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THE FLORA AND FAUNA ON METAL LIGHTING EQUIPMENT IN COPTIC MUSEUM AT CAIRO

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Abstract

This article deals with the floral and animal symbols, elements, and decorations on metal lighting equipment in order to highlight their religious symbolism and decorative significance in Coptic art. The article first considers floral decorations such as the branches and leaves. It then focuses on the use of birds such as roosters and wild animals like lions. It finally discusses marine animals such as the fish and dolphin.

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1. Introduction

Lamps are usually decorated with many symbols, elements, or motifs. Some lamps have floral decorations, while others carry bird or animal ornamentations. Yet lamps in the shape of animals are more frequent (Bénazeth 1991, 8-9). Scholars often attribute the use of animal and bird symbols in this period to several reasons: first, animals and birds were used as secret symbols among the early Christians, who escaped from religious persecution waged by the Roman emperors throughout the history of the empire since the advent of Christianity until after the official recognition of Christianity. Second, the animal or bird symbol was an easy and quick way to learn the principles of the new religion and to determine the nature of the faith. Third, it is through the symbol that believers and worshippers can experience the mystery and secrecy evident in the creed (Scott 1913, 18; Daoud 1987, 149; فيشر 10، 1998؛ 4، 2004؛ فادوس 226 - 227، 2009، بهي الدين).

Symbolism in Coptic art can be viewed as an artistic concept that resulted from the embrace of ancient Egyptian artistic traditions by Christian artists. The hostile political situation during the first centuries of Roman rule against all what was Christian made the artists commit to concealment and then resort to symbolism. The spread of Christianity was a means for the spread of symbols. One of the aesthetic values of Coptic art is to penetrate into the inner content of the image or symbol and not just looking at its outward appearance. It is through symbolism that art succeeded in devising a new method in dealing with the ancient Egyptian and Graeco-Roman cultural and artistic heritage. Artists managed to merge ancient Egyptian and Graeco-Roman arts and Christian religious thought, resulting in the emergence of a new art with many special features that were not available in any of the arts that preceded it (بهي الدين 2009، 373-374).

Since the third century AD, various types of birds and animals have been used in Coptic art. Many of these creatures were borrowed from ancient Egyptian or Graeco-Roman art. The use of each of these animals was for a symbolic purpose as some animals are quoted from the Bible, notably the lamb and the lion. In most cases, there is no fixed or specific meaning for animal or bird symbols, because they have always been subject to the personal preference of artists. In many cases, the context determined what kind of bird or animal should be represented. It appears that Coptic artists followed no fixed rule in the depiction of animal or bird elements. Yet one can easily notice that paganism was often depicted in the representations of animal struggle in the form of savage animals, and this idea is well shown in Coptic art (9 أحمد 2018). The next section will highlight the different types of floral decorations shown in metal lamp equipment and the symbolism associated with each type.

In the last decades, a number of studies have begun to explore the topic of lighting in Christian art and architecture from different perspectives. In 1964, George Ferguson, in a book entitled *Christian Symbols and Their Significance*, has briefly considered the symbolism of various forms in Coptic art, without fully addressing the objects on which these decorations were depicted (فيرجسون 1964).

In her 2001 study on *Catalogue général du Musée Copte du Caire/ Objets en metal*, Dominique Bénazeth presented a general catalogue of the metalworks in the Coptic Museum. She has classified metal objects into the metal holy books, household tools, adornment tools, church keys and monasteries, in addition to metal lamps.

However, she has not touched upon the topic of the symbolism of the decorative elements in such metal objects (Bénazeth 2001).

In 2007, in his book *The Treasures of Coptic Art in the Coptic museum and Churches of Old Cairo*, Jawdat Gabra has explored the treasures of Coptic art in the Coptic Museum and the churches of ancient Egypt, where he generally explained some of the objects in the museum and some of the archaeological elements in the churches of ancient Egypt in Cairo (Gabra 2007).

In 2009, Duaa Bahey El-Din has discussed the symbolism and its implications in Coptic Art as well as the reasons that led to the spread of symbolism in the ancient Egyptian society. She also dealt with symbolism in wall painting, sculpture, tapestry, and other works of art, without considering metalwork (2009 بهى الدين).

In 2010, Maria Xanthopoulou, in her book *Les lampes en bronze à l'époque paléochrétienne*, addressed bronze lamps from the early Christian period and explored many examples from various places without fully taking into account the symbolism of the different shapes found on these objects (Xanthopoulou 2010).

In her 2016 article "The Types of Ornamentations in the Coptic Art", Al Shaima Hassan considered plant and geometric motifs, the symbolism of numbers, the symbolism of animals, and other symbols in Coptic art in general without taken into consideration metalwork (Hassan 2016).

