icon of St Mercurius, 19<sup>th</sup> Century, Saint Mercurius Church, Akhimim, Sohag



**Fig.6.** The icon of St. George, 18th century, Church of St. Virgin Mary, Demishreya

This is an influence from ancient Egyptian art, as Seth has some elements in common with Satan in Christian thought<sup>10</sup>. Horus was depicted piercing his spear into the body of a crocodile, a wild boar, or a hippopotamus, which represents the god Set, a symbol of evil (**Fig.7,8**), as represented on the walls of the Dendera Temple, the Edfu Temple, and the Philae Temple<sup>11</sup>.



**Fig.7.** Wall relief of the fight between Seth and Horus, where Horus helped by Isis, speared Seth as a hippopotamus, Temple of Edfu.

Source: <https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/f0/Edfu47.JPG>, April 2023.



**Fig.8.** Horus on horseback spearing Seth as a crocodile, Fourth Century AD, sandstone window fragment, Louvre Museum, E 4850.

Source: <https://collections.louvre.fr/en/ark:/53355/cl010050476>, April 2023.

<sup>10</sup> Graham, Lloyd D. "Which Seth?" *Pražské egyptologické studie* 27 (2021): p.60.

<sup>11</sup> Ragab Fadel, D., op.cit., p161

And the legend of the battle between Horus and Set began, with the killing of Osiris, the father of Horus, by his brother Set. Horus was born after his father was killed, and he began to fight with Set over the inheritance of his father Osiris, who became the ruler of the underworld, and the fighting continued, whether on the battlefield or in court until Horus defeated Seth<sup>12</sup>.

### ICON OF THE ARCHANGEL MICHAEL

Icon of the Archangel Michael depicts angel Michael holding a scale in his left hand (Fig.9), and the scale was one of the most important elements of the scene of the trial after death in ancient Egyptian belief (Fig. 10)<sup>13</sup>.

There is also another icon, which is known as the Jerusalem icon because visitors take it as a souvenir from the Holy Land (Palestine). It is considered one of the most important examples of the influence of ancient Egyptian beliefs on Byzantine art. The icon depicts many scenes including the scene of the trial after death, which is depicted as it was represented in ancient Egyptian art and beliefs, except the entry of the justified through the door of heaven.<sup>14</sup> (fig. 11).

Funeral rituals in ancient Egypt were famous for the scenes of the trial after death (Fig.12)<sup>15</sup>. According to Egyptian funerary beliefs, the trial after death is one of the most important processes that the deceased must pass through to be either qualified to enter the other world or not qualified. Spells 18 and 20 of the Book of the Dead illustrate a pictorial representation of that trial.



**Fig.9.** Icon of the Archangel Michael holding a scale in his left hand, 18<sup>th</sup> century, Coptic Museum.



**Fig.10.** The weighing of the heart against Maat in the judgment scene before Osiris from the tomb of Menna. Theban Tomb 69 (photograph by Charies F. Nims, Oriental Institute)

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<sup>12</sup> Hany, N., El-Weshahy, M., "Horus, the son of Osiris." *Minia Journal of Tourism and Hospitality Research MJTHR* 3, no. 1 (2018): 276-315. pp.276,277.

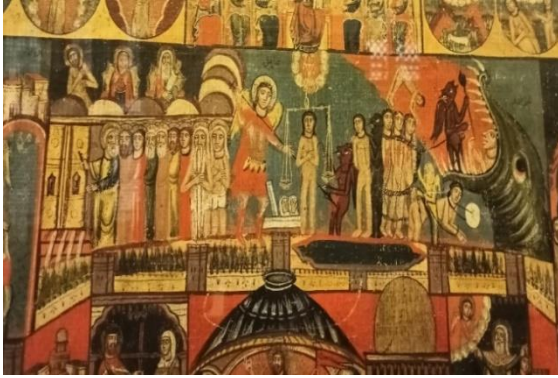
<sup>13</sup> Foy, S., Bryce, K., *Book of the dead: becoming God in ancient Egypt*. The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 2017. p. 23.

<sup>14</sup> Stadler, Martin. "Judgment after Death (Negative Confession)." *UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology* 1, no. 1 (2008). pp.1,2.

