



## The Iconography of Weapons in Coptic Paintings from the Fourth Century till the Thirteenth Century AD

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### ABSTRACT

Weapons, particularly the spear, lance, sword, and the protective shield appeared on a great scale in Coptic paintings as early as the fourth century onwards. These scenes are usually found on the walls of churches and monasteries, in which the military saint appears, riding his horse, carrying a spear in his hand, stabbing one of the enemies. Moreover, archangels were frequently depicted with spears and swords in their hands. Weapons were also depicted in Biblical scenes inspired from the Old Testament particularly scenes of the Massacre of the Innocents, the conflict of David with Saul and Goliath and the sacrifices of Abraham and Jephthah. Rare hunting scenes show bows and arrows as weaponry tools. However, prior research had shed light on these scenes without analyzing the iconography of every weapon in detail. Recent studies did not examine the parallels and contrasts between the depicted weapons nor the concept of every weapon. From this point on, the significance of this study is undeniable in that it approaches the concept and iconography of weapons in Coptic paintings according to the context and artistic iconography. The present paper aims to study and analyze the artistic features of weapons illustrated in Coptic paintings. Furthermore, the paper aims to study the context of the depicted weapons to approach the concept of every weapon in detail. The study also analyzes the accompanying body postures of the weapon's carrier and his opponent and their symbolism. To approach the earlier aims, a descriptive approach was followed in giving a comprehensive account concerning the origin, concept as well as the iconography of every weapon in detail. Furthermore, the researchers used the comparative analytical approach to trace the similarities and differences between the weapons and to trace the development in every weapon in Coptic art till the thirteenth century AD.

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### 1. Introduction

Weapons were divided into two types; the first type is protective weapons such as shields, helmets, vests, and armguards. The second type is combat (offensive) weapons which also divided into two types: melee weapons, which include spears, swords, daggers, and axes and second type is

ranged weapons which includes bows, arrows, slingshots, and javelin, there is also mechanical war machines such as catapults which used to throw stones and ballista which used to release arrows on enemies (Zahra, 1995, 291).

Different types of weapons were usually depicted in the context of the horseman saint. The Coptic knight was usually portrayed with one hand raising

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a weapon whilst the other apparently holding the reins. The accompanying body gesture was raising the hand in the theme of a battle or a hunt. The depicted weapons are various; they ranged from the long lance, bows and arrows, a short sword, or a double axe. The rider saint was depicted in emblemata in the Coptic tapestry similar to that of the Roman mosaic pavements (Lewis 1973, 29-31). By the beginning of the 6th century AD, the Byzantine horsemen began to be equipped with various types of weapons accompanied with body postures. Raising the hands or the firm seat of the rider are remarkable features of the weapon horsemen (Lewis 1973, 37, 51).

Weapons, particularly the spear, lance, sword, and the protective shield appeared in the paintings of the military saints in the early Coptic era. It is one of the important scenes that is usually found on the walls of churches and monasteries, in which the military saint appears, riding his horse, carrying a spear in his hand, stabbing one of the enemies, and the divine hand extends to him with the wreath, a symbol of victory over the forces of evil. The iconography of the warrior saint (Girgis<sup>1</sup>, Tadros, Botros, Abu Sefein) killing any animal symbols of evil powers is mainly originated from ancient Egypt. The iconography of military saints with a weapon killing a dragon continued in contemporary Coptic Icons.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, remarkable paintings of the monastery of Saint Anthony at the Red Sea represent various shapes of weapons whether in the hands of the saints or involved in biblical context.

D'Amato studied the weapons which were depicted fresco paintings at Deir Abou Hennis.<sup>3</sup> Fresco paintings at Deir Abou Hennis are one of the essential sources to study the Late Roman infantry in Egypt including their weapons (D'Amato 2018, 113-114). However, it should be considered that the Roman soldiers were not similarly equipped in all regions of the empire. This was due to many factors, climatic diversity, local impact, and the lack of the concept of the military uniform. Moreover, the weapons of the soldiers differed according to their ranks and specialties (D'Amato 2018, 114). In addition to Roman soldiers and military saints, weapons were depicted in the other contexts in the Coptic art. Biblical scenes stand for various types of weapons. Moreover, archangels were often depicted with spears and swords in their hands. In rare examples, paintings standing for

hunting scenes frequently show the figure of the bow and arrows.

Despite informative sources of illustrated weapons in Coptic art, prior research had shed light on these scenes without analyzing the iconography of every weapon in detail. Recent studies did not examine the parallels and contrasts between the depicted weapons nor the concept of every weapon. From this point on, the significance of this study is undeniable in that it sheds light on the concept and iconography of weapons in Coptic painting according to the context and artistic development.

### 1.1 objective of the study

The main aim of this research is to context of the depicted weapons to approach the concept of every weapon in detail, other objectives will contribute to:

- Study and analyze the artistic features of illustrated weapons in Coptic paintings.
- trace the artistic development in depicting every weapon in detail from the early Coptic paintings till the end of the thirteenth century AD.
- Analyze the accompanying body postures of the weapon's carrier and his opponent and their symbolism.
- Trace the accompanying weapons and hand objects of the carrier of the weapon.
- Examine the parallels and contrasts between the depicted weapons to analyze their different concepts according to the context of every scene.

## 2. Methodology

To approach the study's aims, the descriptive approach was followed in giving a comprehensive account concerning the origin, concept as well the iconography of every weapon in detail. Furthermore, the researchers used the comparative analytical approach to trace the similarities and differences between the weapons and to trace the development in representing every weapon in Coptic art from the fourth century till the end of the thirteenth century.

## 3. The Types of Weapons in the Coptic Paintings

### 3.1 The Spear

The spear *χονταριον, χοντος, δορυ (sarissa, contus, longa, hasta, akontia, doratia, zybinnoi, missilia, specula, veruta)* which was carried of the royal military commander (*hasta summa imperii*) was the symbol of supreme power in the Roman army.

After that, it was used as a hand insignia for the late Roman emperors reflecting their superior military leadership (D' Amato, 2018, 107; Wessel, K.1973-1975, 416). The length of the spear is 2.5 M. It consisted of a metal blade takes the shape of a leaf, wooden body and sometime at the back end there is a metallic part to make the spear stick in the ground.<sup>4</sup> (Zahra291, 1995).

The spear was clearly involved in the context of the crucifixion of the Christ. According to the Gospel (John 19:34), after Christ died on the cross, one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear and at once blood and water came out. (Jones, T., Murray, L., et. al, 2013, 250).

– *The Spear in Biblical Scenes*

In one of the rarest scenarios represented in Coptic art in Egypt, the spear appears as one of the weapons in a number of representations of David and his conflict with Saul and Goliath. A scene from the David cycle that decorates Chapel 3 at Bawit represents David facing Goliath. In his left arm, a basket of pebbles is suspended. In his right arm he holds a long stick to face Goliath who appears here as a bearded man, dressed in military clothes. He holds a spear in his right hand ready to attack David with it. In his left arm, he holds a decorated armour (Fig.1) (Clédat, 1904, 20).

In the chapel III at Bawit, the artist depicted king Saul seated on the throne with an inclined back. In his right hand, the king brandishes a spear above his head. Facing Saul, David is depicted a haloed standing man playing with his lyre (Clédat, J., 1904,19) (fig.2).

The first scene of the Massacre of Innocents at Deir Abu Hennis (Clédat 1902, 49, pl. I; D' Amato 2018, 106-107.) shows king Herod sitting on a military field-chair (sella); a backless seat provided with cushions. He holds a long spear (kontos, contus, dora) with his right hand and directed to a person he holds with his left hand; a big halo surrounds his body. Behind the king, there is a representation of a temple, or his palace supported by columns with ionic capitals. The architrave bears the name of the king in Coptic ἱροῦθς (Irotis) (Fig.3) (D' Amato 2018, 106-107; Du Bourguet, 1928,533; De Bock W., 1901, pls. 33, 44-50; Clédat, J 1902, 44, 49, 50.pl.I).

– *Spear and saints*

Coptic artwork frequently features military saints and warriors brandishing spears that end in crosses while dressed in military garb. Because it depicts the saints' victory over evil forces and their symbolism, Christian depictions of military saints riding horses and carrying weapons have special significance. And that notion developed during the persecution era after it was first conceived in the early years of the development of Christianity. The ancient Egyptians, who were associated with the worship of the god Horus, had an influence on the subject matter of this illustration. As a result, the Coptic artist represented the warriors as soldiers engaged in a battle to expel bad spirits from the world. Military saints appeared in paintings from the end of the fifth century and the beginning of the sixth century (Finnestad, 1996, 96-97, figs. 11,12, 13).