In 2016, Basma Khalil has considered the stereoscopic lamps from Egypt in the Roman period". She has dealt with a group of lamps called stereoscopic that appeared during the Hellenistic period and continued in use down to the end of the Roman period. She has presented a thorough archaeological study on the three-dimensional shapes, which were classified into five sub-patterns after identifying the methods of their manufacture, places of production, and the purposes for which they were carried out (2016 خليل).

In 2012, Nashwa Sadeq has explored the indications and meanings associated with symbols and imaginary shape metaphors in Coptic art. She conducted a special classification through using symbols consistent with the Christian religion. She also classified the uses of some imaginary shapes that appeared in the Coptic arts. This has been achieved through selecting, analyzing and describing some works to assert the role, shape and meaning of symbols and imaginary shape metaphors in the Coptic art (2012 صادق).

In 2020, Shahira Hashem has presented an archaeological study and an analytical description of some models of lamps with human faces in the Greco-Roman Museum in Alexandria and the Egyptian Museum at Cairo (2020 هاشم).

In 2022, Doaa Fadel has considered the effects of using animal and bird symbols in Coptic and Greco-Roman art, where she described the symbolism of these forms on some artifacts made of different materials and found in various places and museums (Fadel 2022).

So far, there is no comprehensive study on metal lighting equipment preserved in the Coptic Museum in Cairo that date back to the Roman period (30 BC-AD 640)

from an archaeological and artistic perspective. The research problem is summarized in the following questions:

What are the shapes and symbols associated with Coptic metalwork in Coptic Museum at Cairo?

Have the shapes and symbols associated with Coptic metalwork in Coptic Museum at Cairo been influenced by the earlier forms of arts?

What are the symbolic connotations and meanings associated with decorative elements and symbols in Coptic metalwork in in Coptic Museum at Cairo?

It is the aim of this study to achieve the following objectives:

- 1- Highlighting the importance of metalwork in Roman Egypt and the different techniques and materials used for making metalwork.
- 2- Classifying the different types of floral and animal representations and elements on metal lighting equipment and exploring the symbolic connotations attached with these forms and motifs.
- 3- Investigating the geometrical decorations and figural representations on metal lighting equipment and the symbolism associated with them.

In order to achieve these objectives, this study follows different methods. First, a comprehensive catalogue of all metal lighting equipment of the Roman Period, which is found in the Coptic Museum of Cairo, will be built to form the database for analysis. Also, a field trip to the Coptic Museum at Cairo will be conducted for investigating the collection of metal lighting equipment and for taking photographs. Finally, the study will extensively uses all relevant literature and other theoretical works available in the libraries of museums, churches, and monasteries in addition to online sources and literature.

The Coptic Museum is located within the antique fortress called “Babylon fortress” in an area containing many of monuments of the historical periods. The place is perhaps linked to the beginning of the rise of Christianity. The Coptic Museum is one of the biggest and most important museums in the world, containing many monuments and art pieces of the Coptic church that have no parallel in any other museum in the world with various materials like stone, textile, manuscripts, wood, ivory, pottery and glass, etc. in addition to metal Lighting Equipments which represent an important part in the exhibition of the Coptic museum (Gabra et al 2013, 246).

From the Dynastic period and down to Roman times, the ancient Egyptians created a variety of metalwork objects that are now exhibited in different museums around the globe, including a large amount of jewelry associated with queens and women as ornament. While high-temperature industries are male-dominated, "domestic" works such as weaving, potters, or blacksmiths are often dominated by women. Numerous types of metals have been used in the manufacture of metalwork in Greco-Roman Egypt, notably bronze and copper. These types of metals provided the main source for the manufacture of light equipment in the Greco-Roman period, including chandelier, candlesticks, lanterns, and lamps.

Casting sequences appear in Egypt very early, probably in pre-dynastic times, but certainly from the VI Dynasty (2420 to 2258 BCE). Representations of charcoal and blowgun melting, crucibles, manipulation and pouring are clearly detailed: circa 1500 BCE. Spinning vases: Some commentators have debated whether the wheel

could have evolved from the bow drill or the potter's wheel. These tools certainly existed before 2000 BCE in Egypt, as well as the chariot wheel around 1500 BCE. They are turning devices, but there is no evidence that Egyptian craftsmen used the principle for the development of the lathe until the 3rd century BCE (Devries et al 1980, 5).

Bronze lamps are very rich in decorations and inscriptions, and they were only for the wealthy class due to their high price. The same well-known methods were used to carve statues and metal utensils in the manufacture of lamps, namely hollow casting, solid casting and hammering, and solid casting is known in the manufacture of bronze lamps (Richter 1915, XVII-XVIII; 244 -243 ,2007 شاهين; 5 ,2020هاشم).