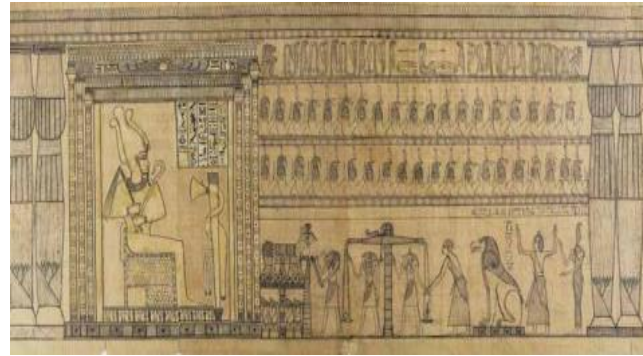
<sup>15</sup> Foy, S., Bryce, K., *op.cit.*, p. 58.

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The scene of the trial represents the presenting of the deceased to the judgment hall by either the deity Anubis, Tut, Maat, or the goddess of the West. The heart of the deceased is placed on one of the palms of the scale, the other a feather is placed, and a predatory beast stands ready to punish the deceased whose heart is heavier than the feather because this means that he is not justified. The deity Thoth records the result, and Osiris sits on the throne as chief judge, in addition to 42 judges. And the deceased addresses those judges by their names, then the deceased denies committing sins such as theft, adultery, and murder, as he admits that he acted in his life by the Egyptian cultic prescriptions, and according to Maat. Those confessions shed light on ancient Egyptian moral standards<sup>16</sup>.



**Fig.11.** Icon (known as the Jerusalem icon), 18 century, Coptic Museum



**Fig.12.** The judgment scene from the Book of the Dead papyrus of Irtyuru showing Osiris painted in yellow to represent gold. OIM E10486J= Cat. No.15 (D. 13333).

## MATERIALS AND TECHNIQUES

### SYCAMORE WOOD

In ancient Egypt, trees were associated with different deities, so the sycamore tree was associated with the goddesses Nut, Isis, and Hathor, who was known to be the lady of the sycamore tree.

The sycamore tree was important to the ancient Egyptians, and this can be seen either from the depiction of the sycamore tree on the walls of the tombs or its mention in many ancient historical religious texts. This was due to the belief of the ancient Egyptians that the sycamore was sacred to the goddess Hathor and also a manifestation of the goddesses Nut and Isis and also goddess Hathor, and that the sycamore tree provided food for the deceased, so the scenes abounded on the walls of the tombs that contained the sycamore tree, which was usually planted in the gardens surrounding the swimming pools<sup>17</sup>.

The goddess Isis, appearing to Sennedjem and his wife in the sacred sycamore, and providing them with water, bread and lotus flowers, burial chamber ceiling, Tomb of Sennedjem, also known as TT1 tomb, dating back to the reign of Rameses II, Deir el- Medina, Theban Necropolis (**Fig.13**)

<sup>16</sup> Stadler, Martin. *Op.cit.*, pp.1,2.

<sup>17</sup> -Azzazy, Mohammed f., and Azza Ezzat. "The sycamore in ancient egypt: textual, iconographic and archaeopalynological thoughts." *liber amicorum–speculum siderum: nūt astrophoros* (2016): 209-220. pp.209,210





**Fig. 13.** The Ancient Egyptian vision of Paradise: The sycamore tree was venerated as the dwelling place of the goddesses Hathor, Nut and Isis, and was associated with rebirth

The Book of the dead, chapters 52-63 are intended to ensure air and water to the deceased and as a symbol of fresh air or wind, the deceased is often represented with a great sail. The deceased prays to the god Turn for a breath of sweet air to his nostrils, and to the goddess Nut for a drink of pure water "O, Sycamore of Nut," he says, "give me the air and the water that is there" In chapter (52 A), Turin Papyrus, (British Museum, 10477, sheet 11), "The horned gods will ask me where would you. (I) want to eat and I answered under the sycamore tree, The goddess is depicted in chapter 59 as a woman emerging from the trunk of the tree while presenting food and water to the deceased <sup>18</sup>.