In the monastery of Apollo at Bawit, there are representations of military martyrs drawn upon a different set of iconographical precedents and themes. The oratory is a small freestanding building with a square plan, low dome, and painted interior. On the west wall, there is a scene of a military saint identified as Saint Sissinius<sup>5</sup>; a local Egyptian soldier (Badamo, 2011, 70; Papaconstantinou 2001, 204-214).

The iconography of Saint Sissinius uses more martial imagery in order to present a slightly different perspective on the metaphorical relationship between monks and martyrs. The artwork of Saint Sissinius depicts spiritual conflict in amazing detail, despite the army saints being seen in both pictures riding horses. Saint Sissinius, who slays the evil Alabasria, stands out as the painting's dominant character (Walters ,1974, 388, pl. 386). In an area filled with tiny creatures and half-human beings that evoke demon forces and wants<sup>6</sup> (McCollum, A,1985). The saint wears a short tunic and leggings of the active soldier and grasps a spear in his right hand and a circular shield in his left one) Badamo, 2011,71(. There is a cross decorated on the outer surface of the shield. At the top of the painting and behind the saint, there is a centaur holding a spear (figs. 4.a.b)) Clédat, J., 1904, 81, Pls LV, LVI.; Bolman 2002 ,92 no6.3; 388).

Saints using spears are often seen assuming combative positions. On occasion, images of two saints facing one another are shown. The saints are depicted in wall paintings at monastic monasteries, such as the Monastery of Saint Antony by the Red Sea, as mounted troops brutally putting down the real-life and mythical enemies of Christianity; Saint George slaying the Jew and Saint<sup>7</sup> Phoibammon<sup>8</sup> slaying Pasicrates (fig.5a) (Badamo, 2011, 5). A similar iconography of two saints with spears is found on the eastern wall of the southern khurus at Deir el-Surian. Both saints are dressed in a scarlet chlamys, or military cloak, over a blue tunic. The right one is directing his spear at an unidentifiable animal. The lower half of both paintings is lost because of the painting being hacked through to make the entranceway between the khurus and the southern haykal (fig. 5b) (Innemée 2016, 10, fig.6).

The equestrian saint slaying a human adversary can be seen in the scene of Saint Claudius of Antioch<sup>9</sup> at the Monastery of Saint Antony. The adversary is a small human figure identified as Diocletian; the emperor responsible for the great persecution of the late third century. The shrine where the saint destroyed the idols, he was forced to worship in his fervour is presumably represented by the building to the right of the horse that has been appointed as the pagan shrine. The tiny man extends his hand in a sign of submission to grasp the spear while pointing angrily in Claudius' direction, calling attention to the strong saint who does the miracle (Fig.6a) (Badamo ,2011, 119, 284, 358).

An almost identical iconography is found through a mural painting from Monastery of the Archangel Gabriel at Fayoum. This painting is Saint Claudius of Antioch slaying Diocletian with his spear.<sup>10</sup> It dates to the 11th century (Fig.6b) (Godlewski 2000, 89-101; Badamo, 2011, 120).

A remarkable iconography of a spear is attested on the southern wall of Deir el-Surian. According to the accompanying inscription in Greek: Ο ΑΓΙΟC [..]ΚΤΩΡ, the depicted military figure is Victor Stratelates. No inscription reveals the identity of the second man. His costume would suggest that he could either be the emperor Diocletian or Romanus, the pagan father of the saint and

governor of Antioch, but according to the legends, Victor never confronted either of the two in a way as represented here. The fact that he has a halo shows that he is king (a saint would be very unlikely here), according to late antique iconography. This led Innemée to suggest that the saint is Mercurius of Caesarea killing Julina the Apostate, but a change of the inscription has changed his identity to that of Saint Victor (fig.7a) (Innemée, 2016,12, Fig10). Regardless minor differences, a similar scene is found in the khurus of the Monastery of Saint Antony at the Red Sea<sup>11</sup> (fig. 7b) (Badamo ,2011,347, fig. 75).

Thirteenth-century theologians interpreted the iconography of Saint Mercurios who was painted in the khurus as a symbol of Noah's ark, since both the church and the ark could be considered ships and symbolically refer to the concept of salvation. Immediately preceding the *hijāb* (iconostasis) and restricted to members of the monastic community, the khurus served as a further partition between the altar and the congregation in the naos (Badamo ,2011, 262; Van Loon,1999,109-124).

In addition to Saint Mercurius,<sup>12</sup> Saint George was commonly depicted as a military saint holding his cross-topped spear in his right hand. He is portrayed slaying various adversaries. For instance, there is an image of Saint George slaying Euchios with his spear. This scene is found on opposite wall of the earlier scene of Saint Mercurius (fig. 7b) just before the *hijāb* (iconostasis) of the Monastery of Saint Antony. Thus, the two scenes integrate each other so that icons of the two saints regarded in Coptic tradition as the heavenly army's two greatest generals flank the haykal (sanctuary) as spiritual defenders (fig.8a) (Badamo ,2011 262, 347, fig. 76).

In another scene in the same monastery, Saint George is depicted holding his spear vertically towards the Jew who is depicted as a diminutive figure lying on the ground (fig. 8b) (Badamo ,2011, 355, Fig. 83). On the north wall of the naos, St. George performs a miracle that recalls the Neomartyrdom of Antony Ruwah, impaling a Jew caught in the hubristic act of stealing church fittings from his shrine, envisioned here as a golden candlestick (Badamo ,2011, 283).

To the right of the painting of Saint George (fig.8b), Saint Phoebammon slays a figure identified in an inscription as Pasicrates, the Roman centurion sent to execute the Christian general (Badamo, 2011, 283). An image of violence, Pasicrates pulls his sword out of its scabbard, the cross-tipped spear of Phoebammon slices through his cheek, spraying blood from the pagan soldier's face (fig. 9) (Badamo ,2011,283, 356, Fig.84).

Nearby, John of Heraclea slays Eutychianos with his spear. He raises a hand in a visual echo of the gesture performed by Diocletian (fig.10) (Badamo ,2011, 284, 359, fig. 87). John of Heraclea directs his spear vertically towards the head of his opponent.

The defeated human figure is replaced with a dragon in other Coptic examples. The representation of Theodore Stratelates provides a remarkable example of the dragon-slayer with his long cross-tipped spear. In the Monastery of depicts Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea, Saint Theodore is portrayed slaying a dragon though a coloured fresco painting which dates to 1232/1233AD. The saint holds a spear with which he impales the head of a serpent crawling on the ground, while a hand descends from the heavens to offer the soldier a crown of martyrdom. The armor, general's sash, and chlamys worn by the saint align closely with Byzantine iconography, while his shield bears an Arabic inscription that ornaments the rim and connects the image to the local visual culture (fig.11.a) (Walters 1989, 193-196, Pl. XVIII, Pl. XX; Badamo ,2011, 117-118).

The same iconography of Saint Theodore<sup>13</sup> as a dragon slayer is found in an earlier example through a tenth-century painting discovered in an unidentified building at Tebtunis in Fayoum region of Egypt (fig.11.b).<sup>14</sup> A particularly close parallel can be seen in the painting of Saint Claudius at the Monastery of the Martyrs in Esna. This remarkable fresco painting which dates to 1179/1180, shows the warrior saint on horseback, with two hands descending to offer crowns, while the saint impales a small figure (fig.11.c) (Badamo ,2011,120; Leroy,1972, 58-59, figs. 40-1).

### *3.2 The Spear*

The sword (spathion, spatha, ensis, semi-spatha, semi-sapthion, gladius, latus, ξιφος, παραμηριον, ερουλισκιον, μαχαира) was one of the offensive weapons in the ancient world (D' Amato 2018, 115). It consists of a double-edged blade that is concave in the area after the hilt then thickens and rounds out until the pointed tip, giving the blade the appearance of a leaf. Hand guards, which prevent the hands from sliding to the blade and getting cut, protrude from the sides between the hilt and the blade. The hilt is a smooth, cylindrical shape that ends in a pommel. (Zahra, 1995,193) In Christianity, the sword was mentioned in the New Testament. It symbolizes what will happen with the Lord Christ on the night of his arrest when he said to the crowd, "Am I leading a rebellion, that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me." (Matthew (26:55-56). In Coptic paintings, the sword was one of the most depicted weapons. It was represented in the context of Biblical scenes, with archangels and in the hands of many saints.

#### *– Swords in Biblical scenes*

Abraham sacrificing Isaac became a favorable theme in Coptic Art and spread on a wide scale through different materials such as wood, textile, or stone (Ali,2022, 247).<sup>15</sup> One of the early representations of this story is found in the Hellenistic art which was obviously modified in Egypt. Smith categorized this innovative type of Hellenistic art in Egypt by the name Alexandrian-Coptic art since most of the objects belong to Alexandria and to the Coptic art in Upper Egypt (Smith 1922, 164-165; Mathew 2006, 235-238). The Sacrifice of Isaac was frequently depicted in the Constantinian Christian art but became an essential scene in Byzantine art (Mathew 2006, 241).

