

Ordinary Lives, Changing Times
The Third International Symposium on Coptic Culture
Coptic Orthodox Church Centre, U.K.
5-7 June 2015

Under the Care of H.G. Bishop Angaelos

Friday 5 June 2015

- 08:30-09:00 Speaker Registration
- 09:00-09:15 Mariam Ayad, Introductory Remarks
- 09:15-09:30 Bishop Angaelos, Welcome Address
- 09:30-10:00 Louay Saied, The Use of the Cross and Other Christian Symbols among the Muslim Tribes of the Egyptian-Libyan Sahara
- 10:00-10:30 C.T. Rooijackers, *Coptic dress in the past and present: Fitting in or standing out?*
- 10:30-10:45 Coffee Break
- 10:45-11:15 Engy Eshak Hanna, “*She is worth far more than rubies*”: *The bridal dowry in Coptic Egypt through Artifacts*
- 11:15-11:45 Helene Moussa, *Marguerite Nakhla (1908-1977) – Painter of the Mosaic of Daily Life*
- 11:45-12:30 Lunch
- 12:00-12:30 Mariam Ayad, *The Rhetoric of Coptic Women as Seen in Personal Letters*
- 12:30-13:00 Vincent Walter, *Linguistic Change as a Symptom of Social Change: The Evidence from the Late Coptic Letters*
- 19:00-21:00 **Keynote Address & Reception: British Museum**
Prof. Dr. Heike Behlmer, *The Digital Edition of the Coptic (Sahidic) Old Testament - A New Project at the Göttingen Academy of Sciences*

Saturday 6 June 2015

- 09:00-09:15 Mariam Ayad, Introductory Remarks
- 09:15-09:30 Bishop Angaelos, Welcome Address
- 09:30–10:00 Alanna Nobbs, *Documents Illustrating the Diocletianic Persecution of the Christians*
- 10:00-10:30 M. Lois Farag, *Clement of Alexandria on Food, Clothes, Money and a New Christian Social Order*
- 10:30-11:00 Samuel Moawad, *Daily Life in Egypt as reflected in the Writings of Saint Shenoute of Atripe*
- 11:00-11:15 Coffee Break

- 11:15-11:45 Louise Blanke, *Feeding the 4000: Food production and population size at Shenoute's White Monastery*
- 11:45-12:15 Sebastian Olschok & Hannah Sonbol, *Daily Life at Deir Anba Hadra: the Archaeological Evidence*
- 12:15-12:45 Shaza Ismail, *Food and Dietary habits of Egyptian Monks. An Examination of Feeding Practices in Coptic Monasteries*
- 12:45-13:15 Mennat-Allah El Dorry, *Abarka and the Coptic Church: Understanding a Tradition*
- 13:15-14:15 Lunch Break
- 14:15-14:45 Engy Eshak Hanna, *"Take Up the Shield of Faith!" Spiritual imagery on Coptic occupational objects Chronological framework: from the 3rd to the 7th century AD*
- 14:45-15:15 Bishop Epiphanius, *Manual Labor in the Coenobitic Life through the Ages*
- 15:15-15:30 Tea Break
- 15:30-16:00 Magdalena Kuhn, *Was music essential for Copts in the Antiquity?*
- 16:00-16:30 Helene Moussa, *The Martyrs of Maspero by Victor Fakhoury*
- 16:30-17:00 Louay Saied, *The Coptic Studies Center: At Last, Coptology for all Egyptians*
- 17:00-17:45 Discussion Panel
- 18:00-20:00 Speakers' Dinner

Sunday 7 June 2015

- 10:00-11:15 Holy Liturgy at St Mary Le Bow Church, Cheapside, London, EC2V 6AU

Abstracts

The Rhetoric of Women as seen in Coptic Letters

Mariam Ayad

A collection of letters written or dictated by women in the period between the third and eighth centuries AD was recently published.¹ The collection included Greek, Coptic, and Demotic letters, spanning five centuries. The corpus also dealt with a variety of topics. While the editors of the collection were careful to compare some of the letters to later Byzantine epistolic traditions, a similar comparison with the ancient Egyptian corpus is still lacking. This paper examines the issues and language used in Coptic letters written or dictated by women in order to assess whether some of the idioms, expressions, or concerns expressed in those letters may be traced to earlier stages of Egyptian.

