



**Mansoura University**  
**Faculty of Tourism and Hotels**

## **BETWEEN EXECUTION AND TORTURE; ROPES IN EGYPTIAN CHRISTIAN ART**

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### ABSTRACT:

In the early centuries of the Roman Empire, the spread of Christianity started in secret, as it faced strong opposition and intense persecution, particularly during the reign of Emperor Nero. The early Christians faced numerous challenges in spreading their faith. Many were martyred under the orders of Roman emperors. Eusebius of Caesarea described all kinds of torture and martyrdom at Egypt. In Christian art, ropes are represented in hanging, execution and torture scenes. Coptic art shows saints exposed to different kinds of torture and martyrdom. Some saints were depicted as preys to wild animals while their hands are often shown tied behind their backs. Other saints are depicted with ropes tied around their waists which were knotted from their backs and draped downwards. Coptic scenes reveal two positions of execution; kneeling on the ground or standing while their hands were tied behind their backs. Some manuscripts show Jesus Christ during his court with his hands tied behind his back, also they show hanging 'gallows' scenes. The present paper aims to trace the iconography of ropes in the context of Coptic torture and execution scenes. It throws the light on the concept of using ropes according to its various contexts.

**Keywords:** ropes, execution, torture, saints, hands.

## الملخص باللغة العربية:

### بين التعذيب و الإعدام: الحبل في الفن المسيحي المصري

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بحلول القرون الأولى في الإمبراطورية الرومانية ، بدأ التحول إلى المسيحية بسرية حيث قوبل بالرفض والاضطهاد الشديد منذ عهد الإمبراطور نيرون. عانوا المسيحيون الأوائل الكثير من الصعوبات في نشر دينهم . أستشهد الكثير منهم بأوامر من الأباطرة الرومان. وتم وصف كل أنواع التعذيب والاستشهاد في مصر من قبل يوسابيوس القيصري. في الفن المسيحي ، يتم تمثيل الحبال في مشاهد الشنق والإعدام والتعذيب. يصور الفن القبطي قديسين يتعرضون لأنواع مختلفة من التعذيب والاستشهاد. تم تصوير بعض القديسين على أنهم فريسة للحيوانات البرية ، غالباً ما تظهر أيديهم مقيدة خلف ظهورهم. وتم تصوير البعض الآخر بحبال مربوطة حول خصورهم والتي عقدت من ظهورهم ولفت إلى أسفل. تظهر بعض المناظر القبطية وضعين للإعدام ؛ الركع على الأرض أو الوقوف وتقييد الأيدي خلف الظهر. تصور بعض المخطوطات القبطية السيد المسيح أثناء محاكمته ويده مقيدتان خلف ظهره ، كما تظهر بعض المناظر الفريدة ومنها الشنق "حبل المشنقة" في المخطوطات . تهدف هذه الورقة إلى تتبع تصوير الحبال في سياق مناظر التعذيب والإعدام القبطي. يلقي البحث الضوء على مفهوم استخدام الحبال طبقاً للأوضاع المتنوعة للتصوير.

الكلمات الدالة: حبال ، إعدام ، تعذيب ، قديسون ، أيادي

## **BETWEEN EXECUTION AND TORTURE; ROPES IN EGYPTIAN CHRISTIAN ART**

### **1. ROPES IN EXECUTION AND TORTURE IN CHRISTIANITY:**

Before turning to examine the images of using ropes in Egyptian Christian art, it will be mandatory to sketch some background account about the cultural perceptions of suicide by hanging in the Roman Empire during the first century AD and to review the early textual traditions surrounding Judas's death in the New Testament in order to delve into the potential motivations for the iconography of Judas's suicide.

The word rope was used in the Old Testament to refer to "binding." This word was mentioned in the New Testament for "what is made of nails or ties." It could mean small ropes that serve as whips (John 2:15). The ropes were usually made of flax, hemp or fiber, but the Egyptians, as well as the Hebrews, used to make ropes from leather thongs. Putting ropes around the necks was a sign of distress and distress (1 Kings 20: 31). Perhaps it is referring to the ropes of sin (Proverbs 5: 22).

Ropes and threads were connected with the religious oppression which was systematically practiced by the Roman emperors towards the believers of the new religion. As Christianity spread quickly across the various provinces of the Roman Empire, its values were seen as a significant threat to the traditional pagan beliefs and the authority of the emperor. Additionally, those who converted to Christianity and refused to worship the Roman gods or emperors were blamed for any major disasters that befell the empire. By the time the persecution ended with the Edict of Milan in 313 AD, issued by Constantine the Great and Licinius, Christians had endured ten brutal waves of violence and massacres

under the reigns of emperors Nero (54-68), Domitian (81-96), Trajan (98-117), Marcus Aurelius (161-180), Septimius Severus (193-211), Maximinus (235-238), Decius (249-251), Valerian (253-259), Aurelian (270-275), and Diocletian (284-305)<sup>(1)</sup>.

The Roman emperors, governors, and pagan judges used all means of torture to threaten the Christians and break their morals. They used harsh physical oppression, all sort of scorn and humiliation as well as social isolation trying to face the rapid spread of Christianity but in vain <sup>(2)</sup>There were many methods of physical torture that were practiced against saints and martyrs, and examples of these methods are: imprisonment in prisons, where the prisoners had their hands tied behind them with ropes and their legs were fixed in the stocks. The later torment equipment consisted of two wooden sticks with holes in them that were used to wrap them around the legs of the guilty (Acts 16: 24). In addition, flogging with whips and beating with sticks were also attested (Acts 16:22-24). The early Christians were lifted up and hung from one of their hands or feet, as they were tied to pillars without resting on their feet, but the weight of their bodies was attached to the thick ropes or metal chains to which they were tied. Hanging with ropes and crucifixion with nails or ropes were one of the several torture methods that were followed during that era. <sup>(3)</sup>There were many uses of ropes in all means of torture, so they were used in order to restrain themselves before starting execution or during torture. For instance, during the torture of

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<sup>(1)</sup> Atiya, A. S. *A History of Eastern Christianity*. Repr. Millwood, N.Y., 1980, p.26; Delahaye, H. "Les Martyrs d'Egypte." *Analecta Bollandiana* 40 (1922):5-154; Frend, W. H. C. (1965), *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church*. Oxford, 169.

<sup>(2)</sup> Cyp.Ep.22:2

<sup>(3)</sup> Mason, (2009), *Historic Martyrs of the primitive church*, 107-120.

Saint George of Cappadocia, his hand was tied around his back with ropes before he was beheaded with a sword. <sup>(4)</sup>

Ropes were also used in torturing St. Sergius, Saint Mina. Among the martyrs were the soldiers, Abskhayroon al-Qalini, <sup>(5)</sup> Ababjul al-Jundi, and among the bishops, Pope Boutros, the Seal of the Martyrs, and among the martyr priests, Abba Kluj, <sup>(6)</sup> Abba Castor priest the priest <sup>(7)</sup> and the deacon Timothy, whose hand was tied behind his back and tied by his feet in a column. <sup>(8)</sup> Among the monks were Antimus, Londius, and Ebrabius<sup>(9)</sup>, the saint Abbaqir<sup>(10)</sup>, Anba Dioscorus And Sclapios his brother, as well as Saint Barbara<sup>(11)</sup>, Afronia the hermit<sup>(12)</sup>, and Saint Takla, the first martyrs, who were chained during the torments.

**2. ROPES IN EGYPTIAN CHRISTIAN ART:** In Christian art in Egypt, Ropes were used in various contexts inspired from the Old Testament, New Testament and from the biography of saints and martyrs. The scenes in which ropes were involved, either in painting, icons or manuscripts could be classified into four main categories;

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<sup>(4)</sup> Wace, H., (1824-1836), Dictionary of Christian Biography and literature to the end of the sixth century AD, with an account of the principal sects and Heresies, Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 822.

<sup>(5)</sup> Coptic Synaxarium: Paona 7.

<sup>(6)</sup> El Masry, I.H., (1977), introduction to the Coptic church, Cairo: Dar el Alam el Arabi, 20.

<sup>(7)</sup> Friends' Review: A Religious, Literary and Miscellaneous Journal. Ed. James Rhoads & Henry Hartshorne. Philadelphia, J. Tatum. 1883-1884. vol. XXXVII. 199

<sup>(8)</sup> Cheneau, P., (1923), Les saint d'egypte, tome 1, Jérusalem : Couvent des RR. PP. Franciscains, 577-585.

<sup>(9)</sup> Coptic Synaxarium: Hator 22.

<sup>(10)</sup> Coptic Synaxarium: Meshir 6.

<sup>(11)</sup> Coptic Synaxarium: Koiak 8.

<sup>(12)</sup> Abd El-Motagally, H., (2020), Saint Thecla on Coptic wall Paintings, *IJASWA* 3 (1), 50.