Abraham frequently appears holding a sword during the context of the Sacrifice of Isaac in Coptic art. An early 6th -7th century *tempra* fresco fragment depicting Abraham's sacrifice is found in the Monastery of St. Jeremiah in Saqqara. It was excavated by Quibell between 1906 and 1910. Despite the absence of fresco's upper section, Abraham is seen holding a sword rather than a knife in his right hand and directs it to the waist of Isaac (fig.12) (Quibell,1912,133; Habib 1976, 5).

In the scene of the Massacre of the Innocents at Abou Hennis, the killers carry swords to perform their massacre. It is a single-edged short sword which was used on a great scale in late antiquity. It is thought to be originated from Germanic peoples as many examples of single-edged knives were excavated in the tombs of Alamanas, Franks, Saxons Burgunds as well as Lombards. According to the archaeological discoveries in Achmim-Panopolis, troops used short swords from the fifth century till the seventh century. However, the swords of Abou-Hennis frescos look very similar to those excavated in Ballana graves that date back to the period between fifth to sixth centuries AD and were about 40 to 4b cm in length (fig.13) (D' Amato 2018, 133-134, fig. 5.16).

The seated king witnesses the massacre of the innocents. The three Roman soldiers are depicted brutally ready for fight and kill. They are carrying short swords or long battle knives (semi-spathae). Unfortunately, only the pommel of the weapon is still visible<sup>16</sup> (fig.14) (Clédât 1902, 49, pl. I; D' A. The second warrior wears similar costumes but in different colors; tunic with the same segments, off-white garment, and trousers. He holds a short single-edged sword with its blue point (fig.15) (D' Amato 2018, 111, fig. 5.3). Amato 2018, 108-111, fig. 5.2.).

The third soldier wears a similar tunic and trouser. He holds a semi-spatha with its blade still visible. This warrior represents the story of trying to kill the child John the Baptist as the name of the child he wants to seize is ΙΩΑΝΝΗC (Iohannes). The soldier holds a sword and in front of him the kneeling mother of the child, ΕΛΙCΕΑ (BET) (Elizabeth), is depicted. (Clédât 1902, 50, pl. II; D' Amato 2018, 110-111, fig. 5.4.) Behind the woman, there is an aedicule surmounted with a triangular pediment. Its frieze bears two names in Coptic zayaras zayarias. The aedicule is covered by a red curtain. The representation of Zacharia and Elizabeth's names are understandable in the context of the scene. (Clédât 1902, 50, pl. II.) Amato rather believes that this scene is one of the earliest representations which are inspired from the Apocryphal Gospels; a scene that spread on a great scale in the eastern fresco paintings of Byzantium

and Cappadocia (fig.16) (D' Amato 2018, 111, fig. 5.4.).

At the end of the wall, there is a man is kneeling and begging another soldier, the man is called ZAXAPAC apparently referring to Zacharias<sup>17</sup> (Saad ,2008,207), the priest father of Saint John the Baptist. (Clédât 1902, 50, pl. II; D' Amato 2018, 112-113, fig. 5.5.) As it is depicted in the scene, Zacharias was murdered by the Jews between the sanctuary and the altar. According to the Gospel of James, the killing of Zacharias was carried out by the soldiers of the king. Thus, the depicted soldiers represent highly ranked Roman soldiers in Egypt (D' Amato 2018, 112-113, fig. 5.5.).

The killer wears the uniform of a one of the elite high officials in Roman Egypt. He wears a long off-white robe (sticharion) with red embroidery around the neck (maniakon). Under this short-sleeved robe, the man wears another blue robe (kamision). Concerning the sword of the killer, it is partially destroyed and is depicted horizontally. It takes the same shape as the semi-spatha of the other soldiers of the scene (D' Amato 2018, 113, fig. 5.5). According to Clédât, this scene is rather a continuation of the scene of the Massacre of the Innocents. He confirms his hypothesis that the depicted man is not represented with a halo around his head (Clédât 1902, 50, pl. II.).

This scene is inspired by the Gospel of Matthew, which described the murder of Zacharias (Matthew 23-35). In the background of the scenes, there are tops of chimneys from which smoke appears. The existence of such chimneys in this scene is understandable. Moreover, trees with their green leaves are found in the background. According to Clédât, this scene of the Massacre of the Innocents is comparable with that represented on the ivory diptych in the Cathedral of Milan (Clédât 1902, 49, pl. I). On the other hand, Amato mentions that this scene recalls the description of John of Nikui about the massacre of the Coptic Monophysite people killed by Orthodox Roman soldiers (fig.17) (D' Amato 2018, 107-108).

#### – *Swords and archangels*

In art, emblems are used to communicate significant ideas and concepts. The sword and

spear of Archangel Michael are one such symbol that gives significance and grandeur to the image. Archangel depictions variously include a cross staff, a sword, and a spear (Atalla,1998,47). Archangels are represented in complete armour, holding swords with points upwards, and sometimes bear trumpets. They are a symbol of power and fulfil their roles as messengers (Saad ,2008, 273). In the biblical text (Genesis 3:24), the cherubim mention when he is placing at east of the Garden of Eden. Because the cherubim are depicted holding swords in their hands, they may be considered as governors for their role in the prevention of entering paradise (Saad ,2008, 276).

The angel portrayed riding a horse was uncommon in Coptic art. Rarely did an angel appear astride a horse, unlike certain saints who were shown as cavalymen with a sword or a spear. The only known instance of such a scene on a Coptic mural can be found in the 11th-century principal church of Abdallah Nirqi in Nubia. An angel is seen riding a horse and holding a sword in his right hand while spreading his two wings, which are decorated with little white circles that represent eyes. Angels and archangels are frequently depicted in scenarios as guards, saviours, or protectors. As a result, the angel was portrayed riding a horse to symbolise the coming of the Savior (fig.18)) Saad, 2008, 318).

A remarkable 10th century mural painting stands for Archangel Michael wearing a brown-red slippers and long robe decorated in front with brown pattern, a long white robe is worn over the cloak, tied with a belt at the hips and ornamented with red and green bands. His right hand holds a sword in a dark-brown scabbard with metal fitting and supports it in the middle with the fingers of his left hand. This painting, which belongs to the cathedral Faras-Nubia, is a unique iconography of archangels accompanied by swords (figs. 19a.b) (Saad, 2008, 231).

#### – *Swords and Saints*

beheaded or by being pierced with a sword. Chief among them is Saint Paul, for whom it is not only the emblem of his martyrdom but refers to his preaching since according to Eph. 6:17, he urges his readers to “Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the spirit which is the word of god” (Jones, T., Murray, L., etal 2013, 37). Among many other saints martyred with the sword are Abu Sefein<sup>18</sup> Saint Matthias the Apostle and Saint

Catherine of Alexandria. The sword is also the emblem of justice together with a pair of scales and symbolizes authority (Jones, T., Murray, L., etal, 2013, 589).

In the khurus of Deir el-Surian, there is a painting of a standing military saint. It shows a standing, beardless young man, dressed in a blue tunic, covered by a shorter, reddish-brown tunic. He wears a girdle from which a sword hangs in a red sheath. He holds its hilt with his left hand, while his right hand holds a staff. At the right side of the head the last letters of a Greek inscription ending in ...ΓΙΟC, ...ΠΙΟC or ...ΤΙΟC are visible. If this is the last part of the name of the saint, it could be Sergius, Dimitrios or Georgios, all three were depicted as young, beardless men. Considering the space available for the inscription, it must have been a short name, which makes Sergius one of the most probable identifications. In early Christian iconography military saints are often depicted standing, instead of mounted on horseback (fig. 20) (Innemée,2016,8).

On the quarter-column, directly left of the doors leading into the haykal, there are remains of a painting depicting another standing military saint. Despite the damage, the high quality of this painting is still recognizable. It is very similar to the painting on the opposite side of the door. The fact that both have been painted as almost identical counterparts, suggests indeed that we have here Saint Sergius and his companion St. Bacchus,<sup>19</sup> usually depicted as youthful soldiers. Here they seem to have been painted as guardians to the sanctuary of the church (fig.21) (Innemée,2016,8).