Keynote Address:

The Digital Edition of the Coptic (Sahidic) Old Testament - A New Project at the Göttingen Academy of Sciences

Heike Behlmer

The translation of the Old and New Testaments into the classical literary language of Christian Egypt, Sahidic Coptic, from the 3rd-5th centuries, can be considered one of the most important translation projects of Late Antiquity. The Coptic Bible is a unique monument to the intellectual, religious and cultural history of the Eastern Mediterranean and at the basis of the entirety of Christian religious literature and culture in Egypt. As cultural and historical heritage of the Coptic Church, the Coptic translation of the Bible is also a document of outstanding current interest. This importance notwithstanding, a complete edition of the Coptic Bible according to modern standards is still lacking today.

A new long-term project at the Göttingen Academy of Sciences is dedicated to providing a complete digital edition of the Sahidic Old Testament, including the analysis of the entire manuscript tradition, of the relationship between the Sahidic and the other Coptic versions of the Old Testament and of the place of the Coptic tradition within the transmission of the Biblical text. The edition will take place in a virtual research environment to facilitate cooperation with other international projects and scholars. Printed editions and a translation in English, German and Arabic will be directed at scholars from neighbouring disciplines and an interested general public.

¹ R. Bagnall and R. Cribiore, *Women's Letters from Ancient Egypt 300-800 AD* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2006).

Feeding the 4000: Food Production and Population size at Shenoute's White Monastery

Louise Blanke

Recent archaeological work at the Monastery of St Shenoute has produced new evidence for the built environment of the early monastery and the subsequent medieval and recent history of the site. Systematic analysis of the areas south and west of the Church of St. Shenoute has revealed a complex system of buildings and thoroughfares, with associated deposits through which it has been possible to reconstruct the occupational sequences and analyse the use of this part of the site from its foundation until the 9th century.

A detailed study of the architectural remains immediately adjacent to the church has highlighted a transition from industrial zone to village settlement and revealed an extensive complex of structures associated with food production and storage. Of particular importance to our understanding of daily life in the monastery are installations related to cooking, baking and to the production of olive oil. The material culture related to the latter contains no less than five contemporary mills, which combined, would have produced quantities far beyond the needs of the monastery.

Complemented by survey data from the nearby Monastery of St Bishay, and with reference to contemporary sites in the region, this paper offers new perspectives on the organisation of life in a late antique monastery. With a focus on the material culture of production and consumption, this work provides a window into aspects of monasticism so far approached through the written record, and offers a significant contribution to future interdisciplinary research on monastic daily life.

***Abarka* and the Coptic Church: Understanding a Tradition**

Mennat-Allah El Dorry

Red wine served in the liturgy of the Coptic Church is known as *abarka*, from the Greek *aparxe*, meaning first fruits or offering. Traditionally, *Abarka* is said to be made from raisins rather than fresh grapes, though both may be used. Although many travellers' accounts and scholarly literature have mentioned and described *Abarka*, how the tradition of making raisin wine started in Egypt is unknown. How raisin wine came to be the preferred beverage for Coptic mass and liturgy is not at all understood. This paper will explore the history of *Abarka*, and its development.

Manual labor in the Coenobitic Life through the Ages

Bishop Epiphanius

Manual labor was a vital importance in the daily life of monks, whether hermit or common, ever since the outset of the monastic movement, elders claimed work as a must for beginners, first to make a living, second for works of charity, and to ward off the spirit of acedia. Most of the manual labor among the hermits was done inside cells, but in coenobitic communities, there were laws and regulations that rule manual work.

Clement of Alexandria on Food, Clothes, Money and a New Christian Social Order.