## 2.1. ROPES IN THE SCENES OF SACRIFICE OF ISAAC<sup>(13)</sup>:

### 2.1.1. Abraham and Isaac from Chapel of Exodus at El Bagawat(Fig.1<sup>(14)</sup>)

Date: First half of fourth century

Provenance: Chapel of Exodus at El- Bagawat

Material: Stucco wall painting

#### • Description:

The Sacrifice of Isaac was a common subject for early Christian art<sup>(15)</sup>. In the center of the east wall, a scene is depicted of Abraham<sup>(16)</sup> preparing to sacrifice Isaac. Abraham

<sup>(13)</sup> As for the story of the sacrifice of Issac : The sacrifice of Isaac presented Abraham with an incredibly difficult test, one that he passed fully due to his unwavering faith and obedience to God. God instructed Abraham, saying, "Go to the area of Moriah with your beloved son, Isaac, your only son. There, sacrifice him on one of the mountains I'll show you as a burned offering" (Genesis 22:2, NIV). Abraham started the trek with Isaac, two slaves, and a donkey. Upon reaching their destination, Abraham instructed the servants to stay with the donkey while he and Isaac ascended the mountain. He told the servants, "After we worship, we'll come back to you" (Genesis 22:5, NIV). When they reached the place God had chosen, Abraham told Isaac that he was to be sacrificed by his father. Isaac, accepting God's will, allowed it to happen. Abraham then bound Isaac with ropes and laid him on the altar. As Abraham lifted the knife to offer his son as a sacrifice, the angel of the Lord called out, telling him to halt and spare the boy. Abraham looked up and noticed a ram caught by its horns in a bush. He sacrificed the ram, which God had provided as a substitute for Isaac. In response, God promised Abraham that he and his descendants would inherit the land. See: Ismail, Sh., & Saied, L., & Radwan, R., (2018), "The Iconography of the Sacrifice of Isaac in Early Christian Art", *IAJFTH* 4, 24-25.

<sup>(14)</sup> Fakhry, A., (1950), The Necropolis of El-Bagawat in Kharga Oasis, Cairo, 63; Martin, M., (2006), Observations on the Paintings of the Exodus Chapel, Bagawat Necropolis, Kharga Oasis, Egypt: Australian Association for Byzantine Studies, Melbourne, 241; Kessler, E., (2003), "A Response to Marc Bregman", *JTR* 2, 35.

<sup>(15)</sup> Kessler, E., (2003), 29.

<sup>(16)</sup> Abraham is the Honorable Patriarch. He was mentioned Khalilullah in Old Testament and the chief father of Israelis, father of all Christians the



is situated behind an altar with a fire burning on it, holding a knife in his left hand. Isaac stands on the opposite side of the altar, his arms crossed over his chest. Sarah, Isaac's mother, is positioned beside him, standing beneath a tree. She lifts her arms and face to the heavens in prayer, adopting the orans posture. On the other side of the scene, beneath the tree, untethered ram is visible.<sup>(17)</sup> Above Abraham's name, the hand of God is illustrated to the right. It is painted in red color.<sup>(18)</sup>

### **2.1.2 Relief with the sacrifice of Abraham (Fig.2)**

Date: 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> century

Provenance: Unknown

Preservation place: Coptic Museum, Inv.No, 4353

Material: Limestone

Dimension: H.44 cm , w 82 cm<sup>(19)</sup>

Description: Abraham and Isaac are positioned centrally beneath an arch in a frontal pose. Abraham raises his right hand holding a knife, while his left-hand grips Isaac's head by the hair. Isaac is completely nude, his hands bound behind his back, and he slightly bends his knees. To the left of Abraham, the ram is depicted, ready to take Isaac's place on the altar in the right corner, acting as the substitute sacrifice provided by God. The ram is shown in profile. At the top left corner of the arch, a hand extends to grasp Abraham's arm, halting him from sacrificing his son, visually representing God's intervention<sup>(20)</sup>.

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believers and the father of Christ in New Testament. See: Hassan, Sh, (2023), " The Symbolism of .colors in Exodus Chapel in Al- Bagwat tombs in Kharga Oasis in the New Valley, *HISS 3* ,Issue 2 ,841.

<sup>(17)</sup> Martin, M., (2006) , 241.

<sup>(18)</sup> Kessler, E., (2002), 83.

<sup>(19)</sup> Ismail, Sh., & Saied, L., & Radwan , R., (2018), 38.

<sup>(20)</sup> Leibovitch, J. (1940), "Un fronton de niche Copte a scène biblique", *BSAC 6*, 169-175. ; Gabra, G., Eaton-Krauss, M., (2010), 103

### 2.1.3. Gallons representing the sacrifice of Isaac Tapestry (Fig.3)

Date : 6<sup>th</sup> Century

Provenance: Cooper Union Museum, New York (Baron Collection), inv. No. 1902-1-142(No. 1740 in the archive of Coptic Museum )

Material: Textile (Linen and wool)

Dimension: 29x14.5 cm.

Description:

Abraham is depicted in the central panel holding a knife in his right hand while his left-hand grips Isaac's head by the hair. Isaac is completely nude, his hands bound behind his back, and he slightly bends his knees. From the left corner, the hand of God reaches down to arrest the sacrifice. At the feet of Abraham is the ram ready for substitution.<sup>(21)</sup>

### 2.1.4. Gallons representing the sacrifice of Isaac Tapestry (Fig:4):

Date: ninth century

جمال هرمينا بطرس (٢٠١٠)، المناظر الطبيعية والدينية والرمزية في التصوير القبطي: دراسة فنية تحليلية مقارنة بالفن المصري والفن الإسلامي، رسالة دكتوراة غير منشورة، كلية الآثار جامعة القاهرة ، ص ١١٥ & منير بسطا وحشمت مسيحه (٢٠٠٥)، جولة في ربوع المتحف القبطي، موسوعة تراث القبط، الجزء الثالث، ٥٤٣.

<sup>(21)</sup> Cannuyer, Ch., (2002), Coptic Egypt: The Christians of the Nile, London: Thames & Hudson, 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.89 ;Worcester Museum catalogue, The Dark Ages: Loan Exhibition of Pagan and Christian Art in the Latin West and Byzantine East, Worcester, 1937,no. 141; Riefstahl, R. M., Early tapestries in the Cooper Union collection, in Art in America, v. Ill, 1915, p. 300, fig. 12 ,p. 250; D'Hennezel, H.,(1929), Musée Historique des Tissus: Catalogué des Principales Pièces Exposées,. Lyon, ,No.20,p.8

Provenance: Tissus, Historical Museum, inv No.  
24.400.55/866.I38  
24.400.55/866.I38<sup>(22)</sup>

Material: Textile

Dimensions: 12 X 26 cm

Description : The biblical tale of Abraham's near-sacrifice of his son Isaac is portrayed in the tapestry .The Gallons Representing the Sacrifice of Isaac, which is housed in the Musée Historique des Tissus in Lyon<sup>(23)</sup>. Grabbing Isaac's hair with one hand, Abraham wields a sword with the other. Isaac is shown as a naked boy kneeling on a round altar with yellow and blue tiles. His hands bound behind his back, and he slightly bends his knees. The ram is placed beneath Abraham's feet, ready to replace Isaac on the altar. As Abraham is ready to sacrifice his son, the blue-colored hand of God appears above the clouds to step in and stop him.<sup>(24)</sup>

#### **2.1.5. The Sacrifice of Isaac, located in Saint Catherine's Monastery in Sinai (Fig:5):**

Date: 7<sup>th</sup> Century

Provenance: Monastery of St. Catherine at Mount Sinai

Material: Marble<sup>(25)</sup>

Dimensions: H. at left 154 cm, at right 153 cm; W. at top 81 cm, at bottom 82.5 cm.<sup>(26)</sup>

Description:

This scene shows Abraham in the upper left corner, with

<sup>(22)</sup> Rutschowskaya, M., (1990), Coptic Fabrics, Paris, 124.

<sup>(23)</sup> Ismail, Sh., & Saied, L., & Radwan, R., (2018), 43.

<sup>(24)</sup> Brooklyn Museum (1941), 202; Rutschowskaya, M., (2000), L'art Copte en Egypte, Paris, 222.

<sup>(25)</sup> Schroeder, C., (2012), Child Sacrifice in Egyptian Monastic Culture: From Familial Renunciation to Jephthah's Lost Daughter, *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 20 (2), 272.

<sup>(26)</sup> Ismail, Sh., & Saied, L., & Radwan, R., (2018), 30.

Isaac positioned between him and a column of fire atop the altar. Abraham is standing on a little pile of dark brown, mound, gripping Isaac's hair while turning his head away. With his right hand, he presses a knife to Isaac's neck. The name "Isaac" is inscribed behind Abraham near his left elbow.<sup>(27)</sup> Isaac is shown kneeling on the altar, his arms bound behind him<sup>(28)</sup>. Rather than the usual depiction of God's hand, the artist uses three yellowish rays emerging from an arc in the sky, symbolizing the Trinity.<sup>(29)</sup>

**2.1.6. The Sacrifice of Isaac from Abu Maqar church, (Wadi An-Natrun) (Fig:6):**

Date: 11<sup>th</sup> century

Provenance: Abu Maqar church, (The Monastery of Saint Macarius Wadi el-Natrun)

Material: stucco

Dimensions: H. 1.50 m & W. 2.05 m<sup>(30)</sup>

Description:

Painting from the Monastery of Saint Macarius depicts 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. The scene is split into two parts: Abraham and Isaac are depicted in the spandrel on the right, while the two servants and the donkey are shown in the spandrel on the left. Abraham steps toward the center of the

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<sup>(27)</sup> Van Loon, G, (1999), *The Gate of Heaven: Wall Paintings with Old Testament Scenes in the Altar Room and the Hürus of Coptic Churches*, Belgium, 155.