A standard feature in Coptic representations of Mercurios, the angel depicted in the upper right-hand corner of the image alludes to an episode from the saint's passion that marks his special sanctity, and, in turn, shows him as a future member of the elect. According to his passion, while Mercurios was in the Martenses he saw a vision of an angel who presented him with a sword. Promising him victory in battle, the angel said: “Take this sword from my hand and go and attack the barbarians and you will conquer them. Forget not the Lord your God. The angel relates to a pivotal event that occurred during Mercurios' life, the other standard motif in his icon supplies evidence that his power and sanctity continued earth even after his death. In

his right hand Mercurios holds a spear surmounted by a cross which he thrusts into the head of a diminutive figure below, identified as the infamous fourth-century emperor, Julian “the Apostate.” (fig. 22) (Badamo, 2011, 266; Budge, 1915, 811).

### 3.3 The Shield

In battlefields, shields were used as a combat weapon. The guards of the Roman emperor Herod are depicted being protected by two wide oval shields which are outlined by a red border and followed by a grey edge and off-white painted surface. They fit very well the descriptions of late Roman shields. From the end of the second century AD, the slightly elliptical and the old oval shapes are typical of the Roman infantry and used even by the emperor. Wide shields (*skoutaria*, *aspides*, *clipei*), and their shape were always indicated as slightly elliptical or oval round (D' Amato 2018, 130).

The Greek shield, which was known as the rounded shield, continued to be used after Christianity but with addition of Christian decorations and became known *Clipeus*. In Coptic art, the shield appeared as a round shield with a convex outer surface and decorated with Christian motifs, the most famous one is the cross in the middle of the outer surface. On the inner part of the shield, a handle or even two handles were attached. In the case of two handled shields, the first handle was found in the middle and was wider and the other one was near the edge of the shield. The two handles were different in sizes to enable the warrior to defend himself, particularly his face and torso.

A very recent discovery of fragmentary specimens of shields in Egypt has clarified the structure and composition of the Roman round shield in the fifth and sixth centuries AD. All shields were decorated with scenes of hunting or battle with vegetal and geometrical motifs. These characteristics are all clearly visible in Deir Abou Hennis paintings (D' Amato 2018, 131).

In this monastery, King Herod represented in the context of the Massacre of the Innocents. He is depicted seated in thorn and flanked from both sides by two bodyguards (Doryphoroi) dressed in white and blue-colored military tunics (*imatia*,

*tunicae*) and adorned with purple segments. The two guards hold oval shields (*clipei*) and spears (*pila*)<sup>20</sup> (fig. 2) (Clédat 1902, 49, pl. I; D' Amato 2018, 107-108.)

In chapel III Bawit, Saul is seated between two guards, one of whom is clutching a lance but who is otherwise unmarked. According to Clédat's commentary, David is depicted as donning a cuirass, a metal tunic that ends at the knees, over a rose-colored tunic with darker vertical lines (Du Bourguet, 1973, 11-16). To his knees, he is covered with boots. The right arm is holding a sword while the left arm is bowed beneath a spherical sword (fig. 23) (Clédat, 1904, 20).

### 3.4 The knife

One of Coptic frescos showing a knife is found in El Bagawat at Kharga oasis. In the Chapel of Peace (chapel nr. 80) which is decorated with Biblical scenes, the Sacrifice of Isaac is colorfully represented. <sup>ABPAAM</sup>, Abraham appears as a bearded man, shown en face, resting his left hand upon the head of Isaac and holding the knife in the right hand and paced it upon the head of Isaac. (Wilkinson, 1928, 31)

Isaac <sup>EIΣAK</sup>, is depicted dressed in a white tunic and holding a small box, or apparently an incense. (Zibawi, 2005, 111)

Over the altar, Sara <sup>ΣΑΡΑ</sup> is depicted holding a similar box with her left hand whilst her right hand is extended forming the orant posture. behind Abraham and appears in the Hand of God. A remarkable cup-shaped altar is represented on the ground and bears its Alexandrian-Coptic features. (Smith 1922, 164-165, 173, nr. 112; Mathew 2006, 241-242). The ram here is depicted turned back to the tree which is at the left of Abraham. Here, the hand of God appears to the left of Abraham. To the right, there are two knives, identical to the one held by Abraham pointed towards the Patriarch (fig. 24) (Mathew 2006, 241-242).

In the chapel (nr. 25) in Bagawat necropolis, there is a poorly preserved scene of the same sacrifice. Fragments of a ram standing under the tree are found and the right Abraham is figured wearing his



robe like his scene in the Chapel of Peace. Isaac is raised by his father's left hand and his arms are crossed behind his back. Like the Chapel of Exodus, Abraham lifts his son to throw him in the fire of the altar. In his right hand, Abraham is depicted holding a knife which is rising in front of Abraham's face. Traces of red color are depicted over his head and might apparently have formed the hand of God. The usual horned altar is represented to the right of Isaac<sup>21</sup> (fig.25) (Martin, Mathew 2006, 242-243).

A late painting from the Monastery of Saint Macarius shows the knife used by Abraham to sacrifice his son. The painting reveals a more movable theme in which Isaac is depicted being brought down by his father. Abraham holds the hair of his son with left hand and dramatically directs the knife towards the neck of his son with his right hand. In all earlier paintings, it is worth noting that Abraham turns his look and face away from the whole scene. The artist might subtly reveal the pain of the father while preparing to slaughter his son (fig. 26) (Leroy, et al, 1982,36).

In the 22nd chapter of the Genesis (Genesis 22: 1-9), the sacrifice of Isaac was placed parallel to the passion of the Christ.(Smith 1922, 159).The Church Fathers, namely Irenaeus, Tertullian, Ephraim, Isidore of Seville found a similarity between the Christ and Isaac was a beloved solemn son offered as a sacrifice by his father (Van Woerden,1961,224). Isaac was the sacrifice and had a crucial role in preparing Jesus as a Savior. Just as Isaac atones for the sins of the children of Israel, so Christ's sacrifice atones for the sins of the entire human race. While Isaac's sacrifice is part of the covenant relationship between God and the children of Israel, Christ's sacrifice marks the beginning of a new era (Ali, 2022, 247). Consequently, late Coptic paintings reveal visual representations of biblical, typological prefigurements of Jesus' sacrifice (Schroeder, 2012, 269–302. 272,276).

The place of the sacrifice in both instances was upon a hill. The thorns of the bush in which the ram was caught refer to the thorns of the Christ. According to the writings of the Church Fathers, the ram in the Bush was the Christ on the Cross and

Isaac was the Christ in the Eucharist (Smith 1922, 159). On Holy Saturday, a series of prophecies were opened with the beginning of the Book of Genesis. The third prophecy is recited between the lighting of the Paschal Candle and the blessing of the Font, the 22<sup>nd</sup> chapter was read about Abraham and the Sacrifice of Isaac (Smith 1922, 159-160; Lallou 1944, 301). During the Eucharist, which is regarded as a visual reperformance of the Last Supper, sacrifices were consecrated, mainly bread and wine consumed on a ritual dining table called mensa or trapeza (Innemée 2022, 106).

A wall painting from the thirteenth century is found over the altar in the monastery of Saint Antony. The parental figures represent the biblical roots of the priest's role as well as the divine origins and sanctification of the sacrament while standing at the altar, where the priest would undertake the liturgical reenactment of Christ's sacrifice through the administration of the Eucharist. (Innemée 2022, 103; Schroeder,2012, 269–302. 272, 276). The painting represents the sacrifices of Abraham and Jephthah to both Isaac and Jephthah's daughter (Innemée, 2022, 106-107, fig.6.1). The two figures are depicted facing each other in almost two identical themes. Both Abraham and Jephthah are grasping a knife in their right hands. The knife is depicted vertically, and its blade is directed backwards to the two human sacrifices. Both Abraham and Jephthah are gently smiling and looking towards the hand of the God which is depicted behind the figure of Abraham (fig.27).

### *3.5 The Bow and Arrows*

The bow was called (arcus) τοξον. (D' Amato 2018, 115) It is considered ranged weapons (Zahra,197,1995). Together with the dagger, it was one of the essential weapons of the Roman cavalry) D' Amato 2018, 115). For the arrow, it consists of wooden body and sharp pointy metal head, and sometimes it all consists of metal. (Zahra 1995, 198). The bow was known as a weapon of hunting from very early times in Egypt and throughout the Coptic time<sup>22</sup> (Wilkinson 1991, 83).

Bows and arrows appeared in hunting scenes, especially wild hunting. Scenes of desert hunting were among the Coptic scenes originated from

ancient Egyptian civilization to signify good prevailing over evil (Rochefeskaya et.al., 2008,146).

seventh century and portrays a hunter on the left side, holding a bow in his hand and aiming the arrow towards a lion on the right side. Now only stayed the bow, arrows, and a part of the hands. The artist has mastered the depiction that shows the relation between a lion and a hunter where it is depicted an arrow piercing a lion's head and the lower part of the arrow is coming out from the eye of the lion also the hunter is prepared to release another arrow on the lion which is turning towards him.(Clédat, ,1904,62, pl.XXXVII ) The scene is not only a hunting scene but it maybe referring to prophet Zechariah, as a depiction of the verse that came in Zechariah in old Testament (Du Bourguet, Pierre S.J. ,1991,Vol.IV,1258) “ There is a voice of the howling of the shepherds; for their glory is spoiled: a voice of the roaring of young lions; for the pride of Jordan is spoiled (Zechariah 11:3.(It probably alludes to Zechariah 11:3: "Hark the roaring of the young lions." (fig.28) (Clédat, 1904, p. 62).