M. Lois Farag

Clement of Alexandria (c. 150-c. 215) is considered a pioneer of what we might call "Christian Literature." His most famous writings are *Christ the Educator* and *Salvation of the Rich*. In the *Educator*, he instructs the faithful how to live the Christian life in conformity with Christian teachings. His instructions inform us of his attitude towards food, drink, and clothing. In so doing we get to know the life style of the early Alexandrian elite. In *Salvation of the Rich* he asserts that the rich do not need to give away all their wealth to be saved, but if they use their wealth to provide for the poor they will be saved. Clement's position is a great departure from the Book of Acts' model of renouncing one's possessions and laying it at the Apostle's feet (Acts 4, 5). This paper will discuss how the *Educator* and *Salvation of the Rich* reveals the Alexandrian elite's lifestyle before and after accepting the Christian faith and Clement's vision of a new Christian social order.

"Take Up the Shield of Faith!" Spiritual imagery on Coptic occupational objects Chronological framework: from the 3rd to the 7th century AD

Engy Eshak Hanna

Integrating spirituality in the workplace is a socio- psychological phenomenon that has existed since ancient times until today. Scholars believe that workplace spirituality is driven by an inner desire to live integrated lives, where spirituality nourished people's social and professional lives. With the rise and spread of Christianity, Coptic workers and craftsmen expressed their spiritual beliefs in their workplace. This paper aims to investigate the spiritual beliefs and practices of workers and craftsmen in Late Antique Egypt by exploring their magical and religious practices, as reflected on daily life texts like magical spells, curses, prayers, apprenticeship contracts and daily correspondence. It will also analyze the decorative patterns on Coptic occupational equipment, like spinning whorls, weaving combs, spindles, shuttles, pen cases, counters, boxes and seals. Finally, it will restore both textual and visual representations of Copts' spirituality into their social context, aiming at reconstructing its motivations and ramifications that lie behind the sources.

“She is Worth Far More Than Rubies” The Bridal Dowry in Coptic Egypt through Artifacts

Engy Eshak Hanna

The bridal dowry, or *pherne*, was a gift made by the bride’s parents to their daughter as a contribution in furnishing the marital house. Although, the tradition can be traced back to the pre-Christian period, it survived Egypt’s conversion to Christianity. Dowry lists, marriage and divorce contracts survive from Late Antique Egypt (3rd-7th centuries AD). According to these documents, the dowry consisted mainly of feminine personal possessions, e.g. jewelry, or domestic objects, such as candlesticks. **Such objects were included in, and have been recovered from, female burial sites**, such as the burial of Sabina in Antinopolis. Judging from their marriage-centered decoration, these objects could have once belonged to dowries. In this paper, I aim to explore Coptic artifacts that were once part of the bridal dowry. I will analyze the imagery engraved on these objects and place them in their socio-economic context, by comparing Coptic artifacts with parallels from other provinces, and integrating the relevant literary sources in my analysis.

Food and Dietary Habits of Egyptian Monks. An Examination of Feeding Practices in Coptic Monasteries

Shaza Gamal Mohamed Ismail

The act of eating, and feeding, can be seen in a number of different settings, both sacred and profane. An example of the former is The Eucharist, the central act of Christian worship involving the ritual transformation of the bread and wine into the true body and blood of Jesus Christ. This sacrament is practiced through offering sacred bread and wine to the congregation. An aspect of the profane is where the food was cooked. A common kitchen that was attached to each monastery is the place where food and beverage would be prepared to feed the resident monks, while the refectory is the room in which the monks can take their meals.

To date, only few works have dealt with the feeding practices, types of food, and rituals associated with the act of eating. Previous studies typically focused on mural paintings, icons, monastic and church architecture, studying architectural elements, designs, and plans, often ignoring the normal aspects of daily life like eating and food. This paper sheds light on the role of food and feeding in daily life of the Coptic monasteries with the aim of understanding some aspects related to the daily life of monks.