<sup>(28)</sup> Weitzmznn, K., (1976), *The Monastery of Saint Catherine at Mount Sinai: the icons*, vol.1, New Jersey, 50.

<sup>(29)</sup> Weitzmznn, K., (1964), *The Jephthah Panel in the Bema of the Church of St. Catherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai*: *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, Vol. 18, 342.

<sup>(30)</sup> Ismail, Sh., & Saied, L., & Radwan, R., (2018), 32.

arch, his right foot resting on the decorative border. In front of him, Isaac lies on an altar. 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.<sup>(31)</sup>

Abraham is portrayed as an elderly man with long gray hair that falls over his shoulders. Isaac is shown half-naked and barefoot, with long black hair and beige-colored skin.<sup>(32)</sup> His only clothing is a light gray, knee-length wrap-around skirt, tied at the waist with a belt. He is positioned on an altar, which is painted in blue<sup>(33)</sup>. The angel, placed to the right of Abraham, is depicted floating in the air with bent knees. He points towards Abraham with his right hand, while his left hand is crossed over his chest. Behind the angel, there are traces of the ram.<sup>(34)</sup>

#### **2.1.7. The sacrifices of Abraham and Jephthah (Fig:7)**

Date: 13th century<sup>(35)</sup>

Provenance: Central haykal, South wall from the Monastery of Saint-Antony, Red Sea

Material: stucco

Dimension: H.1.35 m, w. 2.05 m<sup>(36)</sup>

Description: A wall painting represents the sacrifices of Jephthah and Abraham<sup>(37)</sup>. Both Abraham and Jephthah are

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<sup>(31)</sup> Kitat, S. & Fekry, E. (2022), The Iconography of Weapons in Coptic Paintings from the Fourth Century till the Thirteenth Century AD, *IJHTH* 16, , issue 2.1, 9.

<sup>(32)</sup> White, E., (1933), The Monasteries of the Wadi 'n Ntrun: architecture and archeology, Part III, New York,109

<sup>(33)</sup> Ismail,Sh., & Saied,L.,& Radwan , R., (2018),,33.

<sup>(34)</sup> Van Loon, G., (1999), 42 .

<sup>(35)</sup> Schroeder, C.,(2012),272.

<sup>(36)</sup> Ismail,Sh., & Saied,L.,& Radwan , R., (2018),36

<sup>(37)</sup> Innemée, K.C. (2022), Human Sacrifice from Ancient Israel to Early Christianity, K.C. Innemée (ed.), The Value of a Human Life, Ritual

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<sup>(38)</sup>.

In front of Abraham, Isaac is seen kneeling on an altar with his wrists bound behind his back and striking the three-quarter attitude. With his right hand bringing the knife to Isaac's throat, Abraham uses his left hand to pull his son's head back while holding his long black hair. A hand that represents God's voice appears in the upper left corner, pointing to a ram that is fastened to a little blooming tree.<sup>(39)</sup> Isaac's features are painted in black, and he is seen with long black hair. He is just dressed in a scarlet wraparound skirt that is knotted around his waist and reaches his ankles. His ankles and forearms are encrusted with bracelets. The ornamental border is somewhat obscured by his right foot.<sup>(40)</sup> The setting includes a stone altar composed of huge rectangular stones. Standing on golden land, the white ram with dark crimson horns looks at Abraham. Its neck and the trunk of a tiny tree are both bound with a scarlet rope. It is a tree with a conical crown and a narrow stem. Its branches are covered with dark crimson blooms and green leaves<sup>(41)</sup>.

On the other corner, Jephthah is grasping a knife in his right hand. The knife is depicted vertically and its blade is directed toward to the human sacrifice. Jephthah is smiling and

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Killing and Human Sacrifice in Antiquity, Side stone Press, 107; Schroeder, C.,(2012),272.

<sup>(38)</sup> Kitat, S. & Fekry, E. (2022),9.

<sup>(39)</sup> Pasi, S., (2010), I dipinti della chiesa di Al-Adran elmonastero di Deir-el-Baramus (Wadi-el Natrun), *ZOGRAF*,XXXIV, 42.

<sup>(40)</sup> Van Loon, G, (1999), 95.

<sup>(41)</sup> Boolman, E.,(2002), Monastic Vision: Wall Painting in the Monasteries of St. Antony at the Red Sea, London, , 66.

looking towards the hand of the God which is illustrated behind the figure of Abraham<sup>(42)</sup>.

### **2.1.8 The Sacrifice of Abraham (Fig:8)**

Date: 18<sup>th</sup> Century

Provenance: Monastery of Saint-Antony near the Red Sea.

Material: Wood

Technique: tempera

Dimension: H. 64.3; I. 52; ep. 2.8.<sup>(43)</sup>

Description: The Sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham (Gen 22, 1-19). For the main scene, God testing Abraham, an altar of stone and wood is set up in the center of the composition in a desert plain evoking the country of Moriya. Isaac is seen kneeling on an altar, blindfolded with his wrists bound behind his back and striking the three-quarter attitude. Abraham stands behind his son. The father's fatal gesture is restrained by an angel in flight who grabs the knife that Abraham holds in his right hand and tells him to his left hand the hanging ram whose horns got caught in a tree. Near the angel, Abraham's visitors are resting and on the right top part, the three fathers of the old testament with their symbols.<sup>(44)</sup>

### **2.1.9. The Sacrifice of Abraham (Fig:9)**

Date: 18<sup>th</sup> century

Provenance: church St. Mercury (Abu Sifin), Cairo.

Inventory number: PVM 132.

Dimensions: H. 25; I. 22.

Material: Canvas on wood

<sup>(42)</sup> Ismail, Sh., & Saied, L., & Radwan, R., (2018), 37.

<sup>(43)</sup> Atalla, N., (1998), Coptic Icons, vol.II, Cairo, Lehnert & Landrock art publishers, 133.

<sup>(44)</sup> Auber, A., (2018). "Yuhanna al-Armani al-Qudsi et le renouveau de l'art de l'icône en Égypte ottomane." Thesis, Paris Sciences et Lettres (ComUE), 163.

Technique: Tempera.<sup>(45)</sup>

Description: According to the story, the painter depicts an altar of stone and wood in the center of the composition in a green plain representing the country from Moriya. Isaac is shown half-naked and barefoot, with short black hair and wearing a simple beige loincloth.<sup>(46)</sup> Isaac is shown half-naked and barefoot, with short black hair and wearing a simple beige loincloth.<sup>(47)</sup> His only clothing is a light gray, knee-length wrap-around skirt, tied at the waist with a belt. He is positioned on an altar, which is painted in blue<sup>(48)</sup>. To his left, burnt logs fuel a fire over which a steaming cauldron is boiling. Abraham stands to the right of his son. The angel, placed to the right of Abraham, is depicted floating in the air with bent knees. He points towards Abraham with his right hand, while his left hand points to the anging ram whose horns got caught in a tree. This white ram presents the particularity of being fat-tailed, a species particularly bred in Egypt.<sup>(49)</sup>

#### **2.1.10 The Sacrifice of Abraham (Fig:10)**

Date: 19<sup>th</sup> Century

Provenance: Church of the Martyrs Abakir and John in Babylon El-Darag ,Cairo.

Description: Abraham is depicted in the central panel, holding a knife in his right hand, while his left-hand grips Isaac's head by the hair. Isaac is depicted with his hands bound behind his back, and he slightly bends his knees. From

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<sup>(45)</sup> Skalova, Z. ,Gabra,G.,(2006). Icons of the Nile Valley, 2nd ed. (Cairo: Egyptian International Publishing-Longman).108-110

<sup>(46)</sup> White, E., (1933), The Monasteries of the Wadi 'n Ntrun: architecture and archeology, Part III,New York,109

<sup>(47)</sup> White, E., (1933),109.

<sup>(48)</sup> Ismail,Sh., & Saied,L.,& Radwan , R., (2018),,33.

<sup>(49)</sup>Butler, A.J. (1884) Ancient Coptic Churches of Egypt. Oxford at the Clarendon Press, London, Vol. 2,.95; Auber,A.,( 2018 ), 204.



the left corner, the hand of God reaches down to arrest the sacrifice. At the feet of Abraham is the ram ready for substitution.<sup>(50)</sup>

## 2.2.ROPES IN THE SCENES OF JESUS THE CHRIST:

### 2.2.1. ROPES IN CRUCIFIXION SCENES:

During the Roman Empire, Crucifixion was one of the forms of punishment that had been attested in Palestine and Judea. Furthermore, it was represented in the four canonical Gospels.<sup>(51)</sup> It is recorded also that Jesus Christ, before his death, had referred to his crucifixion, as he informed his disciples: "*As you know, the Passover is two days away—and the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified.*" (Matthew 26:2)

Ropes were used to tie the hands (Fig.11), so the icons of the crucifixion depict Jesus between two crucified people tied with ropes<sup>(52)</sup>. There were two types of fastening to the cross: nailing or tying with ropes. The punishment of crucifixion by tying ropes was applied to the common people among dangerous thieves who were applied to thieves<sup>(53)</sup>.

