

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR COPTIC STUDIES

NEWSLETTER

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NEWS

Linda Hagen

THE ICONS IN THE COPTIC MUSEUM

In May 1986 a co-operation between the Department of Early-Christian Art of Leyden State University and the Netherlands Institute of Archaeology and Arabic Studies in Cairo on the one hand and the Center of Coptic Studies of the Coptic Museum of Old-Cairo (director Dr. Gawdat Gabra) on the other hand was realised in order to take part in the project of the General Catalogue that concerns the icon-collection of the museum. In November 1986 the work on the inventory of the collection started, supervised by Prof. P.P.V. van Moorsel from the University of Leyden and executed by the writer with the assistance of Mr. H. Hondelink and with the help of the curators of the Coptic Museum.

At present, some preliminary results can be given.

The collection consists of 214 icons and related objects (hereafter called: 'icons') of which 57 are exhibited in the vitrines of the museum and 157 are kept elsewhere, mainly in the basement of the museum. The icons show a wide variety in style, theme and date.

Several icons show Greek characteristics and are probably from the Greek mainland or the Greek islands or painted by Greek artists in Egypt. Others are unquestionably painted in a Coptic style, others again show a mixture of different styles.

The themes are based on the Old and New Testament or are derived from hagiography, the majority showing representations of the Holy Virgin Mary or martyr-themes, especially soldier-saints.

Although it is impossible to give already detailed information about the date of the icons (the majority of the icons are not dated), it seems that most icons can be ascribed to the 18th and 19th century. Exceptions are a double-icon and a part of a wooden panel which probably have a pre-Iconoclastic date.

It is interesting to note that several icons form part of a series, which are, unfortunately, mostly incomplete. Additional icons of these series can sometimes be found in the neighbouring Coptic churches. Till now especially the churches of St. Mercurius (Abu Saifain) and Al-Mu'allagah provided supplement. This also gives us an idea about the place of origin of some of the icons of the Coptic Museum.

In addition, the churches provide information about the original setting of the icons of the Coptic Museum as some of the icons in the churches are still in situ.

Not only additional icons have been found, several icons from the churches or from the collection of the Coptic Museum can be ascribed to the work of one painter or perhaps a workshop of icon-painters. It is therefore of certain importance that through the icon-project of the Coptic Museum the attention is also drawn to the collections of the Coptic churches. As our knowledge concerning the workshop of icons is very scarce, this project can be seen as a starting-point for their scientific exploration.

#### Literature:

Simaika Pasha, M.H., A brief guide to the Coptic Museum and to the principal ancient churches of Cairo, Cairo, 1938.

Habib, R., The ancient Coptic churches of Cairo, a short account, Cairo, 1967.

Cocquin, C., Les édifices chrétiens du Vieux-Caire, Cairo, 1974.

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Paul van Moorsel

#### COPTIC WALLPAINTINGS-DISCOVERIES IN BARAMOUS

Two years after the sudden death of Jules Leroy (+ 1979) his work on the Coptic Wallpaintings could already be continued. The first result has been a manuscript on the Paintings in St.-Anthony's Monastery, including a chapter on the architecture (by Dr P. Grossmann) and a section on liturgical and monastic garments (by Mr K. Innemée). This manuscript has been delivered to the Director of the I.F.A.O. in January 1987.

Meanwhile we are writing the final text on the Paintings in St.-Paul's Monastery, where - with the help of Dr R.-G.

Cocquin - an important date for one of the Medieval Painters could be discovered; A.M. 1050!

During work in the church of the Holy Virgin - in Summer 1986 - also in Deir el Baramous (Wady-n-Natroun) Paintings came into light: three layers in a subsequent order. The upper layer, till now only preserved on parts of both walls of the central nave, shows riding and standing saints, all in a pink colour. The quality of these paintings is not overwhelming. In the main apse the well-known double-these shows the skill of a painter on the second layer, who probably must have been working here after the Middle Ages. Important fragments of the first and oldest layer can be traced at both sides of the main apse, in the Southern Haikal and at the Southern side of the central nave. Near the main apse, top right, a scene of Abraham and Melchisedech and - below - the upper parts of six standing Apostles show the skillful design and the bright colours of the first Master. From the two rows of standing saints (partly preserved) in the Southern Haikal till now - thanks to an inscription - only Saint Barsam the Naked could be identified, which gives us a terminus post quem for the first layer, because Barsam died in 1317 A.D. Another surprise have been the important remnants of a Christological cyclus on the Southern wall of the central nave, with - from left to right -: the Annunciation, the Visitation, fragments of one or more not yet identified scenes, the Entry of Christ onto Jerusalem and another scene with Apostles. At a lower level two huge Crosses, one painted above the other (that means: from different Masters) and in the second intercolumnium on the South side the lower part of a standing Archangel came into light. These discoveries surely deserve a rather quick action and we hope that, with the approvals of both civil and ecclesiastical authorities, our work will continue and will be of some use for the rescue of this part of the Coptic Heritage.

I hope to be able to inform the readers of this Newsletter later about our plans concerning the Paintings in both Monastery-Churches on the West Bank near Sohag.

STATEMENT

We hereby state that the "Society for Coptic Archaeology", 2800 Wisconsin Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20007, U.S.A., is not a legally constituted society, but consists only of Dr. Leslie S.B. MacCoull herself, and the opinions expressed by her do not in any way represent those of the Société d'Archéologie Copte, 222 Sharia Ramses, Cairo, Egypt, and his undersigned president, nor those of the International Association for Coptic Studies, 24 via F. Civinini, I-00197 Rome, Italy, which is officially linked (point 8 of I.A.C.S.'s statute) with the Société d'Archéologie Copte (Cairo).

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Prof. Tito Orlandi  
Editor and Treasurer of the International  
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ANNOUNCEMENT FOR THE COPTIC NEWSLETTER

Professor Gerald M. Browne is pleased to announce that he is now ready to accept contributions for the Journal of Coptic Studies/ Revue d'études coptes, Vol. 2. Like its predecessor, the Bulletin de la Société d'Archéologie Copte, the new journal is published by the Société d'Archéologie Copte in Cairo. It is under the auspices of the International Association for Coptic Studies.

The editor welcomes contributions from the entire area of Coptic studies. He will determine the suitability of each article for publication after he consults with his Editorial Board, the members of which are:

Peter Grossmann (Cairo)  
Bentley Layton (New Haven)  
Paul van Moorsel (Leiden)  
Tito Orlandi (Rome).

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\* Rodolphe Kasser: Der Lanzenstich Joh 19,34 im Triadon 487

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\* Hans Quecke: Ein Brief als Textzeuge für den mittelägyptischen Dialekt des Koptischen (P. Mich. Inv. 525)

\* Hans-Martin Schenke: The "Tautological Infinitive" in Coptic: A Structural Examination  
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B.L. Carter, The Copts in Egyptian Politics, Mirrit Boutros Ghali

Obituaries / Necrologies  
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