2. The Floral Decorations

2.1. The Plants and Fruits

2.1.1. The Branch

Fig. 1 Lamp



Inventory No.:1612

Dimensions: H.11.6 cm; L. 18.3 cm; W. 6.4 cm.

Material: Copper metal.

Technical: Cast iron; welding.

Provenance: Unknown.

Date: Byzantine period.

Description:

There is cylindrical foot with protruding line in its end; the nozzle represented as concave disc around the wick hole (nozzle); hinge at the back of the feed hole (reservoir); in front of the hinge, there is the hole of the reservoir that contains the oil. The handle is shown as a fistful of vegetable foliage comes out of a rectangle welded to the back of the lamp; the stem divides into two branches.

Bibliography: Bénazeth 2001, 103; Xanthopoulou 2010, LA 3.232.

The artist used branches to symbolize important figures. The Bible mentions the importance of branches, where Jacob said while blessing his children: "Joseph [is] a fruitful branch, [even] a fruitful branch of a well; [whose] branches run over the wall. Branches were metaphorically used to represent the nations and the Bible, it mentions the words of the prophet Ezekiel regarding Pharaoh: "Son of man, say to Pharaoh king of Egypt and to his hordes... his boughs multiplied and its branches grew longer because of the abundance of the waters when it sprang up. All the birds of the sky nested in its branches, and under its branches all the beasts of the field gave birth to their young, and under its shade dwelt all the great peoples." So he was beautiful in his stature, in the length of his branches: for his root was in great waters" (Hassan 2016, 5).

2.1.2. The Palm Leaves

Fig. 2 Lamp



Inventory No.: 5193

Dimensions: H. 15.9 cm; L. 17.6 cm; W. 8 cm.

Material: Copper metal.

Technical: cast iron; welding.

Provenance: Unknown.

Date: Byzantine period.

Description:

There is broaden/ splay foot, decorated with parallel lines, above the foot there is the reservoir. At the end of the lamp there is broad beak with a hole for the insertion of the wick; protruding edge around the feed hole of the reservoir, with hinge for the lid; The handle is shown as two large, pointed, curved leaves which stuck on the sides of the reservoir; it represented as foliage curved leaves, connected twice by an axial element; the lower one has a fixing hole for a décor shaped as a leaf; the one on the top has a double ring, from which tendrils is sprouting; one of the principal scrolls ends with a cavity intended to receive another ornament (the symmetrical one is broken).

Bibliography: Bénazeth 2001,101.

The palm leaf is considered a very common symbol in Coptic religion, symbolizing victory in general or the victory of martyrs over death in particular. The Palm Sunday in the Coptic Church is the Sunday before Easter. Traditional handicrafts using palm branches are used with many folk songs being sung as the work is done. Through this celebration, the Church commemorates the entry of the Lord Jesus into inner Jerusalem to establish his kingdom and gather everything to himself (Sharafeldean 2019, 10-11).

2.1.3. The Pomegranate

Fig. 3 Handle of lamp



Inventory No.: 5214

Dimensions: H. 11.2 cm; L. 10.5 cm; W. 11.6 cm (dimensions taken by placing the object in its original position).

Material: Copper metal.

Technical: Cast iron; welding.

Provenance: Unknown.

Date: Byzantine period.

Description:

The main stem started from the back of the lamp; it branches into two branches, which are connected twice, by an element adorned with a pomegranate (at the top) or a palmette with three pearls (front); leaves and buttons are born from the foliage.

Bibliography: Gayet 1902, fig. 296; Bénazeth 2001,104.

The pomegranate can be found in lamp fig. 3. In Graeco-Roman mythology, the pomegranate was used as an attribute of Proserpina¹, where it symbolized her regular return to earth in spring. The symbolism of the pomegranate in Christian art, that is the hope of immortality and resurrection, is derived from this pagan symbolism of the return of spring and the rejuvenation of the earth. Due to its many seeds, the pomegranate was also a symbol of fertility. Equally importantly, the pomegranate similarly alludes to the Church due to the inner unity of countless seeds in one and the same fruit (Ferguson and Ferguson 1961, 20).

The pomegranate plant symbolizes the firmness of faith, similar to the thick outer skin of the pomegranate, the white inner membrane symbolizes the purity and purity of the believers, and the blood-colored pomegranate juice is a symbol of the blood of the martyrs and the blood of Christ, peace be upon him, In Coptic art, the pomegranate symbolizes the church and symbolizes fertility and the abundance of offspring The compact pomegranate kernels, and the thin inner casing of the pomegranate, which separates the kernels, has a special symbolism (أبو بكر 99-98 ,2011).