In the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, it was mentioned that those crucified with Christ were two thieves: "Matthew 27: 38." *Two thieves were crucified with him, one on the right*

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<sup>(50)</sup> Saied,Y.,(2016), The Representation of the Relationship of some saints with animals and birds and it's symbolism in Coptic art (Artistic and Archeological studying), Faculty of Tourism and Hotels , Alexandria University, 46.

<sup>(51)</sup> Mostafa,R.,(2019), Women Accompanying Virgin Mary in Crucifixion Scenes: A Study in the New Testament Scenes, **JAAUTH 17(3)**, 2; Shah,B., (2015), Ancient method of crucifixion, Historical Jesus and why Resurrection of Historical Jesus is Possible, State University of New York College at Buffalo,5.

<sup>(52)</sup> Robison, John C.(2002), "Crucifixion in the Roman World: The Use of Nails at the Time of Christ." *Studia Antiqua 2, no. 1*,26.

<sup>(53)</sup> Shah,B., (2015),6.

*and one on the left. Mark 15:27 and with him they crucified two robbers, one on his right and one on his left.*

Historically, crucifixion or hanging on a tree is a very old punishment. Even before the time of Moses, the cross was initially standing vertically like the trunk of a tree<sup>54</sup>. It was mentioned in the Book of Deuteronomy in the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 21:23), and the Greek language retained the word *Stauros* to refer to the cross. Later, another horizontal or crossbar was added to the vertical post, and the convicts were fixed to it with nails or ropes, and they were left in this way until they died. The cross was low, and only the perpetrators of major crimes are crucified high<sup>55</sup>.

The methods of crucifixion differed from one city to another<sup>56</sup>. Herodotus distinguished two types of crucifixion, the first referring to the crucifixion of a person alive, and the second to hanging a dead body on the cross. In both cases, the goal remains the same: for the victim to suffer the most severe form of humiliation. Therefore, they are attached to the cross with nails or ropes, and left to die slowly, if they are alive, or they are given food to the birds if they are dead. This method of execution terrified the ancients, so they refrained from speaking about it in detail, which makes it difficult for us to know the methods of crucifixion<sup>57</sup>.

### **2.2.1.1 Iconography of Ropes in Crucifixion scenes (Fig:12)**

Icon of the crucifixion and the Holy Week Events

Date: 13th century

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<sup>(54)</sup> Cilliers, L& Retief, F., (2010), Christ's crucifixion as a medico-historical event, [\*Acta Theologica\* 26\(2\)](#), 295.

<sup>(55)</sup> Shah, B., (2015), 5.

<sup>(56)</sup> Robison, John C. (2002), 50.

<sup>(57)</sup> Herodotus 1.128.2; 3.125.3; 3.132.2; 3.159.1

Provenance: unknown provenance.<sup>(58)</sup>

Place of preservation: Coptic Museum N.3349

Material: gilding on linen and wood

Technique: Tempera

Description:

In early Coptic Art, it is noticed that scenes of Crucifixion were rare. This Icon is divided into three registers; The main scene of the crucifixion is finely executed, it is characterized by its obvious and intense emotions. In the central zone, Jesus Christ is depicted while being flanked by two thieves; whilst Virgin Mary is shown accompanied by the three Marys. The scene shows Jesus Christ with a naked chest and his arms outstretched and nailed to a wooden cross. It highlights the main events of the crucifixion day: to the right side of the cross, Virgin Mary is portrayed while mourning Jesus Christ and supported by women around her “the *three Marys*”. At the foot of the Cross stands John the apostle and one of the Roman centurions.<sup>(59)</sup>

#### **2.2.1.2. A triptych icon of crucifixion (Fig:13)**

Date: 18<sup>th</sup> Century

Place of preservation: Coptic Museum, M.C 3380

Dimensions: H. 39,7 ; l. 59,7 ; ep. 1.

Material: Canvas on wood; tempera

Description:

The central panel of this triptych is decorated with the Crucifixion of Christ. Jesus the Christ is depicted with a naked upper torso with his arms stretched and nailed to a wooden cross; he is represented in the middle between two thieves. As

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<sup>(58)</sup> Gabra, G., Eaton-Krauss, M., (2019), *The Treasures of Coptic Art in the Coptic Museum and Churches of Old, Cairo* ; New York : American University in Cairo Press, 200.

<sup>(59)</sup> Skalova, Z. ,Gabra,G.,(2006). *Icons of the Nile Valley*, 2nd ed. (Cairo: Egyptian International Publishing-Longman).

for thieves, their hands are wrapped with a rope. They are depicted in the crucifixion scene. On the right side of the cross stands Virgin Mary, standing next to St. John the Evangelist. The good thief, Dismas, is tied to a cross by ropes on the left flap. Her stare goes to the central Christ. He is dressed in a beige perizonium. The bad thief, Gesmas, is in an attitude identical to Dismas on the right part. However, his body is opposed to the central panel and he turns away his face with more emaciated than those of Christ.

### **2.2.1.3. The icon of Crucifixion scene (fig.14)**

Date: 19<sup>th</sup> century

Provenance: the church of the Theodore in Old Cairo

Description: The scene shows Jesus Christ with a naked chest and his arms outstretched and nailed to a wooden cross. He is depicted in the middle between two crucified people tied with ropes. Scenes of Christ crucified in the midst of two naked thieves, eyes closed, his head tilted to the left, and he was wearing a tunic around his waist that reached up to the knees. As for thieves, both of them appear to be wrapped with a rope. Behind the horizontal crossbeam, both of them wear a blue tunic around their waists that reaches to the knees.<sup>(60)</sup>

(Figs. 15, 16, 17, 18) These Icons represent a crucifixion scene; the main scene of the crucifixion is finely executed, it is characterized by its obvious and intense emotions. In the central zone, Jesus Christ is depicted while being flanked by two thieves; as for thieves, both of them appear to be blindfolded and their hands are wrapped with a rope. Whilst Virgin Mary is shown accompanied by the three Marys, in a scene that marks their sad and gloomy facial

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<sup>(60)</sup> Atalla, N., (1998), 61 ; Khalaf, M., (2022), Caps and Identity: Origin and Interpretation of Phrygian Caps in Coptic Art, International Journal of Tourism and Hospitality Management, Volume 5, Issue 2, 251.

features.

The scene shows Jesus Christ with a naked chest and his arms outstretched and nailed to a wooden cross. It highlights the main events of the crucifixion day: to the right side of the cross, Virgin Mary is portrayed while mourning Jesus Christ, her facial features are artistically shown full of sorrow, anguish, misery and sadness, through showing her eyes crying with narrower eyebrows. In this scene Virgin Mary is shown bordered with the three other Marys, who were mourning and giving her the support through patting her body in order not to be fallen, they are suffering but still trying to support her, and two of them were gazing at her with deep emotions, while the third was watching the scene of crucifixion.

In such representation the mutual exposed emotions of pain, sympathy, helplessness and somber of the ladies are forming a unique combination of various artistic influences with a pure focus on the Coptic Art. This is also exposed by the power of body language, especially the movement of the ladies' hands, as they mark the nerve connection and reveal the feeling comparing to the other parts of the body. The feeling of fear is also highlighted through placing the hand over the chest with an open palm.<sup>(61)</sup>

### **2.2.2. ROPES IN THE SCENES OF JUDGEMENT OF JESUS THE CHRIST**

Christ was judged both religiously and civilly. Religiously before Annas and Caiaphas and civilly before Herod and Pilate. On the night that Christ was arrested, they brought him before Ananias, Caiaphas, and a council of religious leaders known as the Sanhedrin, after which he was

<sup>(61)</sup> Attala N. S.,(1998), 60.; Shafik , Mamdouh (éd.), (2008),27; Auber,A.,( 2018 ), 254.

taken before Pilate, the Roman governor, sent to appear before Herod, and then returned to Pilate, who finally condemned him to death. (Matthew 26:57-10:27, Mark 14:53-72, 15:1, Luke 22:54-71, John 18:13-27)

The Roman government did not give the Jewish leaders authority to carry out executions. This is why the Jewish leaders brought Jesus before Pilate, the Roman governor of Judea. The Jewish leaders expected a positive outcome when they went to Pilate. History shows that he was a cruel and merciless man. That is why they believed that Pilate would certainly execute Jesus. As Barclay writes: "*Philo, the ancient Jewish scholar from Alexandria, described Pilate as follows: he was corrupt and arrogant, continually robbing and insulting people, and cruel and ordering people to be put to death without any fair trial or even condemnation. His brutality is endless.*" Meanwhile, the Jewish leaders knew that Pilate would not care about a charge of blasphemy before a religious council. That is why they presented Pilate with three false accusations."<sup>1</sup> Then their entire multitude arose and brought him to Pilate,<sup>2</sup> and began to accuse him, saying, "We have found this man to corrupt the nation, and forbids paying tribute to Caesar, saying, "He is Christ the King." <sup>3</sup> Pilate asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" And he answered and said, *Thou sayest.* <sup>4</sup> Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowd, "I find no fault in this man." <sup>5</sup> And they insisted, saying, "He stirs up the people, and he teaches throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee until here." ». <sup>6</sup> When Pilate heard that Galilee was mentioned, he asked, "Is the man a Galilean?" <sup>7</sup> And when he learned that he was from the kingdom of Herod, he sent him to Herod, who was also in Jerusalem those days". (Luke 23:1-7)

#### **2.2.2.1 The trial of Christ before Pilate (Fig.19)**

Date: 1179 AD (12<sup>th</sup> century)

Manuscript name: The Four Gospels

Manuscript number: Coptic 13

Page No. 82 back

The original location: Damietta

Preservation place: Paris National Library, France

Copier: bishop Michael of Damietta.

