

**ANNUNCIATION ICON IN THE CHURCHES OF ABU SERGA, THE HANGING
CHURCH IN ANCIENT EGYPT, AND TAHA IN MINYA (18TH-19TH AD), AN
ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND ARTISTIC STUDY**

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Abstract

This research deals with one of the religious images in Coptic art, which represents the icon of the Annunciation, as Coptic photographers excelled in expressing this event as an expression of what was mentioned about this story in the Bible, and it refers to the event of the angel Gabriel's announcement to the Virgin Mary, of the birth of Jesus Christ, which St. Luke was the only one in his Gospel to narrate them, and the study deals with three icons, the first in the Church of Abu Serga in Cairo, in ancient Egypt, the second in the Hanging Church in Cairo and the third in the Church of Taha in Minya,. It is produced by photographers Hanna Al-Armani, Anasati Al-Rumi, Ibrahim Al-Nasikh and Youhanna Al-Armani.

The research includes three axes, starting with an introduction to the art of icons, the icon of the Annunciation, and the story of this icon, which deals with an important religious event in Coptic history and art, especially in the field of iconography, and the descriptive study of the three icons that the research deals with, in addition to the analytical study.

Keywords: icon, Virgin Mary, depictions, Coptic art, the Annunciation, Coptic icons, Abu Serga Church, Hanging Church, Taha in Minya.

First: Introduction

Icon

The word Coptic means a religious image, and it includes the image of Christ, the Virgin, saints, martyrs, angels, and other religious subjects mentioned in the Bible or in church history.

The Copts took drawing and painting from the Pharaohs, and in every image, we find the Copts symbolizing the people or occasions that the icon reflects, and the icon is not just a decoration or a piece of art, and therefore the Copts took it as a means of teaching based on

its simplicity, and the personality of the person drawn in it appears in the icon, whether his or her appearance. Or his holiness, or his chastity, or his courage, or his ingenuity and simplicity.

Many materials have been used in drawing icons, whether by relief engraving or color drawing. The first of these materials is stone, which appeared among ancient Coptic antiquities in some paintings and stone friezes that were engraved in relief, including representations of Jesus Christ, the Virgin, and the martyrs.

The story of the Annunciation:

The Feast of the Annunciation is considered one of the major Christian holidays¹. Luke alone narrated the event of the Annunciation in his Gospel. The story of the Annunciation depicted in icons and pictures is summarized in the Annunciation of the Angel² Gabriel³ (one of the seven angels in Christian sources) to the Virgin⁴ Mary⁵, as stated in the Gospel of Luke the Evangelist.

¹Lutfi, Osama. *Melodies and readings for the feasts of the Annunciation and the entry of Christ into the land of Egypt*, Cairo: The Church of the Virgin Mary and Bishop Shenouda in Ard Al-Baraka Publishing House, City of Peace, p. 4.

²The name angel in the Arabic language is derived from the Hebrew language malak and it was said malach, and in the Greek (New Testament) angelios, both of which mean "sent" and mean that this luminous spiritual being is sent from heaven - to our world - with a special message to a person or group and for a specific purpose based on an order of God. Maksi, Iskandar Mikhail (2001). *Tughamat al-Malaika al-Abrar*, Cairo: Harmony Printing Company, Dar al-Kutub, pp. 7-8.

³Gabriel is a Hebrew name that means man of God, and he is one of the seven archangels. His name is mentioned in the Book of Daniel (8:15, 9:21), where he helped Daniel the Prophet understand his visions. In the New Testament, he is the one who announced to Zechariah the priest about the birth of John the Baptist Luke (1:5-25). Likewise, the Virgin Mary announced the birth of Jesus, the Son of God, Luke (1:26-32), and he is ranked directly after the Archangel Michael.

Thanassius (2003). *Dictionary of Ecclesiastical Terms*, Cairo: Dar Al-Kutub Printing, 1, pp. 273-274, Kamal, Yuannis (2005). *Gabriel, the Angel of Annunciation*, Cairo: Kirlo Shubra Library, pp. 8-17.