3. Birds

Birds exist in several lamps. Any winged bird in classical Roman art symbolized victory. Wings similarly were associated in Christian art with angels, and thus birds were heavily used in Christian symbolism (4-1) حزقيال - العهد القديم; Ferguson 1955, 6; Cirlot 1971, 38; Biedermann 1992, 39).

Birds were also used in the early days of Christian art as a symbol of winged souls. The birds representing souls are considered one of the main features of Coptic art, based on an ancient Egyptian belief about the nature of the human soul that was expressed as the *ba*-bird (Evans 2012, 4; 161 ،1995 الملطي).

¹ Proserpina was the Roman queen of the underworld and consort of Dis, the Roman god of the underworld. The Romans believed that Proserpina had power over plant cultivation and revered her as a goddess of spring. Proserpina was an ancient goddess of Italian origin. The people of Rome honored her and Dis in games that were held roughly every 100 years. Some scholars see in Proserpina the simple translation of the name Persephone, a Greek goddess, daughter of Demeter and Zeus, who was kidnapped by Hades, the Greek god of the underworld, to become his wife. Other scholars identify Proserpina with the ancient Greek goddess Hecate, who in some tales becomes Persephone's companion in the underworld (Daly 2009, 123).

3.1. The Rooster/ Cock

Fig. 4 Lamp shaped like a rooster



Inventory No.: 5189

Dimensions: H. 13 cm; L. 14.2 cm; W. 6.1 cm.

Material: bronze or copper metal.

Technical: Cast iron; engraving; stamping; welding.

Provenance: Luxor.

Date: Byzantine period/ IV-V centuries.

Description:

This lamp shaped cock bird, there are three feet, two in the front and the other at the back, the head is perfectly performed that represented as projecting eyes, large crest treated in seven hatched lobes; two baleen under the head, rings behind each eye and another ring at the end of the crest with chain for suspension. At the back of the neck, there is triangular feed hole with hinged lid for receiving the oil, another suspension ring with chain at the back of the reservoir, on the each side of the body, there are two wings raised, feathers figured by small incisions in an arc. At the back of the lamp which is the tail, represented as circular nozzle for lightening the wick.

Bibliography: 594 ,1995 بسطا و مسيحه; Xanthopoulou 1997, LA 19.030; Bénazeth 2001, 152.

The rooster was among the first types of birds to appear in funerary representations in the tombs and catacombs. Various meanings have been given to it in different positions where it was placed; in a sense, he was considered an emblem of vigilance and alertness due to the well-known habits of vigilance and alertness associated with the bird. Whenever it appears in connection with St. Peter, it means repentance, and often forms one of the emblems of passion. The rooster was also considered by early writers as the image of the faithful preachers of the gospel, which proclaims the true light to men (Twining 1885, 372).

The rooster has always been a solar bird, a symbol of the planet and the light that is born, and the rooster crows even before sunrise, and thus it was thought of as a symbol of vitality, and its crowing was a sign of the dispersal of the cult ghosts during the night. The rooster in Christianity represented St. Peter, who denied Christ three times before the rooster's morning. The conflicts of the roosters had their place in many different countries, and they were familiar in Greece (سیرنج 1992، 186-184).

3.2. The Peacock

Fig. 5 Lamp



Inventory No.: 7373

Dimensions: H. 11.5 cm; L. 13.6 cm; W. 3.8 cm.

Material: Copper metal.

Technical: Cast iron; engraving or stamping.

Provenance: Unknown.

Date: Byzantine period/ 13th century/ IV-V centuries.

Description:

This lamp shaped peacock bird, at the bottom, there is oval foot, molding, passes through a square sleeve under the oval foot for positioning on a candelabrum, the legs are indicated in relief under the wings and along the base, above the foot, it is reservoir decorated with wings feathers, feed hole with hinged lid on the back to receive the oil, and the decor of the wings continues on the lid. At the back of the hinge, it is right side of the head and neck damaged; triple egret on the head; eye etamp and small beak. At the end of the lamp, there is the tail that gives way to the wick, shaped a nozzle which uses for insertion of the wick, circular nozzle, around it a notch.

Bibliography: 596 ,1995 بسطا و مسيحه; Xanthopoulou 1997, LA 19.057; Bénazeth 2001, 148; Xanthopoulou 2010, LA 15.055; Mahmood 2005, 43.