Language: Bohairic

Description: In the manuscript of the Four Gospels in the Gospel of Matthew by Anba Michael, Bishop of Damietta, depicting the trial of Christ before Pilate, Christ appears in the middle of the picture, with his hands tied, wearing a purple garment that reaches all the way to his feet. To his left stands Barabbas, naked except for a blue tunic around his waist that reaches to his knees. On the left side of the picture, Pilate sits squatting on a green cushion placed on a chair made of wood, and it appears as he washes his hands that he absolved himself of the righteous Christ, who did not find any fault on him. Drawing of two soldiers holding weapons in their left hand. In the right of the picture, there is a group of Jews raising their hands protesting and demanding the crucifixion of Christ and the release of Barabbas.<sup>(62)</sup>

Writings: Written above each person in black and in Arabic; dialects read as;

Jews Barabbas Christ soldier Pilate: اليهود باراباس المسيح  
الجند بيلاطس

As for this manuscript, it depicts the trial of Christ before Ananias. Ananias was the high priest (AD 7-AD 14) when he was overthrown by the former governor of Pilate, and his name was Valeros Gratus, twenty years before the events of the crucifixion<sup>(63)</sup>.

<sup>(62)</sup> Leroy J. (1974). *les Manuscrits Coptes et Coptes-Arabs illustrés*, Paris, .129-130

<sup>(63)</sup> Acts 23:1-2

After Ananias, his son Eleazar succeeded him for one year (years 16-17 A.D.), and after him came Caiaphas, his daughter-in-law, and he remained in the presidency until the year 35-36, when he was overthrown by the governor who came after Pilate. After Caiaphas, another son of Hanan, Jonathan (years 36-37 AD), took over the presidency. After him, three of Hanan's sons assumed the presidency, namely Theophilus (years 37-41 AD), then Matthias (years 41-44 AD), then Hanan al-Saghir until the year 62 AD<sup>64</sup>.

But Herod the Great summoned him and his family to appoint him in power in one way or another, and then appointed him as a high priest, and he controlled the priesthood for a long time, especially since five of his children - other than Caiaphas - assumed the priesthood as we mentioned, and because he was very rich, he was able to buy This rank is theirs<sup>65</sup>.

At the trial of Christ, both Annas and Caiaphas lived in the high priest's cell in Jerusalem. And when the soldiers and some of the rabble of the people brought the Lord Christ, they went first to Annas, who in turn sent him bound to Caiaphas, and in these two trials the Lord was only moving from one wing to another within the palace itself<sup>66</sup>.

The first trial before Annas was a conspiracy, while the second before Caiaphas consisted of taking statements, and the third religious trial was before the Sanhedrin, which was - according to form only - the only legal trial<sup>67</sup>.

#### **2.2.2.2 The trial of Christ(Fig.20)**

Date: 12<sup>th</sup> Century

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<sup>(64)</sup> Smallwood,E.,(1962), Priest and Politics in Roman Palestine , *The Journal of Theological Studies* 13 (1), 29.

<sup>(65)</sup> Smallwood,E.,(1962), 22.

<sup>(66)</sup> Smallwood,E.,(1962), 15.

<sup>(67)</sup> Smallwood,E.,(1962), 26.



Manuscript name: The Four Gospels "The Gospel of Luke"

Page No. 56

The original location: St. Mercurius Abu Sefein Church  
- Cairo

Present place: the Catholic Institute in Paris (In the manuscript of the New Testament)

Description: drawing in the fourth rectangle the trial of Jesus before the high priest Ananias. Drawing of Christ in front of Ananias with his hands tied, and pictures of Ananias on the right side, sitting cross-legged on a wooden chair with a red cushion, wearing a green turban and purple clothes. Behind Jesus Christ, there is a group of men perhaps members of the Jewish Sanhedrin or servants protesting and demanding the crucifixion of Christ and the release of Barabbas.(68)

### **2.3.ROPES IN THE SCENES OF THE MARTYRDOM OF JOHN THE BAPTIST**

#### **2.3.1. The martyrdom of John the Baptist (fig.21)**

Date: 1179 AD (12<sup>th</sup> Century)

Manuscript name: The Four Gospels: the Gospel of Matthew

Manuscript number: Coptic 13

The original location: Damietta

Preservation place: The national Library of Paris

Copier: Anba Michael, bishop of Damietta

Language: Bohairic

Description: The illuminator of the manuscript of the Four Gospels for Anba Michael, the Bishop of Damietta in the Gospel of Matthew, portrayed the theme of the martyrdom of John the Baptist. The painting depicts the scene of the beheading of John the Baptist. On the right, they see John prostrating on the ground, bending his neck, tied behind his head, blindfolded with a white handkerchief, wearing a dark

(68) Leroy J. (1974),126.

blue dress that reaches the knees, while his hair and chin are black.

One of Herod's soldiers stands behind him, holding his handcuffs, and wears a dark blue robe that reaches to the knees, with black hair on his head hanging down behind his neck, and he wears long red Roman shoes on his feet. Drawing of the swordsman soldier on the left of the picture, fanning his large dark brown sword on the head of John the Baptist. Drawing behind the soldier, the executioner, the entrance to the prison. The manuscript is written in 2 languages; Arabic and Bohairic dialects read as: Beheading of John the Baptist "قطع رأس يوحنا المعمدان(69)"

### **2.3.2 Martyrdom of John the Baptist(fig.22)**

Date: 1250 AD (13<sup>th</sup> century)

Manuscript name: The Four Gospels - The Gospel of Luke (the manuscript of the New Testament)

The second scene, page No. 18, which contains 6 photos divided 2×3

Original location: St. Mercurius Abu Sefein Church – Cairo

Preservation place: Library of the Catholic Institute in Paris

Language: Coptic & Arabic

Description: The illuminator of the manuscript of the Four Gospels for Abba Michael, the Bishop of Damietta in the Gospel of Luke, portrayed the theme of the martyrdom of John. John the Baptist depicts kneeling and tied with ropes. On the right side, a soldier is depicted wearing a green dress and long black shoes. In his right hand is a long sword. John the Baptist's head was cut off with it, and his head was lying on the ground, according to Herod's order<sup>(70)</sup>.

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<sup>(69)</sup> Leroy J. (1974), 122-123.

<sup>(70)</sup> Leroy J. (1974), 161.

## 2.4. ROPES IN THE SCENES OF TORTURE AND MARTYRDOM OF SAINTS:

In Coptic art, depictions of saints appearing as they are being tortured in different fields, and in the end they are victorious. The art reflects the different conditions of being tied up with ropes as one of the means of torture. Where the hands of the saints appeared tied with ropes behind their backs to appear as they were delivered as prey, and some others were depicted with ropes tied around their waists that were held from their backs and turned down.

Some Coptic scenes also show two modes of execution; Kneeling on the ground or standing with hands tied behind the back. Some Coptic manuscripts depict Christ during his trial with his hands tied behind his back, as well as some unique scenes, including hanging "the gallows" in the manuscripts. In early periods, Egypt's Coptic artists were impacted by the early saints and saints' biographies who martyred in defense of Christian doctrine. Those biographies weren't only a memory of the saints and their suffering but also an educational message that represented the absolute right faith of Christianity and maintaining those convictions in opposition to paganism.