A mural painting in monastery of Saint Apollo in Bawit: This scene is in the 37 room. It portrays a hunter sitting behind a vegetal branch to get ready for hunting a lion. Furthermore, the scene depicts a gazelle and the hunter deriving an arrow towards it. More often, this scene corresponds with the estimation of the faithful hunter (قادوس، السيد، ١١٩، ١١٤، ٢٠١١، شكل ١٣١)

#### 4. Analytical Study

Based on (Table. 1), following points could be concluded:

##### 4.1 Context of the scene

##### 4.1.1 Biblical Scenes

Among all types of weapons, the spear is the most common type of weapon used in the Coptic art. It was involved in the context of Biblical scenes, particularly the conflict of David with Saul and Goliath. In addition to spears, swords were depicted in Coptic paintings on a wide scale. Scenes of the Massacre of the Innocents, particularly at Deir abu Hennis depict a variety of soldiers that hold swords. Swords appeared also in the context of the Murder of Zacharias which is inspired from the Gospel of Mathew. In rare

Table. 1 Analysis for the weapons that are mentioned through the study

On the eastern wall of the twelfth room in Bawit hunting scene is depicted. It dates to the sixth or

Weapon	Context of the Scene				Body Postures			Artistic Concept
	Biblical Scene	Angels	Saints	Hunting Scenes	Body Posture of the weapons carrier	Body posture of the opponent	Accompanying weapons	
Spear	The Conflict of David with Saul and Goliath	-----	Saint Sissinius, Saint George, Saint Claudius of Antioch, Saint Mercurius of Caesarea, Saint John of Heraclea, Saint Theodore	-----	Lifting the spear Directing the spear to the opponent Carried by the right hand	Lying on the ground Standing pose Kneeling pose	Shield sword	Triumph
Sword	the murder of Zacharias Sacrifice of Abraham (rarely) the Massacre of Innocents	Archangel Michael	Saint Bacchus Saint Sergentus Saint Mercurius	-----	Directing the sword to the opponent Carried by the right hand	Lying on the ground Standing pose	Shield Sword	Triumph Justice Authority
Shield	King Herod and Saul (Massacre of Innocents)	-----	-----	-----	Carried by the left hand	Standing pose	Spear Sword	Defense
Knife	Sacrifices of Abraham and Jephthah (Old Testament)	-----	-----	-----	Directing the sword to the opponent Carried by the right hand	Standing pose Kneeling pose		Sacrifice
Bow and Arrows	-----	-----	-----	Hunting Scenes	Quiver placed on the right side of the shoulder strap; Bow left arm Arrow right art	Standing pose		Daily Life Scene

paintings, the knife of Abraham was replaced by a sword in the Sacrifice of Isaac. The shield was used by King Herod in the Massacre of the Innocents. It should be noticed that all earlier mentioned scenes are inspired by the Old Testament.

#### *4.1.2 Angels*

Among all types of weapons, Angels in the fusion of equestrian appeared holding the sword in their hands (figs. 18, 19). For instance, archangel Michael was often represented as an equestrian carrying a sword (fig. 19).

#### *4.1.3 Saints*

Saints were the most common category in which weapons were frequently depicted. Many saints, who appeared in the fusion of horsemen, were depicted holding the spear in their hands and defeating their opponent. In addition to Saint Paul, the sword was commonly used in the hands of many saints such as Saint Bacchus (fig. 20), Saint Sergerius (fig. 21) and Saint Mercurius (fig.22). The sword of the latter saint is figured being touched by angle, apparently referring to a blessing posture.

#### *4.1.4 Hunting Scenes*

Aside from religious scenes, weapons were depicted in the context of hunting scenes. In this vein, bows and arrows were often used in Coptic hunting paintings (figs. 28, 29).

### *4.2 Body postures*

#### *4.2.1 Body Posture of the Weapons carrier*

Body Posture of the Weapons carrier being mainly a defensive weapon, shields were usually carried by the left hand. Except the shield, all other types of weapons were carried in the right hand of the figure. The shield was held by a central grip or by straps going over or around the user's arm or held by his left hand. The shield was depicted in an elaborate representation, being adorned by the pattern of the cross (fig. 4). Aside from the spear, which was sometimes depicted lifted by his carrier, weapons were usually represented being directed to the opponent in the scene. In Coptic paintings, the carrier of the weapon was usually figured standing

or riding his horse whether in profile or en face. In Coptic hunting scenes (figs. 28, 29), the quiver of the arrows is depicted on the right-hand side with a shoulder strap. The hunter is depicted in a movable standing pose, holding the bow with his outstretched left arm. The arrow is carried with his right arm and drawn back to the ear of the bowman's hunter.

#### *4.2.2 The opponent in the Coptic weapon scenes*

The opponent in the Coptic weapon scenes was usually one of the enemies of Christianity. Thus, he was usually represented lying on the ground reflecting his languid and weak situation. The weapon was depicted being directed to different parts of his body. The spear was frequently directed to his head (figs. 5, 7b, 8b, 10), his nose (figs. 8a, 9), his chest (fig.4), his neck (fig.6) and his knee (fig. 7a). The opponent of Theodore and Saint Claudius was replaced by a dragon in certain examples (figs. 11a, b, c). Slaying the dragon with the spear became an iconic representation in Christian art. By the eleventh century AD, the image of Saint George slaying the dragon spread on a wide scale. Generally, the iconography of the saints spearing the dragon or even a serpent became a universal favorable scene which speared by the medieval Christian art (see; Synder 2019, 67-100).

The lying pose of children in the scenes of the Massacre of the Innocents (figs. 13, 14,15,16) could dramatically reveal their pain and rustiness. The opponent might also be an animal in the daily life hunting scenes (28, 29).

#### *4.2.3 On the contrary, the resistant attitude of the opponent is artistically revealed in certain examples through his standing pose*

This pose was used by the prominent religious figures to reveal their firmness and faith. For instance, David stands holding his lyre facing King Saul who directs his spear towards him (fig. 2). Isaac is also depicted standing without resistance beside Abraham who holds his sword (fig. 12) or his knife (figs. 24, 25) towards him. The kneeling pose was also often used in the context of spear scenes. The opponent was the spear's carrier, was sometimes depicted kneeling in front of him (figs. 8a, 10) or even standing (figs. 8b, 9). In scenes of

human sacrifices, the keeling pose was often used. Both Isaac and Jephthah's daughter were depicted kneeling in front of Jephthah and Abraham (fig. 27). Isaac was sometimes solemnly depicted in the kneeling pose during his sacrifice (fig. 26).

#### *4.3 Accompanying weapons*

The spear was held by Goliath in his right hand and the shield in the left one (fig. 1). In the case of knight saints, the saint was depicted holding the spear in his right hand and the shield (fig. 4) or the sword (fig. 7b) in his left hand. In other cases, the knight saint was depicted with sword pods on the horse's back (figs. 6,7,8,9,10). Moreover, many paintings are the knight saint holding the reins of his horse saddle in the left arm (figs. 8a, b,9,10,11).

#### *4.4 Concept*

Aside from the shield which was rather used as a defensive weapon, both were used and sword to represent the spear power and triumph of its carrier. Being held by saints and angles, the two weapons refer to the concept of triumph in Christianity. The weapon also functioned as an emblem of justice and authority particularly when it is accompanied by a pair of scales. Furthermore, the shape of the standing saint armored with his shield and sword was used as a protective motive in art. For instance, the identical image of Saint Sergerius and Saint Bachus holding their swords is depicted on the quarter doors columns leading to the door into the haykal of the church of Deir el Surian (figs. 20, 21). The location of the two images suggest that their figures functioned here as guardians to the sanctuary of the church (Innemée 2016, 8).

The knife was obviously bond with and the concept of sacrifice salvation in Christianity. Thus, the weapon was usually found in the context of the Sacrifice of Isaac and in later Coptic paintings through the Sacrifice of Isaac and Jephthah's daughter. Christian rites center around sacrifices, in which believers ingest actual human flesh and blood-not just symbolic representations-in their entirety. Numerous martyrs chose to die by their own actions in the early decades of the Christian era, offering themselves in acts that almost seem like sanctified suicide (Innemée 2022, 95).