The Byzantine and Crusader icons made at the Mount Sinai workshop and those imported from Byzantium – are, exceptions notwithstanding, painted on elegant, integral panels fashioned from wood not indigenous to Egypt. Icons produced locally in the Nile Valley are predominantly painted on sycamore panels and can thus be easily recognized. Heavy, roughly fashioned boards reminiscent of pharaonic-era woodwork are therefore attributed to Coptic carpenters.

The reverses of these local sycamore panels in the Nile Valley are coated with a layer of white plaster with a striking design of wavy brushstrokes in pink-brown and grey-blue hues, already familiar from Sinai. Not surprisingly, the Greek Orthodox community still possesses Byzantine icons and has a small museum in the Greek patriarchate in Alexandria. Among Byzantine icons, brought there from the Greek Orthodox Monastery of St George in Old Cairo, five panels have wavy ornamentation.

The presence of the same decoration on sycamore panels, undoubtedly made for and Copts, is worthy of our attention because it suggests their cooperation with the Greeks; in that period, contacts were sustained between the workshops of the Nile Valley and Sinai. Coptic sycamore boards would have been extremely heavy to transport additional corroboration of their local provenance<sup>19</sup>.

A good example of the phenomenon is the special reverence which Egyptians paid to the Sycamore fig tree from ancient times. The majority of wooden art works – such as sarcophagi, mummy masks (**Fig.14**) and Fayoum Portraits – from the Pharaonic and Graeco-Roman periods appear to be made from sycamore timber. The tradition remained so strong that most Coptic icons are painted sycamore, representing an earlier heritage. It had a practical aspect as well: no other indigenous tree, e.g., tamarisk

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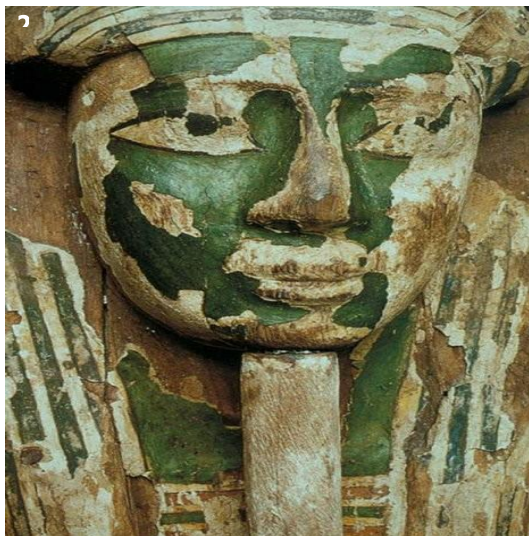
<sup>18</sup> - Abdelhamid, T. (2017). Tree Goddess Scenes in the New Kingdom Private Tombs at Thebes. *International Journal of Heritage, Tourism and Hospitality*, 11(3 (Special Issue)), 103-120.

<sup>19</sup> - Skalova, Z., & Gabra, G. *Icons of the Nile Valley*. Egyptian International Publishing Company Longman. (2006), pp.61.



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or acacia, would have supplied durable wood in planks of sufficient length for the construction of any sizeable object, but the intrinsic sanctity of the sycamore tree in Egypt is undisputed<sup>20</sup>.



**Fig.14.** The mummy and the sarcophagus of Pa Sheri en Aset (Museo Archeologico di Genova Pegli, Italy)

Source:<file:///C:/Users/hp/Downloads/PreservationConservationOfMummies.pdf>, April 2023

Sometimes, the preparatory layer was composed of two distinct sub-layers, the inner one being gypsum mixed with coarse calcite and sand and the outer one is of fine gypsum only<sup>21</sup>.

Romano-Egyptian mummy portraits have conventionally been divided into two groups according to binding media, described as tempera (implying an aqueous medium such as glue or egg) or wax (specifically beeswax)<sup>22</sup>

Egypt is the classic land of mummification. In Pharaonic times, the mummified and wrapped body was at first covered with a mask bearing the stylized features of the deceased before being placed in a rectangular wooden coffin. By the end of the Middle Kingdom, anthropoid coffins appeared, shaped like the mummy, with modelled hands and facial features, presumably developed from the earlier mummy -masks. The deceased, identified with Osiris, God of the Underworld, hoped to participate in Osiris resurrection. Many of these wooden coffins were painted with elaborate scenes of rituals, or with the figures of protective deities.