The peacock appeared in Greco-Roman material culture as a mythological symbol. The circle that the peacock makes when it displays its feathers is closely associated with the rainbow and its goddess Iris. The peacock was also the companion of Hera, goddess of the sky. The peacock was her favorite and sacred bird. The peacocks face each other on artifacts from the time of Augustus. The peacock is said to have been a favorite dish of the Roman emperors. It has become an important symbol of the resurrection of the body. This is why it played an important role in Christian art and artifacts. Equally importantly, the peacock was sometimes depicted on the architraves and lintels of churches as a symbol of paradise. Similarly, it is frequently represented on funerary stelae to evoke the idea of the resurrection of the body (Habib 2019, 12-13).

The peacock also appeared as one of the emblems of the resurrection; but other than that it was also used to represent Christians in general or religious saints. In that sense, the head of the peacock is sometimes surrounded by the cloud. The idea of using the peacock as the emblem of pride and vanity, because of the splendor of its plumage and its beautiful wings, is of much later date (Twining 1885, 372).

3.3. The Dove

Fig. 6 Lamp



Inventory No.:5198

Dimensions: H. 10.3 cm; L. 15.5 cm; W. 6.3 cm.

Material: Copper metal.

Technical: Cast iron; engraving; welding; inlay of glass paste.

Provenance: Old Cairo (after Boulaq, 1885).

Date: Roman or Byzantine period/ IV-V centuries.

Description:

This lamp takes the shape of the colobus (dove) bird. At the bottom, there are normal legs above it, or at the back of the lamp there is a reservoir which contains a triangular feed hole, with a hinged lid that uses for receiving the oil, and three rings placed at the

birth of the wings and at the point where they meet; chains of suspension, two holes in the beak; a broken ring; only one piece of the chain of suspension remains At the top of this lamp, there is the head is turning to the left; several plumage; eyes inlaid with blue glass paste; little round salient behind each eye; recess between the two parts of the beak of the bird. At the end of the lamp, it is a tail shaped a circular nozzle that uses for insertion of the wick.

Bibliography: Xanthopoulou 1997, LA 19.022; Bénazeth 2001, 149; Mahmood 2005, 41.

In Christian art, the dove symbolizes purity and peace, and one finds in the Law of Moses that the dove is considered pure and for this reason the dove is used to denote purity and was used as an offering for purification after the birth of a child. The dove is used in Christian art in abundance to symbolize the spirit (فيرجسون 1964 , 41-40). For this reason, Joseph is often shown carrying two white doves in a basket in scenes of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple. As an emblem of purity, the dove sometimes appears on top of Joseph's rod to show that he was chosen to be the husband of the Virgin Mary (Ferguson and Ferguson 1961, 9).

4. Wild Animals

Some Ptolemaic kings and queens had visited the sites of Egyptian sacred animals. Additionally, there are images of many Roman emperors offering sacrifices to sacred animals. The depiction of sacred animals on coins had political and religious purposes. This indicated the ability of the Roman emperors to control the land of Egypt, especially since the emperors ruled from Rome. Greco-Roman society accepted the use of a coin in the shape of an Egyptian sacred animal. Therefore, the ancient society has sanctified these animals. Sacred animals were also depicted on coins with Roman emperors, which is another expression of the sanctification of animals in Egypt through the Roman period. During the Roman period, the practices and beliefs of sacred animals in Egypt continued throughout the Roman period and disappeared with the rise of the Christian religion (Aglan 2013, 48, 50-52).

With the advent of Christianity, which was automatically willing to accept embodied or visible elements to explain the missing ideological and ritual elements, these symbols found a place and gained acceptance and approval to emphasize those concepts. The new belief that spread to most of the regions of Egypt through Alexandria and brought with it these marine symbols which help in its interpretation and thus these elements found acceptance in the inland regions of Egypt which are completely away from the sea and unaffiliated there with or regional navy (قادوس 3-2 , 1998 ; 255 , 2009 بهي الدين).

4.1. The Horse

Fig. 7 A Candelabrum



Inventory No.: 5185

Dimensions: H. 36.5 cm; L. 15 cm; D. plate 10.5 cm.

Material: Cuprous metal.

Technical: Melting; engraving; welding.

Provenance: Unknown.

Date: Byzantine/ 6th-7th centuries AD.

Description:

In the lower part of candelabra there are three feet in the shape of a horse snarling on a pedestal, which also joins the long undulating (wavy) tail; the legs are joined together; the head is turned to the right; the mane bears notches; a small point between the ears is a tuft of horsehair or a horn. The lower limbs, not detailed, are connected to the central disk, which bears, between the animals, three palm leaves; motifs as palmettes and animals. The central disk supports the candelabra and joins the horses together. The middle part is designed as a tubular pillar that is divided into superimposed parts which are connected together with alternative rings. At the top there is a circular plate looking like a tray with a concave edge.