Was Music Essential for Copts in Antiquity?

Magdalena Kuhn

Nowadays music is an important item for Copts, both in Coptic liturgy as well as in daily life. Coptic people like to sing and to listen to CD’s and tapes with Coptic Church songs and liturgical music.

Even when priests tell us that Hymns are not music but prayers, Copts recognize and remember the texts immediately by listening to the melodies. About music making in the antiquity there are numerous utterances of the church fathers from the first to the fifth century. Did Clement of Alexandria (150-215) really dislike music in church rituals? What was the meaning about music in rituals of other church fathers in Egypt and surrounding countries, and what was the position of women in music making during the antiquity? In my paper I would like to show how people looked at Coptic music in the past and present.

Daily Life in Egypt as reflected in the Writings of Saint Shenoute of Atripe

Samuel Moawad

Shenoute of Atripe (ca. 347-465) is not only a famous saint and abbot but also the most prominent author in the history of the Coptic literature by far. His writings deal with spiritual and ascetic matters as well as with daily problems the poor Egyptians had to face in the fourth and fifth century. His homilies are distinguished through the details they give which hardly to be found in any other Coptic writings. Although Shenoute lived in anchoritism he received people from various social levels and helped them to find a solution for their problems. Daily life troubles were often the subject of his Sermons trying to give his audience motivation to change their life. The writings of Shenoute also give some details of the daily life of his fellow monks in particular before he became their abbot. He tells elaborately the circumstances accompanied his new responsibility in the monastery. Therefore, his literary heritage became an invaluable source for writing the history of the Coptic monasticism. In my paper I will present some examples from the writings of Shenoute which deal with the daily life of Egyptian laymen as well as with monks and nuns to show how Shenoute depicted such events in his own words and to give a picture of the Egyptian society in that time based on sources at first hand.

Marguerite Nakhla (1908-1977) – Painter of the Mosaic of Daily Life

Helene Moussa

This paper will discuss a range canvases by Marguerie Nakhla that reflect not only the wide scope of subject matter but also the mosaic of life in the period of history she lived in. While many of her paintings were of rural and popular areas such as market places, she did not limit herself to a particular social class or region of Egypt. Nakhla's canvases also express a remarkable sense of awareness (and presence) of the world around her. She was also able to communicate with her brush the "other side" of events such as what happened to Nubian villages when the Aswan Dam was built or the return of refugees after the 1967 war. Her "secret" was her ability to turn her

canvases into a stage on which people move with spontaneity. Her aim was to relate an “anecdote” and also to “provoke a thought... an idea.”

The Martyrs of Maspero by Victor Fakhoury

Helene Moussa

The Martyrs of Maspero, now in St. Mark’s Coptic Museum (Canada), is the second in a series of narrative icons — five to date — in which Victor Fakhoury has sought to record the events that affected the Church in Egypt following the popular uprisings unleashed by the 25 January 2011 revolution. This series of icons is an innovation that totally departs from classical iconography in that it narrates a sequence of contemporary events in the life of the Coptic Church.

While Fakhoury is loyal to Coptic traditional iconography’s two-dimensional representations, intensity of colours, stylized lines, oval-shaped faces, black lines surrounding almond-shaped eyes, and the use of gold leaf to evoke the Divine Light, he is also a contemporary Coptic artist, influenced by modern movements, such as cubist and abstract art. Above all, his art recalls the imagery of his ancient Egyptian artistic heritage. He incorporates these ancient representations with traditional Coptic themes. In this way, ancient Egyptian artistic heritage “nourishes” contemporary art. This icon is particularly striking because it is replete with ancient Egyptian imagery as a way of emphasizing the historical roots of Egyptian Christianity. The focus of this presentation will be to “unpack” these ancient Egyptian symbols and Fakhoury’s spiritual message.