In Graeco-Roman times, mummy -cases were extensively made from cartonnage, manufactured out of plastered linen or papyrus. Cartonnage coffins were richly decorated and the modelled facial features become less God-like and more human. From the period between the first and the fourth centuries AD, instead of modelled facial features, some of the mummies were provided with a more portrait like representation painted on a wooden board. These were inserted either into the anthropoid coffin in place of a modeled head, or into the mummy wrappings themselves, so that the deceased appears to be looking out of a window at the viewer. There are indications that the mummy was sometimes kept upright on view for a time before the burial<sup>23</sup>

<sup>20</sup> - Skalova, Z., & Gabra, G., Op.cit.

<sup>21</sup> -Sakr, A. A., Ghaly, M. F., Abdulla, M., Edwards, H. G., & Elbashar, Y. H., A new light on the grounds, pigments and bindings used in ancient Egyptian cartonnages from Tell Al Sawa, Eastern Delta, Egypt. *Journal of Optics*, 1. (2020).

<sup>22</sup> - Svoboda, M., & Cartwright, C. (Eds.). (2020). *Mummy portraits of Roman Egypt: emerging research from the APPEAR project*.

<sup>23</sup> . Skalova, Z., & Gabra, G., Op.cit.

## LINEN (FLAX PLANT)

The Majority of ancient Egyptian textiles are of linen which is made from the bast fiber, flax. The Egyptians used linen from Pharaonic times onward. Linen was preferred because it is durable and strong. Egyptian mummies were wrapped in linen (**Fig.15**) because it had been seen as a symbol of light and purity and as a display of wealth. Some of these fabrics, woven from handspun yarns, were extremely fine and the fineness of the threads in them cannot be produced even today on spinning machines<sup>24</sup>

the flax plant (*Linum usitatissimum*); the fabric woven from its fibres is known as linen. In the Near East, Egypt was so well-known for its production of huge quantities of linen fabrics with diverse qualities<sup>25</sup>



**Fig.15. The using linen in Egyptian mummies**

In the icons the textile was glued to the wooden support over the rifts between irregularly cut planks; doing so strengthened the adhesion of the ground and paint layers. In Egypt, where many textiles survive from all periods, it is possible to compare fabric applied on icons with those produced for other purposes. Weaving techniques, materials (linen, cotton, jute and hemp), Colours and patterns have parallels with other extant fabrics<sup>26</sup>

In general, in the most of icons in the world we noticed that the painters used the linen as an underlayer for the ground (**Fig.16,17**). This underlayer is very important, for it binds the ground more firmly to the panel. Protects the panel from splitting, and when it begins to warp, prevents the ground from flaking off<sup>27</sup>.

Linen decorated by metallic threads and ornaments were a unique type among archaeological textiles through the historical ages<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> -Al-Gaoudi, H. A., Painted ancient Egyptian mummy cloth of khonsuemreneop from bab el-gasus excavation: Scientific analysis and conservation strategy. *Scientific Culture*, (2020).

<sup>25</sup> - Al-Gaoudi, H. A., & Aly, N. M., The Characterization of Some Ancient Egyptian Funerary Linens from the Twenty-First Dynasty Discovered in the Bab El-Gasus Excavation. *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, 107(1-2) (2021)., pp 115-116.

<sup>26</sup> - Skalova, Z., & Gabra, G. *OP.cit.*

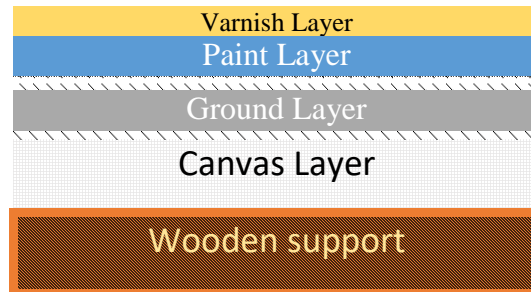
<sup>27</sup> - Ouspensky, L., & Lossky, V., *The meaning of icons*. St Vladimir's Seminary Press. (1982). Pp.53

<sup>28</sup> -Fahim, N. F., & Ahmed, S. M., N-Isopropylacry Amide Nanogel for Surface Treatment of Corroded Copper Ornaments associated on Coptic Linen. *Egyptian Journal of Chemistry*, 65(12), (2022). .