The theriomorphic feet of other Egyptian candlesticks depict felines, dolphins and horses. Here the projection between the ears of each breeding steed suggests that they are unicorns, imaginary animals known from other media in Coptic art. Their tails sway down to join the bases on which their hind legs balance. The palms between the feet of the front legs serve to reinforce the support foot.

Bibliography: Xanthopoulou 1997, CD 6.079; Bénazeth 2001, 54; Mahmood 2005, 45.

In Greek art, the horse often appears with the god Poseidon, the god of the sea, while the white horse appeared in Roman art to drive the solar chariot of Apollo, but in Christianity the horse symbolizes the sun, courage, generosity and self-control and appeared with many saints, the most important of them St. Georgios. The horse was taken as a symbol of the victory of the martyr, and the white horse was taken as a

symbol of Christ's victory, while the red horse symbolized murder or death, and the black horse symbolized famine, while the green horse symbolized disease or epidemic (العهد الجديد - سفر رؤيا يوحنا اللاهوتي 6: 2-8، 11-؛ العهد القديم - سفر زكريا 14:20، 5:10، 2:6، 1:8؛ Cooper 1978, 86).

The horse is one of the most common animals shown in Coptic art, where it appears as a symbol of lust. From the 6th century onwards, saints and monks were often depicted on horseback, with one or both arms raised to hold a weapon or as a sign of blessing (Fadel 2022, 37-38). In the Renaissance, the horse was most often depicted as a symbol of lust (فيرجسون 1964، 38؛ Ferguson and Ferguson 1961, 12).

4.2. The Bull

Fig. 8 Lamp



Inventory No.: 5197

Dimensions: H. 7.8 cm; L. 15.5 cm; W. 7.4 cm; Chain 8 cm.

Material: Copper metal.

Technical: Cast iron; engraving; welding.

Provenance: Edfu.

Date: Roman or Byzantine period.

Description:

This lamp shaped like a seated bull, consisted of four legs, reservoir, head, two spouts, broken tail and ring with chain. At the bottom, there are two hind legs folded, the left passing under the body to approach the right; the front legs are replaced by two spouts as nozzles for the wick, the tail is broken. There is a circular reservoir with rim for receiving the oil without lid, the serious head is fine performed, contained ring with uncompleted chain at S-links, small eyes, ears and mouth. The frontal legs represented as spouts or nozzles for illumination of the wicks performed like two cylindrical tubing.

Bibliography: Bénazeth 2001, 154.

Similarly, the bull occupied a central position in the Greco-Roman world. The worship of calves spread in Egypt during the Greco-Roman era, especially the worship of the calf, Apis. Memphis is the main center for the worship of Apis, as his worship there was associated with the worship of the god Ptah, where one priest was appointed for the daily service of each. The Ptolemaic kings paid special attention to

the worship of the calf Apis, where they participated in the rituals of coronation of the new calf in the Holy of Holies in Memphis. They were also keen to participate in the ritual burial of the calf in the desert of Memphis. The worship of Apis was associated with the worship of Serapis, the main deity of the Ptolemaic Kingdom, where Serapis became the Hellenistic synonym for the deceased calf, Apis. Interest in the worship of the Apis calf continued by the Roman emperors, both inside and outside Egypt. The importance of Apis during the Greco-Roman era added to him some funerary characteristics, as his images spread in the graves of the Greco-Roman era as a funerary deity (Omran and Zouair 2014, 14).

In Coptic Art, the bull symbolizes sacrifices and Christ, who sacrificed for the good of humanity. The bull also symbolizes patience and strength. The winged bull symbolizes St. Luke because he cares about Christ's sacrifices for the salvation of humanity. Hence, the bull became a symbol of Christ and is used to indicate all those who work silently for the good of others. The winged bull was a symbol of St. Luke and an emblem of the salvation of mankind, patience, and strength (أبو بكر 2011، 96; Fadel 2022, 44, 68).

4.3. The Lion

Fig. 9 Lamp censer



Inventory No.: 5196 and 5217

Dimensions: H. lion 14.5 cm; H. total 20 cm; L. 23.6 cm; W. 5.9 cm.

Material: Copper metal, iron.

Technical: Cast iron; engraving; stamping; welding.

Provenance: Unknown.

Date: Byzantine period/ 4th-5th centuries AD.

Description:

This lamp take shape standing lion, it consisted of reservoir, censer, suspension rings and nozzle. At the bottom, there are four legs, some feathers on the body, fine performed head with two rings placed in the open mouth, eyebrows and ears and

suspension rings on the head and rump. In front of the head, coming out of the chest, there is a large nozzle for illumination, at the back there is triangular feed hole with hinge for lid, a chalice-shaped censer with a hinged lid presenting an openwork scroll and a cross ending in a ring that it simply reproduces the usual form of censers with a chain.