⁴The Virgin: Mary, the mother of Christ, is called the Virgin because she became pregnant with Christ without a man knowing her, when the Holy Spirit came upon her (Luke 34:35), and she fulfills the prophecy that says, "Behold, the virgin will conceive and give birth to a son" (Isaiah 7:14).

⁵The Virgin Mary was born to two righteous parents, Joachim and Anna. Anna was barren, so she continued to pray and supplicate, to the point that Joachim isolated himself for a period in the mountain to spend his solitude with God and continuous supplications. There, the angel of the evangelist Gabriel appeared to him and rejoiced his heart by saying, "God has heard your prayers," and indeed this good news was fulfilled.

"وفي الشهر السادس أرسل جبرائيل الملاك من الله إلى مدينة من الجليل اسمها الناصرة، إلى عذراء مخطوبة لرجل من بيت داود اسمه يوسف، واسم العذراء مريم، فدخل إليها الملاك وقال: سلام لك أيتها المنعم عليها!، الرب معك، مباركة أنت في النساء، فلما رأته اضطربت من كلامه، وفكرت: "ما عسى أن تكون هذه التحية!" فقال لها الملاك: "لا تخافي يا مريم، لأنك قد وجدت نعمة عند الله وها أنتستحبلين وتلدين ابنا وتسمينه يسوع. هذا يكون عظيما، وابن العلي يدعى، ويعطيها الرب الإله كرسي داود أبيه، ويملك على بيت يعقوب إلى الأبد، ولا يكون لملكه نهاية". فقالت مريم للملاك: "كيف يكون هذا وأنا لست أعرف رجلا؟"، فأجاب الملاك وقال لها: "الروح القدس يحل عليك، وقوة العلي تظلك، فلذلك أيضا القدوس المولود منك يدعى ابن الله. وهو ذا أليصابات نسيبتك هي أيضا حبلى ببن في شيخوختها، وهذا هو الشهر السادس لتلك المدعوة عاقرا، لأنه ليس شيء غير ممكن لدى الله"، فقالت مريم: "هو ذا أنا أمة الرب، ليكن لي كقولك"، فمضى منعدها الملاك.

In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man of the house of David whose name is Joseph, and the virgin's name is Mary. Then the angel entered her and said: Peace be upon you, you who have been favored! The Lord is with you, blessed are you among women. When she saw him, she was troubled by his words and thought, "What could this greeting be?" Then the angel said to her: "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God, and now you will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and he will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end". Then Mary said to the angel: "How can this be, since I do not know a man?" Then the angel answered and said to her: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore also the Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God. And behold, your relative Elizabeth⁶ has also conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who is called barren, for nothing is impossible for God." Then Mary said: "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord.

Heavenly life, and God granted Anna and Joachim a daughter, the Virgin Mary. Al-Masry, Isis Habib (2012). Synodal Committee for Rituals News of the Martyrs and Saints According to the Faithful Synaxarium Used in the Churches of the See of Mark, 2, Cairo: Saint George Library.

⁶Elizabeth is the mother of John the Baptist. This saint was born in Jerusalem to a righteous father named Matthat, from the tribe of Levi, from the house of Aaron. Her mother's name was Sophia. Matthews had three daughters. The name of the eldest was Mary, who was the mother of Salome, who cared for the Virgin Mary during the birth of Jesus Christ. The name of the second was Sophia, who was the mother of Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist. The youngest was Saint Anne, the mother of the Virgin Mary, so Salome, Elizabeth, and the Virgin Mary were cousins.

Let it be done to me according to your word.” Then the angel left her. The good news was summarized in her being informed of the virginal conception of Jesus Christ, born of her by the Holy Spirit”⁷.

The talk revolved around her acceptance of peace and good news, and the angel told her of Elizabeth’s conception of the Baptist (John, son of Zacharias)⁸.