In Christianity, the sacrifice of a beloved child might be an atonement of the guilt of the others (John 3: 16). In the Old Testament, the sacrifice of Abraham (Genesis 22:1-19) and the sacrifice of Jephthah's daughter his "only begotten and beloved" (Judg. 11:34) were mentioned. These human sacrifices, in Innemée's opinion, were not intended to serve as Christ's atoning sacrifice. Instead, they speak of the passing of David and Bathsheba's firstborn child, who perished because of his father's guilt (2 Sam. 12: 13-14). Although, in the Gospel of John, the roles were obviously shifted, as the Father here willingly sacrifices his solemn child as a sign of faith and the unconditional obedience to the orders of God "aqedah (binding)" (Innemée 2022, 104).

So, the knife was clearly relevant to the Eucharist, and this explains the location of paintings showing the Sacrifice of Abraham alone or with Jephthah. Scenes of knives scenes were therefore found being located over or nearby the altar; the place where the liturgical reenactment of Christ's sacrifice were undertaken.

#### *4.5 Decoration*

In early Coptic paintings, spears, knives, bows, and arrows were simply portrayed plain without any decoration. In later scenes, spears carried by saints and angels were topped by the shape of the cross. Moreover, swords appeared with rather elaborate fusion as swords' pods appeared in more colorful shapes with decorative patterns. In biblical scenes, shields were sometimes decorated with floral motives (fig. 24) or shape of a cross on its outer surface (fig. 4).

#### *4.6 Date*

Tracing the history of the weapon scenes in Coptic paintings, it could be observed that weapons were represented as early the 6th and 7th centuries. Together with textiles discovered in Antinoe, Bawit and other places in Egypt, and fragments of excavated weapons, frescos of the monastery of Deir Abou Hennis are regraded primary sources to study weapons in Egypt after Christianity. The frescos of Deir Abou Hennis perfectly coincides with the literary resources as well as the archaeological evidence referring the various

weapon in Egypt from the fourth to the seventh centuries AD (D' Amato 2018, 105-106, 113, 145.). Despite of their poor preservation, paintings of Bawit and Saqqara which date back to the 6th -7th centuries represent one of the earliest scenes of weapons in Egypt after Christianity. Aside from the 10th century painting from Tebtinius, frescos of weapons reached its peak in the Egyptian monasteries by the 12th to the 13 centuries AD. The monastery of Deir el-Surian and monastery of Saint Anthony at the Red Sea represent various examples of weapon scenes that show diversity in context, bodily postures, and decoration.

## 5. Conclusion

It could be concluded that the context of the scene played the most prominent role in figuring out the type and shape of illustrated weapons in Coptic paintings. Weapons were used as a symbol of justice, triumph, authority, sacrifice or simply as a hunting tool. The artistic depiction of every weapon obviously varied and developed throughout the long history of Coptic paintings in Egypt. The Coptic artist succeeded in standing for the diversity and variety of postures and body poses of the weapons carriers who used certain hand objects side by side with their weapons.

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<sup>1</sup> St. George's story proliferated through his images and his icons became a representation of the struggle against evil and fear, represented by the depiction of the dragon in his equestrian iconography. The saint's divinely inspired courage and power, his "Good Principle," is symbolized by the spear he wields (Gordon, 2015).

<sup>2</sup> Among the contemporary collection of Isaac Fanous, there are contemporary Coptic icons that depict certain saints killing the dragon, the sign of evil with a spear (Finnestad, 1996, 96-97, figs. 11, 12, 13).

<sup>3</sup> Deir Abu Hennis (Monastery of Father John) bears a remarkable example of Coptic art and architecture. It was explored by Jemard and was explored and published by Clédât in 19021. The

most distinguished part of the monastery is the church which is found at the top of the mountain in the south of the city of Antinoe. Its fresco paintings date back to the period between the sixth century and the seventh century AD; see; (D' Amato 2018, 105; Jomard 1821, 274).

<sup>4</sup> For examples of Coptic textiles bearing the shape of the spear see; (Lewis 1973, 30, fig. 2; London, Victoria and Albert Museum, Inv. No. 282-1891, 25.4 cm. sq., sixth century; see (Kitzinger 1946, fig. 34).

<sup>5</sup> St. Sisinius was one of the first named saints to take on the magical power of Solomon's Seal Pre-iconoclasm, the saint's "magic" was seen in household objects used to repel demons (Snyder, 2019, 71).

<sup>6</sup> The snakes and centaurs that surround the saint are likely meant to visualize demons as well. In the Sayings of the Desert Fathers, Abba Poemen likens a snake and scorpion shut up in a bottle to the evil thoughts that are suggested by demons. In another saying, Abba Poemen refers to the “*venom of evil demons*” that attack monks in the desert. Poemen 21 and 30. Benedicta Ward, *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers: The Alphabetical Collection* (McCollum, A,1985).

<sup>7</sup> St. George was born around 280 AD in Cappadocia, to Christian parents of high birth. His father, Anastasius, was a senior Roman officer and his mother was from the Syrian village of Lod. He followed his father’s footsteps, joining the Roman army at the age of 20. For a while, things went well for the young saint, who quickly rose through the ranks before the persecution of Christians began in earnest and he was forced to take sides. He endured seven years of torture, and he was executed on orders of Diocletian in Nicomedia on 1 May 307 AD, a date that is still celebrated today by the Coptic Church (Kamil,2002,275).

<sup>8</sup> St. Phoibammon was a Roman soldier and during the time of the emperor Diocletian (r. 284-305), a decree was issued and sent to everywhere in Egypt stating that everyone must kneel in front of the emperor’s idol and give offerings to the Gods or else they will be executed. An officer gathered all his troops and announced that decree upon them, among those soldiers, there was a young soldier in his 30th named Phoibammon (Bifam), he announced his refusal of accepting the Emperor as a God. The chief in command ordered his soldiers to lock him in prison then he was taken by the soldiers outside the town to be beheaded (Kabeel,2009,14-15).

<sup>9</sup> St. Claudius of Antioch was the son of Ptolemy (Abtelmawos), who was Emperor Numerianus’ brother. He was loved by the people of Antioch for his courage and good appearance. When Diocletian reneged the faith and incited the persecution against the Christians, this Saint agreed to be martyred for the sake of the Name of Christ. The emperor brought St. Claudius and proposed to him the worship of the idols and promised to give him his father's position. Claudius neither accepted his promise, nor submitted to his order. He spoke to him boldly and fearlessly reviling him for worshipping the idols. The emperor did not dare to harm him for the people of Antioch loved him.

Romanus, St. Victor's father, advised the emperor to send him to Egypt to be killed there. The Saint went with the soldiers to Egypt. Arianus, the governor of Ansena, drove the spear into the Saint. He delivered up his pure spirit and received the crown of martyrdom. His celebration's date is Paona 11. ((Coptic Synaxarium: St. Claudius of Antioch)

<sup>10</sup> The iconography – if not St. Claudius himself – appears in other wall painting programs, manuscripts, and church furnishings (Badamo, 2011,120; Godlewski 2000, 89-101).

<sup>11</sup> During his short and turbulent reign (361-363 AD), Julian reinstated the pre-Christian religion and endeavoured to overturn the church through a campaign of non-violent persecution, a ploy intended to circumvent the powerful martyrial discourse of Christianity (Badamo 2011,347, fig. 75).

<sup>12</sup> St. Mercurius was born in 225 A.D in the city of Eskentos in Cappadocia, in Eastern Asia Minor, His parents were converts to Christianity and they called him “*Philopater*” . He enlisted in the Roman army in the reign of Emperor Decius.in 249, Decius began his persecution of Christians, compelling everyone to offer sacrifices to his pagan gods. The emperor tried to persuade him to give up his faith but failed. He then ordered Mercurius to be stripped of his rank and tortured. The emperor had him bound in iron fetters and sent him to Caesarea. Mercurius was beheaded on 4 December 250 AD (Gabra and Eaton Krauss 2007, 266).

<sup>13</sup> St. Theodore was born in the City of Tyre in 270 A.D. In his youth, he enlisted in the Roman army and was promoted to the rank of commander. His father's name was Sadrikhos, “*Adrakos*” who was a high ranking official during the reign of Emperor Numerianus (283-284 A.D.), and his mother was the sister of Basilides, the minister. When Emperor Numerianus died in the war against the Persians, the Diocletian took charge of the Empire, and started to persecute the Christians. At that time, St. Theodore was in charge of the army that was fighting against the Persians. During a truce, between the Roman and Persian armies, St. Theodore met with Banikaros, the commander of the Persian army. St. Theodore guided him to Christianity, and he believed in Christ. Diocletian commanded his soldiers to nail the Saint to a tree



and to brutally torture him. His celebration's date is 12 topi (Coptic Synaxarium: St. Theodore).