In the early Christianity stages and especially in the middle of the first century AD, Saint Thecla's biography was considered a true representation of the Struggle between the growth of Christianity and the ideas of paganism.<sup>(71)</sup>

Saint Thecla was from a wealthy Roman family from Iconomium City in the east of Italy. She became a Christian woman with the help of Saint Paul. Because of the high

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<sup>(71)</sup> Abd El-Motagally, H., (2020), Saint Thecla on Coptic wall Paintings, *IJASWA 3 (1)*, 49.; Delaney J., (1980), Dictionary of Saints, New York, 543; Abd El-Motagally, H., (2020), 49.

position of her family in the city, Saint Paul was condemned to exile while St.Thecla was judged to burn alive on the stick, but God intervened and rescued her by a storm that extinguished the flames. (72)

Thecla religious story started to spread through the city; however, the governor didn't like that and ordered her to be tied between two wolves and dragged across the city, but yet again she survived, and the governor had no choice but to release her(73).The governor wanted to marry her, but she refused. Then he ordered her to be thrown to the lions, but yet again she survived(74).she was sanctified in Egypt in the early period of the fourth century, and she had a good reputation by the coming of the fifth century AD in the Mediterranean cities and a lot of other regions. She depicted in artifacts such as wall paintings, textiles, combs, lamps and flasks of the pilgrims.(75)

#### **2.4.1Relief sculpture (Fig.23)**

Date: Fourth-fifth century AD

Material: Limestone

Provenance: Bahnasah " oxyrhynchus"

Conservation place: Nelson Gallery, Atkins Museum, Texas City<sup>(76)</sup>

Diameter: 64.7 cm

Description: Saint Takla is depicted in relief sculpture in a circular shape. Around the scene, the decoration of the laurel plant revolves in the form of two branches that meet from above and below. Saint Takla is depicted in the center of the

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(72) Abd El-Motagally, H., (2020), 49.

(73) Delaney J., (1980), 369

(74) Abd El-Motagally, H., (2020), 50.

(75) Hal Abd El-Motagally, H., (2020), 50

(76) Weitzmann, K. (1978), Age of Spirituality. New York, 574-575, note 513.

scene. She wears a long tunic that reaches the feet, and over it another upper dress. A belt is wrapped and tied below her stomach and hangs down between the feet. The saint's hands are tied with ropes behind her back to appear as she surrenders a prey to a lion and a lioness, and above each of them appears an angel wearing a headband and a cross on the chest. It sang about the decoration of the halo, and the piece is in good condition, except for some fractures in its circular edge<sup>(77)</sup>.

#### **2.4.2. Flask (fig.24)**

Date: Sixth-seventh century AD

Material: Pottery

Diameter: 17.7 cm

Conservation place: The British Museum in London

Description: A circular flat terracotta flask with a cylindrical neck and two loops. St Menas appears on the front side between two kneeling camels. On the back side Saint Takla appears tied with ropes, handing prey to animals, wearing a long tunic with sleeves, the head flying around her neck, and the cover flying backwards.

#### **2.4.3. Flask (fig.25)**

Date: Sixth and seventh centuries AD

Preservation place: Louvre Museum in Paris

Material : red pottery

Dimension : 7.27cm×17.5cm

Description :A large clay flask with a cylindrical neck and two loops. On the front side, St Menas appears in a prayer position. The inscription on the edge of the two sides shows the blessing of St. Mina Amin. On the back side, St. Takla appears, referred to by her name, standing smiling in a way that indicates her complete confidence in her victory for

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<sup>(77)</sup> Subias,E (2012), "Fragments of a Relief from Oxyrhynchus: Elements of Late Roman-Coptic Iconography and Styles", *Journal of Coptic Studies* 14,142.

Christianity and surrendering as a prey to animals. Her hands are tied behind her back and ropes wrap her around her waist so that she hangs down and wraps herself around the alliance. Saint Takla wears a long traditional tunic, which is decorated around the opening of the chest and at the knee and shoulder area. She mostly did not depict hidden feet, but rather wore simple shoes that reached the heels of the feet<sup>(78)</sup>

**2.4.4. The pyxis box depicts scenes from St. Mena's life (fig.26)**

Material: ivory

Preservation place: The British Museum

Description: This pyxis featured a hinge and lock, with its sides intricately carved in relief to illustrate scenes of St. Menas's life. The scene pictured above a box is divided into two scenes. The first scene, it relates the story of St. Menas' martyrdom in a wonderful sequence of stories that begins with the court scene, in which we find the Roman governor is shown seated as a judge on a chair without a back, his feet resting on a footstool, with one hand raised and holding the judgment book in his right. To the right of the Roman governor, there are the scene of St. Mena's execution, in which he appears without clothes in the upper half of the body, and a poor tunic covering his private parts from below. St. Menas is portrayed kneeling with his hands bound behind his back. An executioner seizes him by the hair while holding a sword aloft. Behind St. Menas, an angel is depicted flying position

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<sup>(78)</sup> Davis, Stephen J. (2008), *The Cult of Saint Thecla: A Tradition of Women's Piety in Late Antiquity*. *Oxford Early Christian Studies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 114–20, 194–200.; William, A., (2004). "An Archaeology of Late Antique Pilgrim Flasks." *Anatolian Studies* 54, 79–80.

preparing to receive the soul of St. Mina after his execution<sup>(79)</sup>. The flying angel are representing divine intervention and protection.<sup>(80)</sup> Behind St. Menas, there is an armed guard, and further back, a basket can be seen. In front of him, a table is set with an inkpot, with a man holding a diptych positioned behind it. A veiled doorway is visible behind the soldier. St. Menas is positioned beneath an arch on the other side of the pyxis, his hands elevated in the prayer position with nimbus around his head. The head of a slumbering camel on each side of the sanctuary is visible, and two worshippers' approach from each direction.<sup>(81)</sup>

## **2.5. ROPES IN THE SCENES OF THE EXECUTION OF JUDAS THE ISCARIOT**

### **2.5.1. The suicide of Judas:**

The betrayal of Judas is the event mentioned in the New Testament, as the collusion of Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve disciples of Christ, with the members of the Supreme Council of the Jews, with the aim of handing over Christ in exchange for thirty pieces of silver (Matthew 27:1-10). That he was condemned, he repented, and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders," saying, "I have sinned in that I have betrayed blood." bad. They said: "What should we do?" You see!" And he threw the money into the temple, and turned away, and went and hanged himself. So the chief priests took the money and said, "It is not lawful for us to put it into the treasury, because it is the price of blood." (Matthew 27:3)

In western culture, Judas Iscariot became known as the

<sup>(79)</sup> Roman, M., (2018), the representation of victory in Coptic art from the fourth to the tenth Century A.D., Phd, Faculty of Art, Alexandria university, fig. 75, p. 96.

<sup>(80)</sup> Zekry, N (2017), 39.

<sup>(81)</sup> Roman, M., (2018), 96.

disciple who betrayed his master Jesus Christ by a kiss (Mk 14:44–5) and silver bribery (Mt 26:14), By the thirteen Century the depiction of Hanging body of Judas became the center attention in the western Christian and byzantine art. The "Hanging-Judas" was the most well-known of the numerous derogatory pictures created and disseminated during the middle Ages.<sup>(82)</sup>

As for what came in the Gospel of Matthew and the Book of Acts of the Apostles about his repentance and death, there is a difference in some details. Matthew mentions that the judgment against Jesus was a reason for awakening his sense of guilt and in his increases despair because of the chief priests and elders expelling him and he strangled himself.” And the chief priests bought the potter’s field for silver, which was later called “the field of blood.” Thus, the prophecy of Zechariah 11: 12-14 was fulfilled. As for what came in (Acts 1:16-20), it does not mention anything about Judas’ remorse or the chief priests, but it only mentions that: Judas acquired a field from the wages of oppression, and when it fell on his face, it split open in the middle, and all his bowels gushed out (Acts 1:18). The writer of the Book of Acts finds in this a fulfillment of the prophecy that came in (Psalm 69: 25), which is as it was mentioned in the Vulgate: “When he hanged himself, his bowels gushed out,” thus linking the two accounts.

In the New Testament, Judas appears in lists of the 12 disciples (Mt 10:4, Mk 3:9, Lk 6:16), and is often designated as ‘one of the Twelve’ (Mt 26:14, 47, Mk 14:10, 43, Lk 22:3, 47, Jn 6:71, 12:4, cf. Acts 1:17);

Although the Hebrew Bible (where six instances of

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<sup>(82)</sup> Harley, F.,(2020), “Hanging by a thread The death of Judas in early Christian art,” in *The Eloquence of Art Essays in Honour of Henry Maguire*, Edited by Andrea Olsen Lam and Rossitza Schroeder, New York: Routledge,. 115,



suicide are recorded)<sup>4</sup> and the New Testament do not specifically forbid or condemn suicide, attitudes towards intentional death started to change in both philosophical and Christian societies in the third century.<sup>(83)</sup> Jerome made the claim that Judas betrayed Jesus more by hanging himself than by betraying him in the late fourth century.<sup>7</sup> Judas's death was perceived in this way as not atoning for his transgression but rather amplifying it<sup>(84)</sup>.

Ron Brown described the rope as “the most demeaning and sinful of deaths carried with it association of punishment for crime of Judas’s death and his betrayal of Christ.”<sup>(85)</sup> The first time Judas is identified as the one who hands Jesus over is in the Gospel of Mark, which was written around 70, however it is not clear why he did it or exactly what he did (Mk 14:10).<sup>(86)</sup>

### 2.5.2. The suicide of Judas (fig.27)

Manuscript name: The Four Gospels

Date: 1179 AD-1180AD (12<sup>th</sup> Century)

Manuscript number: 13 Coptic

Page No : 81 face

The original location: Damietta

Preservation place: Paris National Library, France

Copier: Anba Michael, Bishop of Damietta

Language: Bohairic

Description: The illuminator of the manuscript of the

<sup>(83)</sup> Harley, F.,(2020), 116-117; 124, note 4, 5; Droge, A.J. & Tabor, J.D., (1992), *A Noble Death: Suicide and Martyrdom among Christians and Jews in Antiquity* (San Francisco), 53–61; Van Hooff, A. J. L., (1990), *From Autothanasia to Suicide: Self-Killing in Classical Antiquity*, London, 192–197.