وذكرت قصة البشارة أيضا في القرآن الكريم:

The story of the Annunciation is also mentioned in the Holy Qur’an:

”إِذْ قَالَتِ الْمَلَائِكَةُ يَا مَرْيَمُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُبَشِّرُكِ بِكَلِمَةٍ مِنْهُ اسْمُهُ الْمَسِيحُ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ وَجِيهًا فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَمِنَ الْمُقَرَّبِينَ (45) وَيُكَلِّمُ النَّاسَ فِي الْمَهْدِ وَكَهْلًا وَمِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ (46) قَالَتْ رَبِّ أَنَّى يَكُونُ لِي وَلَدٌ وَلَمْ يَمَسِّنِي بَشَرٌ قَالَ كَذَلِكَ اللَّهُ يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَاءُ إِذَا قَضَىٰ أَمْرًا فَإِنَّمَا يَقُولُ لَهُ كُن فَيَكُونُ”.

“When the angels said, ‘O Mary, indeed God gives you good tidings of a word from Him. His name is the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, distinguished in this world and the hereafter, and among those who are brought near. 45) And He will speak to people in the cradle, and as an old man, and of the righteous. (46) She said, “My Lord, how can I have a child when no human being has touched me?” He said: “Thus does God create what He wills. When He decides a matter, He only says to it, be, and it is”⁹.

Then also the words of God Almighty in the Holy Qur’an, specifically in Surat Maryam:

”وَأَذْكُرُ فِي الْكِتَابِ مَرْيَمَ إِذِ اتَّيَبَّتْ مِنْ أَهْلِهَا مَكَانًا شَرْقِيًّا (16) فَاتَّخَذَتْ مِنْ دُونِهِمْ حِجَابًا فَأَرْسَلْنَا إِلَيْهَا رُوحَنَا فَتَمَثَّلَ لَهَا بَشَرًا سَوِيًّا (17) قَالَتْ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِالرَّحْمَنِ مِنْكَ إِنْ كُنْتَ تَقِيًّا (18) قَالَ إِنَّمَا أَنَا رَسُولُ رَبِّكِ لِأَهَبَ لَكِ غُلَامًا زَكِيًّا (19) قَالَتْ أَنَّى يَكُونُ لِي غُلَامٌ وَلَمْ يَمَسِّنِي بَشَرٌ وَلَمْ أَكُ بَغِيًّا (20) قَالَ كَذَلِكَ قَالَ رَبُّكِ هُوَ عَلَيَّ هَيِّئْ وَلِنَجْعَلَهُ آيَةً لِلنَّاسِ وَرَحْمَةً مِّنَّا وَكَانَ أَمْرًا مَّفْضِيًّا (21) ﴿٢١﴾ فَحَمَلَتْهُ فَانْتَبَتْ بِهِ مَكَانًا قَصِيًّا”.

⁷Holy Bible: New Testament, Gospel of Luke (1:26-38).

⁸John the Baptist, son of Zechariah the priest, whom the Lord called, the greatest born of women. His parents, Zechariah and Elizabeth, were righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and decrees of the Lord without blame. They had no child, since Elizabeth was barren, and both of them were advanced in their days. See Luke (1:6-7), On the life of John the Baptist, see: Mayer, F. B. (1957). John the Baptist, translated by Mark David, al-Mahabba Library.

The church celebrates the annunciation of the priest Zechariah about the birth of John the Baptist on the 26th of Tut. Synod Committee for Rites (2013). The Book of Synaxarium, which contains the news of the prophets, apostles, martyrs, and saints used in the churches of the See of St. Mark, 1, p. 90. Mayer, F. B. (1957). John the Baptist, translated by Mark David, al-Mahabba Library. Nakhla, KamelSaleh (1906). Series of Popes, Patriarchs of the Alexandrian See, Episode Five, John the Baptist, Cairo: Library of Charity.

⁹The Holy Qur’an: Surah Al Imran, verses (44: 46).