<sup>14</sup> Although the painting is fragmentary, enough remains to identify similar features: equestrian saint, cross-tipped spear, panel format, flying cape, and narrative details; two children can be seen behind the serpent, while the widow stands to the left of the saint, pulling her hair with one hand and supplicating the saint with the other. Such imagery was not limited to wall paintings, but also appears in manuscript illuminations (Badamo 2011, 119).

<sup>15</sup> For the sacrifice of Isaac on a stone Fragment preserved now in the Coptic Museum see; (Leibovitch, 1940 169-175).

منير بسطا وحشمت مسيحه ٥٤٣: جمال هرmina (٢٠١٠)، ١١٥.

A remarkable collection of Coptic textiles represents the theme of Isaac sacrifice and preserved now in the Coptic Museum of Cairo No. 1740, see; CANNUYER, Coptic Egypt, 25. Pagan and Christian Egypt; Egyptian art from the first to the tenth century A.D., exhibited at the Brooklyn museum by the Department of ancient art, January 23-March 9, 1941, Brooklyn museum, Brooklyn institute of arts and sciences.<sup>89</sup> ;Worcester Museum catalogue, The Dark Ages, Worcester, 1937, no. 141. Riefstahl, R. M., Early tapestries in the Cooper Union collection, in Art in America, v. III, 1915, p. 300, fig. 12, p. 250; a cup-shaped pyx of Berlin shows the sacrifice of Isaac in the Byzantine art, see (Smith 192, Fig.7, 166).

<sup>16</sup> The poor children are depicted at the feet of the soldiers laying in blood. Their names are painted in black. The first soldier is depicted catching a child from his leg taking him the arms of his mother. The soldier wears a long-blued tunic closed by a belt "zostarion" and a long blue trouser. On his wrist, there are three red segments similar in shape to the tunics of the Late Roman soldiers and in other fresco paintings depicting the same biblical scene (Clédat 1902, 49, pl. I; D' Amato 2018, 108-111, fig. 5.2).

<sup>17</sup> At 8<sup>th</sup> of Thout the Coptic Synaxarium Martyrdom of Zechariah the Priest, father of John the Baptist "the Coptic church commemorate the martyrdom of Zechariah the Priest, son of Berechiah, by the hands of Herod the King. It was said that during the slaughter of the children, Herod thought that John was the Christ and he sent requesting him from his father Zechariah.

Zechariah said that he did not know where the child was, they threatened to kill him, but he did not heed, and Herod ordered his soldiers to kill him. It was also said that when Herod sought John to slay him, Zechariah escaped with him to the sanctuary and put him on the altar and when they caught up with him, he told the soldiers, "From here (the altar) I received him from the Lord, and thereupon the angel snatched away the child, and took him to a desert called Zifana. As they did not find the child, they slew Zechariah between the temple and the altar (Matthew 23:35; Saad, 2008,207).

<sup>18</sup> St. Marcurius, known as the saint with the two swords (Arabic, "Abu-Saifain"), perhaps because an angel of the lord gave the saint a sword in his battle against the barbarians. According to his story Philopatir Mercerius wore the helmet and the armour of faith Took the double-edged sword/ which the angel placed in his hand He went gallantly to the battle/ and destroyed the barbarians. That is why he is called, "of the two swords", Abu-Saifain, one is the military sword and the other is the sword of the divine power (Saad 2008, 212; Du Bourguet 1971, 177).

<sup>19</sup> Saints Sergius and Bacchus (died 303): Both saints were martyred in Syria. Saints Sergius and Bacchus were close friends and officers in the Roman army. They kept their Christian faith secret, but they were discovered when they were assigned as bodyguards to a Roman official and refused to join him in offering sacrifice to the roman god Jupiter. To humiliate them, Emperor Galerius had the two men dressed in women's clothing and led in chains through the camp and the nearby town. Bacchus was beaten to death; Sergius was tortured, then beheaded. Although the account of the martyrs, the passion of Sergius and Bacchus, is almost certainly fanciful, devotion to these martyrs' dates back to at least the fifth century and possibly to the fourth. Saints Sergius and Bacchus are the patron saints of desert nomads and are among the patron saints of Syria (Craughwell 2011, 263).

<sup>20</sup> One of them is clothed in an armor (*thorax, heroikon*) surmounted with a rounded shoulder guard (*umerale*). The wear crested helmets (*cassis*), *περιχεφαλαια* topped with red feathers (Clédat 1902, 49, pl. I; D' Amato 2018, 107-108).

<sup>21</sup> The same iconography of the Sacrifice of Isaac is found the mosaic pavement of Beth Alpha

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Synagogue For further details see; E. Kessler (2000),76, fig. 44

<sup>22</sup> For examples of the bows and arrows on Coptic textiles discovered in Akhmim, see; Lewis (1973),

p. 30, fig. 3, 4; For examples of bows and arrows in Coptic sculpture see; Atalla, (1998), 64- 71; Qadūs, Abd el-Fattah, (2000),109; Şaleeb (1995), 15

**Figures**

**Fig. 1**

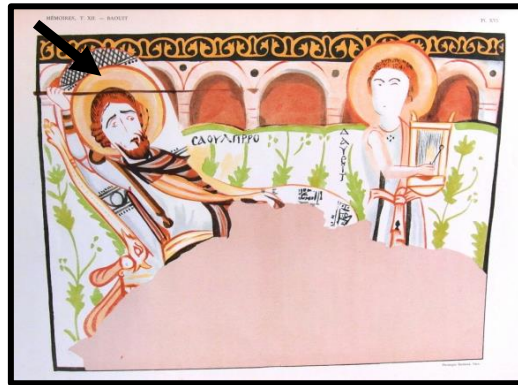
David holding a spear while facing Goliath, north wall in chapel III, Bawit, 7th century AD.



Clédat, J. ,1904, pl. XVIII

**Fig. 2**

King Saul with his spear facing David, chapel III, Bawit, 7th century AD.



Clédat, J. ,1904, Fig.XVI, p.107

**Fig. 3**

The spear carried by King Hesiod, left wall, Deir Abou Hennis, 6th -7th century.



D' Amato 2018, 107, fig. 5.1

**Fig. 4**

**a** and **b** Saint Sissinius slaying the demon Alabastria, (now lost) wall painting in Oratory 17, Monastery of Apollo at Bawit, 7th century, Asyut, Egypt.



**(a)**

**(b)**

Badamo, 2011, p. 299, fig.9

**Fig. 5.**

(a). Saint George slaying the Jew and Saint Phoibammon slaying Pasicrates, wall painting in naos, 1232/1233 AD, Monastery of Saint Antony at the Red Sea, Egypt



Badamo, 2011, fig. 297

(b). Detail of two saints on horseback, wall painting in khurus, In the Church of the holy virgin of the Monastery of Syrians, Wadi Al Natrun, 13th century.



Innemée, 2016, fig.9, p.11

**Fig. 6**

(a) Saint Claudius of Antioch slaying Diocletian, wall painting in naos, 1232/1233, Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea, Egypt.



Badamo ,2011, fig.32

(b) Saint Claudius of Antioch slaying an emperor, wall painting in naos, 11<sup>th</sup> century, Monastery of the Archangel Gabriel, Fayoum, Egypt.



Badamo ,2011, 320

**Fig. 7**

(a). Detail of Saint Mercurius of Caesarea, wall painting in khurus, Deir el-Surian, 13th century.



Innemée, ,2016, fig.10, p.1

**Fig. 8**

(a). Saint George slaying Euchios, 1232/1233 AD, Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea, Egypt.



Badamo, 2011,347, fig. 76

(b). St. Mercurios slaying Julian the Apostate, wall painting in khurus, 1232/1233, Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea, Egypt.



Badamo, 2011, 347, fig. 75

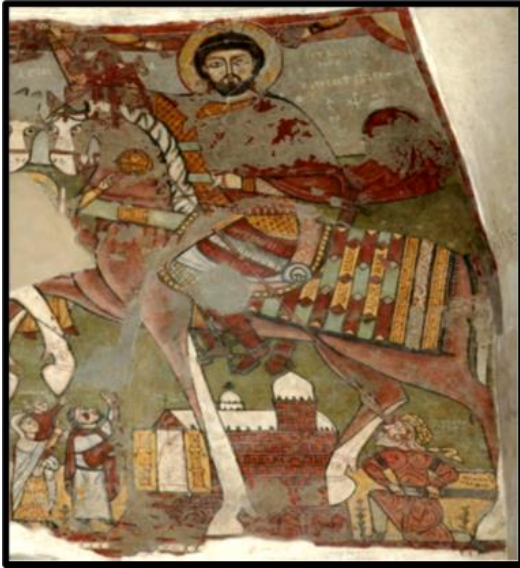
(b). St. George slaying the Jew, wall painting in naos, 1232/1233, Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea, Egypt.