<sup>(84)</sup> Harley, F.,(2020), 116.

<sup>(85)</sup> Ron Brown, *Art of Suicide*, London, 2001, p. 129

<sup>(86)</sup> Harley, F.,(2020), 116.

Four Gospels for Anba Michael, the Bishop of Damietta in the Gospel of Matthew, portrayed the rare miniature picture, which is the scene of Judas hanging himself, and he appeared hanging with a thick rope attached to a wooden crossbar above an open entrance. before him the devil is depicted as a smashing beast . The manuscript is written in Arabic languages; dialects read as;

"Judas strangled himself"<sup>(87)</sup> "خنق يهوذا لنفسه"

**Table. 1 Analysis for the Ropes that are mentioned through the study:**

Iconography	Figures	Body Posture	Depiction of Ropes	Provenance	Museum	Date
Context						
	FIG:1	Hands tied back in standing position	indirect	Chapel of Exodus aEl Bagawat		4 <sup>th</sup> Century
SACRIFICE OF ISAAC	FIG:2	Hands tied back in standing position	indirect	Unknown	Coptic Museum, Inv.No ,4353	5 <sup>th</sup> -6 <sup>th</sup> century
	FIG:3	Hands tied back in the kneeling pose	indirect		Cooper Union Museum, New York (Baron Collection), inv. No. 1902-1-142	6 <sup>th</sup> Century
	FIG:4	Hands tied back in the kneeling pose	indirect		Tissus, Historical Museum, inv. No. 24.400.55/866.138	9 <sup>th</sup> century
	FIG:5	Hands tied back in the kneeling pose	indirect	Monastery of St. Catherine at Mount Sinai		7 <sup>th</sup> Century
	FIG:6	Hands tied back in the kneeling pose	Indirect	Abu Maqar church, (The Monastery of Saint Macarius		11 <sup>th</sup> century

<sup>(87)</sup> Leroy J. (1974),129.

				Wadi el-Natrun)		
	FIG:7	Hands tied back in the kneeling pose	Indirect	Central haykal, South wall from the Monastery of Saint-Antony, Red Sea		13 <sup>th</sup> century
	FIG:8	Hands tied back in the kneeling pose	Direct	Monastery of Saint-Antony near the Red Sea.		18 <sup>th</sup> Century
	FIG:9  FIG:10	Hands tied back in the kneeling pose  Hands tied back in the kneeling pose	Direct  Indirect	church St. Mercury (Abu Sifin), Cairo Church of the Martyrs Abakir and John in Babylon El-Darag ,Cairo.		18 <sup>th</sup> Century  19 <sup>th</sup> Century
crucifixion of the Christ	FIG:12	two thieves were tied up in ropes	Direct	unknown provenance	Coptic Museum Inv.No.3349	13th century
	FIG:13	two thieves were tied up in ropes	Direct		Coptic Museum, M.C 3380	18 <sup>th</sup> Century
	FIG:14	two thieves were tied up in ropes	Direct	the church of the Theodore in Old Cairo		19 <sup>th</sup> century

**Between Execution and Torture; Ropes in Egyptian  
Christian Art**

	<b>Figs. 15, 16, 17, 18</b>	<b>two thieves were tied up in ropes</b>	<b>Direct</b>	<b>-Dair El Naghamish -the church of saint George, old Cairo. -the Church of Saint Menas (Cairo) , Fum el-Khalig, -The Church of the Virgin Mary (The Hanging Church)</b>		<b>18<sup>th</sup> Centu ry</b>
<b>JUDGEM ENT OF JESUS THE CHRIST</b>	<b>FIG:19</b>	<b>hands are tied in front of the chest in the standing pose</b>	<b>Direct</b>	<b>Damietta</b>	<b>Paris National Library, France</b>	<b>12<sup>th</sup> centu ry</b>
	<b>FIG:20</b>	<b>hands are tied in front of the chest in the standing pose</b>	<b>Direct</b>	<b>St. Mercurius Abu Sefein Church - Cairo</b>	<b>the Catholic Institute in Paris</b>	
<b>Martyrd om of John</b>	<b>FIG:21</b>	<b>Hands tied back in the kneeling pose</b>	<b>Direct</b>	<b>Damietta</b>	<b>The national Library of Paris</b>	<b>12<sup>th</sup> centu ry</b>
<b>the Babtist</b>	<b>FIG:22</b>	<b>Hands tied back in the kneeling pose</b>	<b>Direct</b>	<b>St. Mercurius Abu Sefein Church – Cairo</b>	<b>Library of the Catholic Institute in Paris</b>	<b>13<sup>th</sup> centu ry</b>
	<b>Fig.223</b>	<b>Hands tied back in standing position</b>	<b>Indirect</b>	<b>Bahnasah "oxyrhynchus"</b>	<b>Nelson Gallery, Atkins MuseumTexas City</b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> centu ry</b>

Martyrdom of saints	FIG:2 4	Hands tied back in standing position	Indirect		The British Museum in London	6 <sup>th</sup> -7 <sup>th</sup> century
	FIG:2 5	Hands tied back in standing position	Indirect		Louvre Museum in Paris	5 <sup>th</sup> -6 <sup>th</sup> century
	FIG:2 6	Hands tied back in the kneeling pose	Indirect		British Museum Inv.No., 1879,1220.1	6 <sup>th</sup> century AD
suicide of Judas	FIG:2 7	hanging body of Judas by rope	direct	Damietta	Paris National Library, France	12 <sup>th</sup> Century

### Analytical study:

Concerning the context and the characters we should mention that ropes were represented in the context of the crucifixion of the Christ. The two thieves were tied up in ropes, while the Christ was nailed up according to Christianity.

In the Scenes of the trial of Jesus, ropes used to tie him.

However, the rope was not directly depicted in the scene in some examples in other examples it was depicted.

The indirect iconography was also applied in the scene of Martyrdom of John the Babtist in some cases or examples.

The indirect iconography of the ropes in Egyptian art was found in examples of the trial of Jesus, the sacrifice of Abraham and Jephthah, Martyrdom of John the Baptist and Martyrdom of saints.

On the contrary the direct iconography of the ropes was found in the scenes of the two thieves, Martyrdom of saints and other examples especially like saint Menas and saint Thekla and hanging thread of Judas.

Scenes of the two thieves spread on a great scale in Christian paintings and icons in Egypt, they were shown of the crucifixion of the Christ between two thieves. Examples were

found in the works of Ibrahim El-Nasikh and Yuhanna El Armani dating back to 8th century A.D.

In fact, scenes of the two thieves were rarely found in some examples in the Byzantine art before the 6<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

One of the earliest and most important examples were found in the doors of saint Sabina, A bearded Christ is found crucified between the two thieves against the backdrop of the walls of Jerusalem.

The scene of hanging Judas was attested in the Coptic Manuscript especially by 12<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

Scenes of hanging Judas were attested as early as the 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D. in the Christian art.

The hanging body of Judas came to receive special attention in the Byzantine and western Christian art. For example, we have this ivory relief The Maskell ivories, it is now preserved at the British museum is considered to be one of the earliest examples of hanging up Judas, it dates back to the 5<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

Here also the Brescia Casket in North of Italy, it dates back to the 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D., it is made of Ivory, we can find here in parts of the scene or episodes of the Christ, we can find that Judas is being hanged up to a tree by a rope. In another example, the Rossano Gospels, it's a Syrian/Palestine or Constantinople dates back to the second half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century A.D, we can find Judas also hanged up to a tree by a thin black rope.

Concerning the accompanying body postures with ropes, Hanging is considered to be one of the most remarkable scenes like hanging of Judas by rope and it is inspired by the New Testament.

Crucifixion of the two thieves and also inspired by the New Testament.

Hands tied back in the kneeling position and this was mainly

found in sacrifices of Abraham and Abraham and Jephthah and it is inspired by the Old Testament.

In some other rare cases the hands are tied in front of the chest and this was found also in the kneeling pose and it is also inspired by the Old Testament.

Hands are tied back in standing position and this was found in an example representing the Martyrdom of saint Techla.

Hands tied back in the kneeling pose and this was found in the Martyrdom of saint Menas.

### **CONCLUSION:**

Ropes were usually found in many contexts of the Biblical scenes referring to the crucifixion and torture. Ropes or in other words threads became the sign of salvation as well as Martyrdom in Egyptian Christian art. The sacrifice of Isaac (Old Testament) considered being the cradle of depicting ropes in Christian art. Afterwards, Ropes were involved in many other scenes from the New Testament. Based on the rich saint's Bibliography in Egypt, The Egyptian Christian art is remarked with many scenes of saints being tortured and tied up with ropes. The ropes were usually depicted in form of twisted threads tying firmly the hands or the upper part of the characters or being place around their necks. Being an illustrated reference, ropes were used in many manuscripts to reflect the meaning of the context itself.