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**Fig.16.** The Saint Joseph icon,19<sup>th</sup> Century, Virgin Mary Church in Haret Zuwaila,Cairo (Photography by Emil Henin)



**Fig.17.** The Structural of Saint Joseph icon,19<sup>th</sup> Century, Virgin Mary Church in Haret Zuwaila,Cairo (By Emil Henin)

### PIGMENTS AND PAINTING METHODS

Egyptian artists usually decorated houses with striped dadoes; palace ceilings, floors, and walls were painted with elaborate designs and representations. Artists also painted the walls of temples and tombs, wooden and stone statues, and the surfaces of coffins, boxes, and furniture. Such surfaces were usually covered with a ground of mud plaster, gypsum plaster, or gesso, on which the designs were drawn and colored. Painted scenes and symbols of events in the afterlife were integral parts of funerary papyrus scrolls. Pigments were made from various natural substances. Red and yellow generally came from ocher, found in abundance in the desert. White was often made from 57 gypsum, black from soot or manganese. Blue was mostly an artificial pigment called “Egyptian blue.” This was made by heating a mixture of ground desert sand, natron, and a copper compound such as malachite. The resulting calcium copper silicate frit (a grainy substance on the way to glass) was also used to create beads, small vessels, and figures. Yellow added to the blue frit produced green, which could also be ground malachite. To make paint, these substances were ground into powders and mixed with water to which a binder, such as a vegetable gum, was added to make the paint adhere to the surface<sup>29</sup>.

In speaking about icons pigments; Pigments were obtained from natural or refined sources, mineral (stones, clay) or organic (juices and insect). The range of pigments on most icons from the last two Millennia indicates that those locally available to Coptic workshops were limited to ochres, orpiment yellow, azurite blue, malachite green, minimum and cinnabar red, lead white and charcoal or bone black. Expensive imported lapis lazuli or ultramarine blue is found only rarely on icons in the Nile Valley but was used on icons painted at Sinai.

The binding substances enable that mixing of pigments ana their application to a support. Other than wax, which ceased to be utilized in the Middle Ages, egg (the yolk, the white or both), animal or vegetable glues (e.g., gum Arabic) and oils were used. Each tempera painting technique had it own characteristics, procedure and costs.

The warm wax technique, known as encaustic, was difficult to master and costly, but durable. Tempera dries quickly; this method thus has its artistic limits. The paint can be applied in primary colours, one over another in separate layers and brushstrokes. The first layer is the darkest and the last

<sup>29</sup> - Kent Lydecker, The Art of Ancient Egypt, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, PP.75

the lightest. The faces, hands and feet were painted in two stages – a mixture of greens superimposed with light modelling highlighted with red and white touches on an eyebrow, pupil, nose, even if the inner corner of the eye. Additionally, the contours of the face would be enhanced with dark and red outlines<sup>30</sup>.

Where we notice in the icon of Jesus Christ at the Saint Mercurius Church in Tamouh, Giza, Egypt that the painter has used inorganic pigments such as lead white, ultramarine blue and red lead, in addition to use the egg yolk as a binder<sup>31</sup>

## **CONCLUSION**

Considering Coptic art as an extension of ancient Egyptian art is due to the Coptic art's use of the artistic and aesthetic values of ancient Egyptian art, and the Coptic artist's keenness to be like his predecessor, the ancient Egyptian artist, in his resort to simplification, brevity, symbolism, and the use of religious concepts and beliefs in his works, even the technique of art and the materials that They were used by the ancient Egyptian artist such as inorganic pigments, binders, Sycamore wood and linen.

Therefore, Coptic art is a reflection of what society inherited from its ancient Egyptian ancestors and its preservation of the Egyptian identity, the most important characteristic of which is religiosity. The best example of this is what was represented and preserved for us by the icons.

Also ancient Egyptian art, which Coptic art preserved by retaining many of its features, influenced other arts such as Greco-Roman and Byzantine art.

This research paper clarified this isential influence, as it included examples that are distinguished by the characteristics of the Egyptian identity, such as the use of artistic symbols, beliefs, or the technique of painting icons.

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