Badamo ,2011, 355, fig. 83

**Fig. 9**

Saint Phoebammon slaying Pasicrates, wall painting in naos, 1232/1233 AD, Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea, Egypt.



Badamo ,2011,356, fig. 84

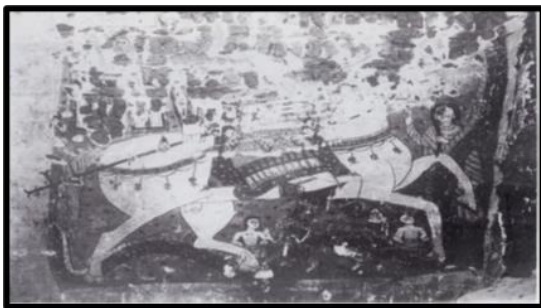
**Fig. 11**

(a). Saint Theodore



Badamo, 2011, 316, fig. 29

(b). Saint Theodor



Badamo ,2011, 317, fig. 30

**Fig. 10**

John of Heraclea (?) slaying Euctychianos, wall painting in naos, 1232/1233, Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea, Egypt.



Badamo ,2011, 359, fig. 87

(c). Saint Claudius



Badamo ,2011, 320, fig.33

**Fig. 12**

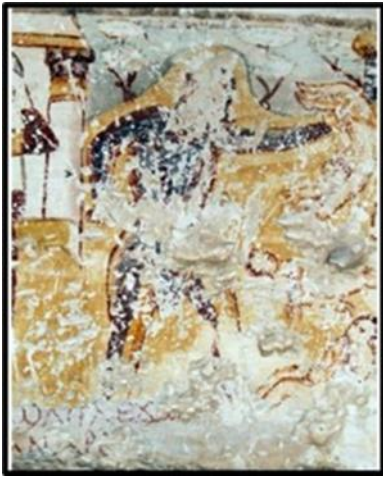
Tempra painting showing Abraham holding a sword in his right hand, Monastery of Saint Jeremiah, Saqqara, 6th -7th century, Coptic Museum (Inv. no. 8411), Cairo



Quibell, 1912, PL.XII

**Fig. 14**

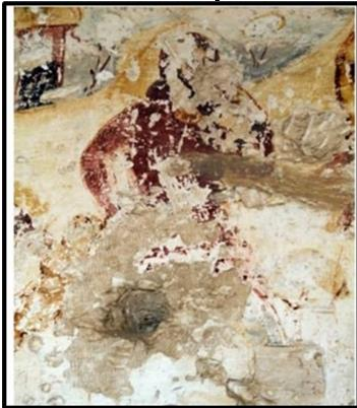
The first Roman soldier killing a small child with a short sword or a knife, Deir Abou Hennis, 6th -7th century.



D' Amato 2018, 109, fig. 5.2

**Fig. 16**

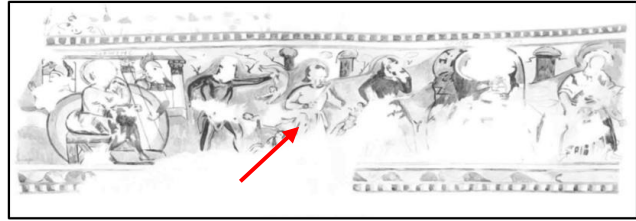
The third Roman soldier killing a small child, Deir Abou Hennis, 6th -7th century.



D' Amato 2018, 110, fig. 5.4

**Fig. 13**

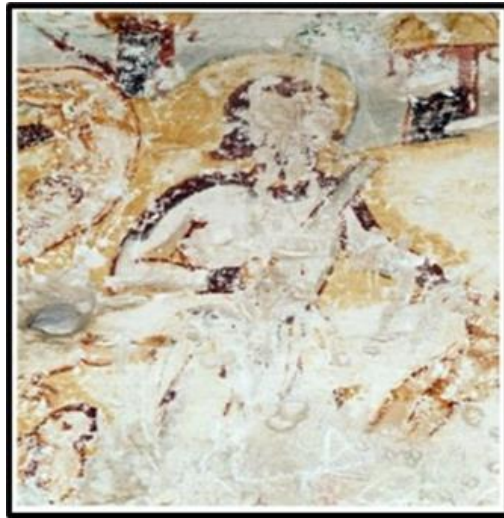
Soldiers using swords, the Massacre of Innocents, Deir Abu Hinnis, 6th -7th century.



Clédat 1902, Pl. I

**Fig. 15**

The second Roman soldier holding a short single-edged sword, Deir Abou Hennis, 6th -7th century.



D' Amato 2018, 109, fig. 5.3

**Fig. 17**

The killer of Zakharais holding a semi-spatha sword, Deir Abu Hennis, 6th -7th century.



D' Amato 2018, 110, fig. 5.4

**Fig. 18**

The equestrian Angel, the central church of Abdallah Nirqi.



Saad 2008, 306, fig.140A

**Fig. 19**

The Archangel Michael, the cathedral Faras  
MICHALOWSKI K. Faras Wall Painting in the collection of the National Museum in Warsaw, (Inventory No 149671 MN).



(a)

(b)

Saad 2008, 230, Fig102A, pl. 46.

**Fig. 20**

Military saint 'Bacchus' holding a sword, Deir el-Surian.



Innemée, 2016, p.9, fig.6

**Fig. 21**

Military Saint 'Sergius' holding a sword, Deir el-Surian.



Innemée, 2016, p.9, fig.5

**Fig. 22**

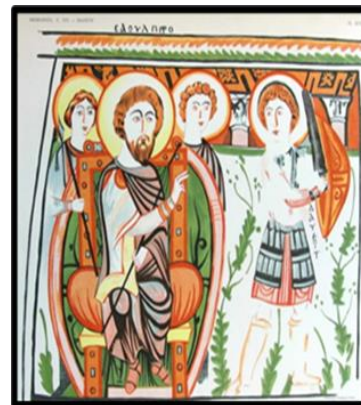
Detail of angel holding the sword of Saint Mercurios, wall painting in khurus, 1232/1233, Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea, Egypt.



Badamo, 2011, 349, Figure 77

**Fig. 23**

Saul sitting on the throne and with a sword and a shield-North wall.



Clédat, J. ,1904, Fig. XVII

**Fig. 24**

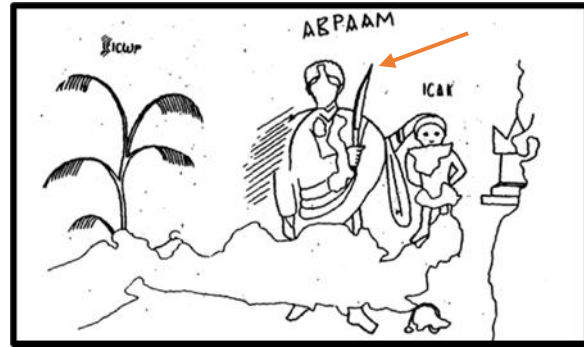
Chapel of Peace, Fresco at El Bagawat representing the Sacrifice of Isaac, Fourth Century AD.



Smith 1922,107, 162

**Fig. 25**

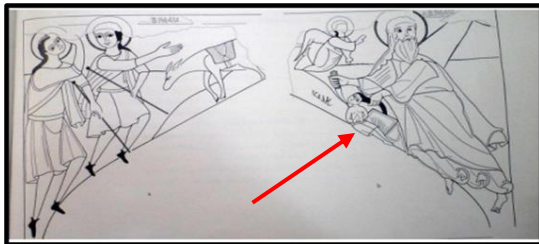
Bagawat necropolis, Kharga oasis.



أحمد فخري، ١٩٨٩، ١٧٥، شكل ٧٥

**Fig. 26**

Painting from the Monastery of Saint Macarius standing for the Sacrifice of Isaac Seventh and eighth century.



Leroy, et al, 1982, 36.; Gabra, 2002, fig. 4.6

**Fig. 27**

The sacrifices of Abraham and Jephthah grasping knives, gouache painting by Pierre Laferrière after the mural painting in the sanctuary of St Antony's monastery.



Van Moorsel, Les peintures du monastère de Saint-Antoine, pl. 10; Innemée, 2022, p. 107, fig. 6.1



**Fig. 28**

Fragment of a fresco showing the hunting scene-  
chapel 12 in Bawit- north wall-Sixth Century.



Clédat 1904,.62, pl. XXXVII

**Fig. 29**

A mural painting in the monastery of Saint Apollo in  
Baweit, Room 37.



Clédat, J: op. cipt pl. xxxi