Bibliography: Xanthopoulou 1997, LA 17.003; Bénazeth 2001,155.

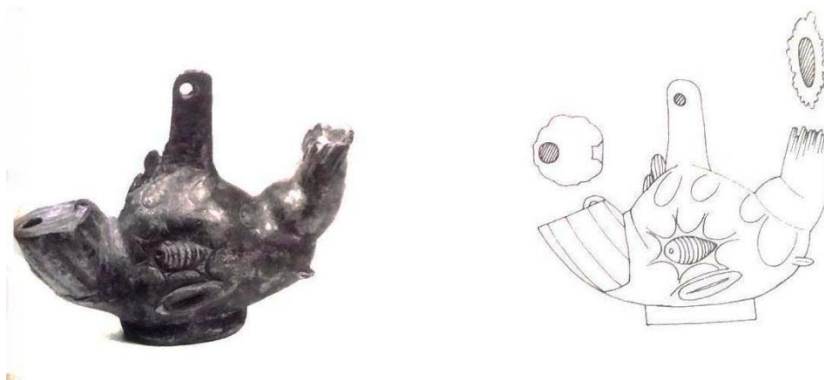
In Greco-Roman Egypt, images of lions could be used as guardians of tombs or other important places. Lion parts were highly valued as ingredients in medicine. Hercules is one of the immortal heroes of Greece who fought with the lion who suffered evil from the Greeks and symbolizes courage and daring. It was a symbol of strength, power, protection, and guard; lion amulets were associated with royalty, evil, and courage. The lion in Roman sculpture was a symbol of evil (سيرنج 86, 97, 101, 1992; Fadel 2022, 26-28, 69).

Lions are common in Coptic Christian art, especially in textiles, wood, and stone. One of the main symbolic meanings of the lion was the resurrection, as it can articulate more than others the resurrection of Christ, so the lion often accompanies Egyptian saints and hermits. The lion symbolizes St. Jerome because he is said to have a painful thorn in the foot of a lion, and became a faithful friend of him. The lion is also associated with the four incorporated creatures. The winged lion was a symbol of the savior Jesus Christ and paradoxically was a symbol of the enemies of Christians (Fadel 2022, 40-41, 67).

5. Marine Animals and Nautical Icons

5.1. The Fish

Fig. 10 Lamp



Inventory No.: 5898

Dimensions: H. 7.6 cm; L. 9.8 cm; W. 3.8 cm.

Material: Copper metal.

Technical: Cast iron; engraving.

Provenance: Unknown.

Date: Roman period.

Description:

This lamp is unique in shape, take shape dolphin-reservoir; it consists of foot, reservoir, nozzle and ring. At the bottom, there is oval foot, above it dolphin-shaped reservoir for containing the oil, at the body of the reservoir, there are some motifs like eyes, fins and fish shape in between the tank, feed hole in the tail for receiving the poured oil; small hole of wick at the edge of the flat disc closing the beak; at the opposite of this hole, ring on the back, ring with hole for suspension.

Bibliography: Xanthopoulou 1997, LA 18.007; Bénazeth 2001, 156.

The use of fish was common in Greco-Roman art. In Greece, the fish was one of the properties of the goddess Aphrodite to express the fertility of the sea from which this goddess was born. The fish was considered a purely religious symbol, as it is the oldest symbol that expressed Christ, and the fish also symbolized resurrection and immortality and was a sign of acquaintance between Christians in the days of persecution (Cooper 1978, 68; 69 1998، قادوس).

The fish seems to have been used as a symbol of Christ in a lower sense than the previous ones, since it is never represented with the nimbus, but it was undoubtedly considered a sacred symbol in the early periods of Christianity. Saint Augustine and Tertullian both speak of the fish as a symbol of Christ, In the New Testament, many fish accompanies the miracle of the doubling of bread, then, in a measure that represents the food of the Eucharist, so fish is one of the two elements which the Lord has given as food for the multitude to satisfy them (Twining 1885, 79; سيرنج 1992, 212; 160, 158, 1995 الملطي).

5.2. The Dolphin

Fig. 11 Chandelier holder



Inventory No.: 7683

Dimensions: H. 9.7 cm; L. 12 cm; W. 4.6 cm.

Material: Copper metal.

Technical: Cast iron; engraving.

Provenance: Unknown.

Date: Byzantine period.

Description:

The chandelier itself is missing, this is the holder of it, shaped dolphin body, protruding eyes and open mouth, some notches in his stomach, at the bottom is his bent hands, and extended tail ended with ring.

Bibliography: Bénazeth 2001, 196.