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**Figures:**



Fig.1: Abraham Sacrificing Isaac, Chapel of Exodus, El Bagawat



Fig:2 Relief with the sacrifice of Abraham After: Gabra, G., Eaton-Krauss, M., (2010), 102.



Fig:3 The sacrifice of Isaac , 6<sup>th</sup> Century, Cooper Union Museum,  
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Fig:4 The sacrifice of Isaac Tapestry , Musee Historique des Tissus After : Rutschowskaya, M., (1990), Coptic Fabrics, Paris, 124 The Sacrifice of Isaac, located in Saint Catherine's Monastery in Sinai



**Fig:5** The Sacrifice of Isaac, the Monastery of Saint Catherine at Sinai  
After: Ismail, Sh., & Saied, L., & Radwan, R., (2018), Pl.3, p.30.; Schroeder, C., (2012), Child Sacrifice in Egyptian Monastic Culture: From Familial Renunciation to Jephthah's Lost Daughter, 2012, Journal of Early Christian Studies, Vol. XX, No. 2, Fig. 1.



Fig:6 Painting of the Sacrifice of Isaac , Abu Maqar church, (The Monastery of Saint Macarius Wadi An-Natrun)  
After: Leroy, J., et al, (1982), Les Peintures des Couvents du Ouadi Natroun, MIFAO 101, Le Caire, 36; Gabra, G., (2002), Coptic Monasteries: Egypt's Monastic Art and Architecture, Cairo; New York: American University in Cairo Press, fig. 4.6



**Fig.7.** The Sacrifices of Isaac and Jephthah's Daughter, Monastery of Saint Antony on the Red Sea.

After : Pasi, S.,(2010),Fig.4; Van Moorsel,(1997), *Les peintures du monastère de Saint-Antoine près de la mer Rouge* (MIFAO 112/2), pl. 10; Innemée, K.C.(2022), 107, fig. 6.1; Schroeder, C.,(2012), fig.3.

The Sacrifice of Abraham (Fig:8)



Fig:8 Sacrifice of Abraham, 18<sup>th</sup> Century, Monastery of Saint-Antony near the Red Sea. After: Atalla, N., (1998),133. The Sacrifice of Abraham (Fig:9)





Fig:9 The Sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham, 18<sup>th</sup> Century, Saint Mercurius "Abu Sefein" Church in old Cairo. After: Auber,A.,(2018),No. Y133, p.204



Fig:10 Icon of the Sacrifice of Isaac, 19th century , Church of the Martyrs Abakir and John in Babylon El-Darag , Old Cairo  
After: Saied,Y.,(2016), pl.19,p.154

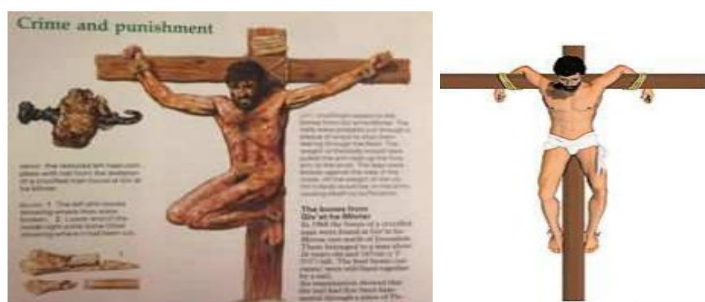


Fig. 11 Ropes were used to tie the hands in Crucifixion during Roman period.  
After:Shah, B.,(2015), 8.



Fig:12 Triptych icon, Coptic museum  
After: Mostafa,R.,(2019). pl.7



Fig.13 A triptych icon of crucifixion, 18<sup>th</sup> century, Coptic Museum.  
After: Auber,A.,( 2018 ),p.511,A 199 , Moorsel , Paul P. V. van,  
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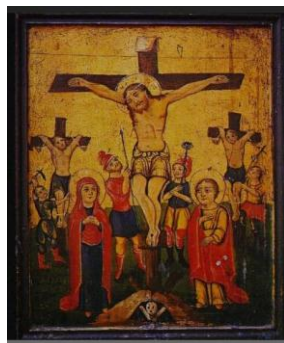


Fig.14 Coptic icon of crucifixion at the church of the Theodore the  
oriental in Old Cairo, 19th century  
After; Attala N. S.,(1998), Coptic Icons, 61.

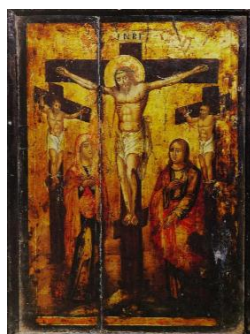


Fig.15 An ancient Coptic icon From Dair El Naghamish, district of elBalyana(east side of the Nile) After; Attala N. S.,(1998), 60.

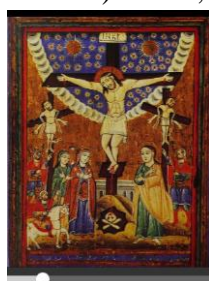


Fig.16 An icon of the crucifixion, the church of saint George, old Cairo. After; Attala N. S.,(1998), 60.

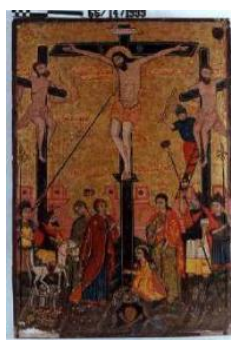


Fig.17 icon of the crucifixion, 18<sup>th</sup> Century, the Church of Saint Menas (Cairo), Fum el-Khalig, After: Shafik, Mamdouh (éd.), (2008), The Coptic Icons in St. Mina Monastery in Fum al-Khalig Cairo, Le Caire, Mar Mina – Fum al-Khalig, 27.

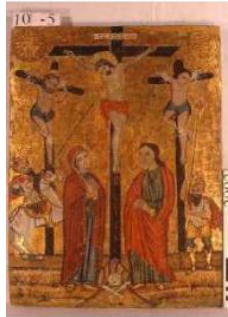


Fig.18 icon of the crucifixion, 18<sup>th</sup> Century, The Church of the Virgin Mary (The Hanging Church) After: Auber,A.,( 2018 ),p.254,Y175



Fig.19 The trial of Christ before Pilate, 1179 AD (12<sup>th</sup> century)  
After: Leroy J. (1974).,pl.57.

<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b52508833q/f172.item>. Accessed in15/9/2024 at 5PM



Fig.20 The trial of Christ before Annas After: Leroy J. (1974).pl.81  
*illustrés*,<https://bibliothequenumerique.icp.fr/viewer/4790/?offset=#page=119&viewer=picture&o=bookmark&n=0&q=> Accessed in1/9/2024 at 6PM



Fig.21 The martyrdom of John the Baptist, 1179AD (12<sup>th</sup> Century), manuscript of the four Gospels, the National library of Paris  
After: Leroy J. (1974), pl.50.;  
<https://archivesetmanuscripts.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cc103661q>



Fig. 22 Martyrdom of John the Baptist, 1250 AD (13<sup>th</sup> century), The Four Gospels - The Gospel of Luke, Library of the Catholic Institute in Paris  
After: <https://bibliotheque-numerique.icp.fr/records/item/4790-evangeliaire-copte-arabe> Leroy J. (1974), pl.79.





Fig.23 An Oxyrhynchus relief depicting the martyrdom of Saint Thecla, the fourth and fifth century AD, The Nelson Gallery-Atkins Museum, Kansas City, Missouri accession number: 48.10 After: Subias,E (2012), "Fragments of a Relief from Oxyrhynchus: Elements of Late Roman-Coptic Iconography and Styles, *JCS* 14,fig.3; <https://art.nelson-atkins.org/objects/19015/saint-thecla-with-wild-beasts-and-angels>. Accessed 8/7/2024 at 5PM



Fig.24 Flask , British museum , No.EA69839, After: Gruneisen,W.,(1930), Art chretien primitif du haut et du bas Moyen age, Paris, fig. 41; [https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/Y\\_EA69839](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/Y_EA69839): Accessed in1/7/2024 at 6PM



Fig.25 Fragment of Flask showing Thecla and Menas 6th-7th century A.D., Louvre Museum. After: : W. Gruneisen, Art chretien primitif du haut et du bas Moyen age, Paris, 1930, fig. 41



Fig.26 The martyrdom of st. mena , Ivory Pyxis , 6th century AD, Probably made in Alexandria, British Museum, 1879,1220.1 Zekry, N (2017)," The Iconography of St. Menas in the Coptic Art", Journal of the Faculty of Tourism and Hotels-University of SadatCity, Vol. 1, Issue2/2, ,Pls.IC,ID,p.40;Beckwith , J.,(1963),CopticSculpture300-1300,London,pl.35,p.46.

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Fig.27The Suicide of Judas, 1179 AD (12<sup>th</sup> Centurey), National Library, France After : Leroy J. (1974).pl.56. ;  
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