Documents Illustrating the Diocletianic Persecution of the Christians

Alanna Nobbs

A number of papyrus Documents survive from late third and early fourth century Egypt, illustrating on a day to day level how the Diocletianic persecutions affected the churches and the lives of ordinary Christians. This paper will look at these, in the light of some recent modern discussions challenging their interpretation and implications.

Daily Life at Deir Anba Hadra: The Archaeological Evidence

Sebastian Olschok & Hannah Sonbol

The monastery of Anba Hadra in Aswan is one of the best preserved medieval monasteries of Egypt. Its remains attest to its former importance during its usage from the 8th to the 15th century. The extant walls of the church and domestic buildings bear different Coptic and Arabic inscriptions. Even after the abandonment of the monastery, passing pilgrims left their inscriptions

and graffiti, changing the monastery's function from a monastery for hermits to a popular visitors' area.

This paper focuses on recent archeological discoveries of the site, including the economic complex of the monastery and discusses aspects of daily work and production of the monks that once inhabited the monastery of Anba Hadra.

Coptic Dress in the Past and Present: Fitting in or Standing Out?

C.T. Rooijackers

Dress is one of the ways through which we present ourselves and through which we categorize others. This paper examines how Christianity and a sense of community influenced Coptic dress practices in Egypt throughout the centuries. Based on the wealth of surviving textiles from burials, it highlights a number of trends in the period from the third until the thirteenth century, including the use of crosses, Biblical scenes, and lines of Christian text (*tirāz*). It discusses the relation between these trends and the 'changing times' in which the Christians in Egypt found themselves. In general, although Christian symbols were used on some garments, dress was *not* used to distinguish oneself as a Christian. This matter is also discussed in relation to the textual evidence regarding sumptuary laws (*ghiyār*), imposed from ca. the ninth century onwards. Finally, a comparison is drawn with dress practices among the Copts in contemporary Egypt.

The Use of Cross and Other Christian symbols among the Muslim Tribes of the Egyptian-Libyan Sahara

Louay Saied

The Sahara region, which extends from the western banks of the Nile of Egypt to the desert area of eastern Libya, is characterized by the presence of inhabited oases. The communities living around water springs in this huge area form deeply rooted ancient tribes whose presence in the area pre-dates the emergence of Christianity and Islam in Egypt or Libya. Remarkably, while all the tribes in both countries are Muslim nowadays, they extensively use the sign of the cross and other Christian symbols, such as the fist. These symbols appear as decorative elements, ornamenting feminine garments, jewelry and containers. The cross is often tattooed on the wrist, exactly as the Christian Egyptians do nowadays. Surprisingly, some members of these Muslim tribes bear the names of Christian saints as Girgis, Botros, etc., and other similar names, which, elsewhere, are exclusively used by Christians.

Using historical and anthropological approaches to this phenomenon, this study attempts to trace the origins of these habits, which stand in stark contrast to Islamic dogma, and examines their

ancient and modern significance through field survey and contextualizing the art and heritage of these tribes, placing their unique use of Christian symbolism in a socio-historical context.

Linguistic Change as a Symptom of Social Change: The Evidence from the Late Coptic Letters

Vincent Walter

In the centuries after the Arab Conquest in 642 CE, Egypt went through a long period of change—politically, socially, religiously, and also linguistically. A process had begun which would eventually lead to the all but complete disappearance of the native Egyptian language in the 13th century CE. After that time, its latest stage, Coptic, managed to survive as a liturgical language only—much like Latin has in the Roman Catholic church of the West—but not as a productive language of every day life. Arabic had surpassed it in that respect.

Though they have not received much scholarly attention so far, the Coptic letters written on paper—roughly dating to the 10th to 12th centuries CE and now scattered throughout all major papyrus collections worldwide—are an important corpus for the study of this period. They are the closest thing there is to the spoken vernacular of Egypt just before the “language death” of Coptic, and the investigation of their contents can help to enhance our understanding of Egyptian society at that time. This paper aims to present an overview of the language and style of these texts and how they differ from their earlier counterparts, as well as the linguistic and social motivations behind these changes.