The dolphin received special attention in the Greco-Roman myth, as it represented the supernatural powers of the sea as it appeared in the myth of Dionysus as a savior of sunken ships. It was also associated with the goddess of love Venus and the sea god Poseidon and with the god Apollo, who disguised in the form of a dolphin to transport the people of Crete to Delphi, which is the same city in which the famous temple of the god Apollo was built. Hence, Apollo was nicknamed Apollo-delphinus. The dolphin was associated with the goddess Aphrodite as a symbol of benevolence, good luck, and protection for sailors (Biedermann 1992, 99; 255, 2009 بهى الدين; Fadel 2022, 70).

The dolphin is portrayed in Christian art more frequently than any other fish. Generally, it embodies resurrection and salvation. Considered to be the strongest and swiftest of the fishes, it was often shown bearing the souls of the dead across the waters to the world beyond. Depicted with an anchor or a boat, it symbolized the Christian soul, or the Church, being guided toward salvation by Christ. It frequently represented the whale in the story of Jonah. This, in turn, led to the use of the dolphin as a symbol of the resurrection and also, though more rarely, as a symbol of Christ (Ferguson and Ferguson 1961, 9).

5.3. The Shell

Fig. 12 Reflector of lamp



Inventory No.: 5881

Dimensions: H. 12.1 cm; W. 9.4 cm; D. 5.3 cm.

Material: Copper metal

Technical: Cast iron; welding

Provenance: Unknown.

Date: Byzantine period.

Description:

The reflector take shape a shell, the shape of the shell is divided into equal diagonal lines and hinge ring in the frontal side, at the rear side of the reflector, there is annular handle and spiral stem.

Bibliography: Bénazeth 2001, 115.

The origin of the conch comes from Greek mythology of Aphrodite that is closely related to the elements of moisture and water. The Coptic painter replaced Aphrodite with a painting or engraving of a cross, and that the cross in her place is a sign of the new birth of a new religion, and sometimes the artist's body voluntarily paints the charity alone or within it a precious pearl radiating from the center of the cochlea, where the pearl experiences its symbolic costume in its posthumous resurrection as a sign for Christ risen from the grave (صادق 2012 ، 22-21; Fadel 2022, 54).

The shell is one of the symbols of the resurrection or the soul because it remains after the animal, as the soul remains after it leaves the body. Hence, the decorations with many shells came on some of the first Christian monuments, and the shell was like pearls the emblem of love and marriage in Greece, India and everywhere, the shell is a symbol of fertility. Likewise, it is present in many religious rites, and in agricultural and dedication ceremonies (سيرنج 1992 , 222-221). The next chapter will discuss the different geometrical decorations and figural representations shown in metal lamp equipment and the symbolism associated with each type.

6. Conclusion:

Symbolism played a central role in Coptic art, where it is considered one of the most important elements in such art. It clearly expresses the culture of the ancient Egyptian society. The symbols in Coptic art are different from the symbols in any other art. Some of these symbols resort to the symbol to express the idea inherent in the mind of the artist, while others deliberately mixed the symbol with reality.

The use of symbols to express religious personalities and ideas was the most suitable method for the early Christians in the Roman Empire. The artists symbolized matter with the least lines and outlined the symbols. They cared about the spiritual meanings more than the physical form of the elements.

Animals and birds played a central role in Christian religion and symbolism. The occurrence of animal and bird representations exceeded the decorative nature of such elements for these symbols heavily carried metaphorical connotations in Christian religious world. There are symbols that came related to connotations related

to the idea of redemption, and others that expressed the form of the soul and represented purification, as well as plant and animal symbols that the Coptic artist took and turned some of them into sacred symbols.

The Coptic artist used to decorate the lamps by floral decorations like branches that symbolize important figures. It represents the nations and the Bible as well. He also used the palm leaves to decorate the lamps as a sign of triumph and victory.

Birds exist in several lamps like the rooster that represents the passion and vitality while the peacock is used as a symbol of immortality, eternity and the resurrection. The dove appeared in some lamps referring to purity and peace.

Wild Animals have a prominent place in Coptic art as the horse, the bull and the lion. The horse is the most common animal used in decoration in several lamps. It depicted as a symbol of lust but the bull used as an emblem of the salvation of mankind, patience, and strength and the lion was considered one of the most important animals by which the Coptic artist symbolized Jesus, who was “the lion coming out of the tribe of Judah,” as mentioned in the Book of Revelation.

Marine Animals is widely used in Coptic art as the fish, the dolphin and the shell. The fish is the most frequent symbol to be used which represents the Christ. This is because the five Greek letters forming the word 'fish' are the initial letters of the five words: Jesus Christ God's Son Saviour' (*ichsus*). The dolphin is portrayed in Christian art more frequently than any other fish. Generally, it embodies resurrection and salvation.

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