”And mention in the Book Maryam when she withdrew from her people to an eastern place (16) and took a veil from them, so We sent to her Our Spirit, and it appeared to her. (17) She said, “I seek refuge in the Most Gracious from you, if you are pious.” (18) He said, “I am only the messenger of your Lord to give you a pure boy.” (19)) She said, “How can I have a son when no human being has touched me and I have not been a transgressor?” (20) He said, “Thus said your Lord, ‘It is easy for me.’ And “And We will certainly make him a sign for the people.” It was a mercy from Us. And it was a decreed matter. (21) So she carried him and withdrew with him to a faraway place¹⁰.

The story of the Annunciation came in some Christian¹¹-Islamic¹² sources, and it was mentioned in the orders of the Virgin Mary: “The pure, undefiled bride, the golden lampstand, the second dome, the pride of our race, the beautiful dove, the new heaven, the fat rope of God, the vine that prospers, the king’s seat, the Holy of Holies.” The gate of heaven, the city of the living God, the temple of God, the true queen, the ever-virgin, the mother of light¹³.

On the glorious Feast of the Annunciation, the Church reads in the Mass the Gospel of Luke (1:26:38), faithful to the Annunciation of the Angel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary. The story of the Annunciation is read in front of the icon of the Annunciation (the Angel Gabriel and the Virgin Mary), early on Palm Sunday, the Gospel of Luke (1:26:38)¹⁴.

¹⁰The Holy Quran: Surat Maryam, verses (15: 21).

¹¹Tawadros II (2013). Coptic Menglis, Coptic Treasures, Cairo: Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate, pp. 108-110; The committee formed by His Holiness Pope Shenouda III: Annual Qatamars, 2, p. 21:32; Matthews (2013). Al-Isbaliyat Al-Annaiya Al-Wataswa Al-Adam, Coptic Treasures, 1, pp. 36-44; Matthews (2013). Epistles and treatises on the Christian holidays and church seasons, Coptic Treasures, pp. 390:397; Jerome, Jerome (1962). Memer, The Only Son of the Virgin, Al-Syriac, Monastery of the Virgin Mary Al-Syriac for Publishing and Printing, pp. 8-1. Al-Baramousi, Mina Al-Mahlawi (1908). The Holy Annual Psalmudians, Monastery of the Virgin in Bramos, Alexandria: Kamal Abdel Masih Taurus Printing House.

¹²IbnKathir (1988). Interpretation of the Holy Qur’an, Cairo: Misr Printing House, 3, p. 118.

¹³One of the monks. Mayamir of the Virgin Mary, reviewed by Bishop Mattaous, Deir al-Syrian Library, p. 13.

¹⁴Abdel Masih, Hossam Kamal (2013). A biblical study on the Gospel of Luke, Coptic Treasures, pp. 18-26.

Second: Descriptive study of the icons of the Annunciation

1. Icon of the Annunciation of the Angel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary (pl. 1).

Abu Sarga Church¹⁵ in ancient Egypt¹⁶.



pl. 1. Icon of the Annunciation,
Abu Sarga Church in ancient Egypt

Icon data

Location: Abu Sarga Church in Old Egypt.

Icon dimensions: 47 x 40 cm

Photographer: Hanna Al-Armani

Inscriptions: I depicted the Annunciation and his parents in Your Kingdom, the Sun, the work in the year 1497 Coptic, the work of the Armenian wretched in the year 1195.

Artistic style: graffiti - wood

Icon condition: good

Colors: golden - sky blue - dark blue - red - white.

School: Hanna Al-Armani

¹⁵It is noteworthy that Sergius was a follower of Lyus Nus, one of the makers of harnesses for animals, donkeys, and horses, in the court of Emperor Maximian. Perhaps this is where the name Abu Serga came from. Due to their conversion to Christianity, they were killed in the country of Rusafa in the early fourth century AD. These two saints have a status among the Eastern Christian sects. Habib, Raouf (1979). Historical Summary of the Ancient Coptic Churches in Cairo, Cairo: Al-Mahabah Printing Library, p. 30.

¹⁶This is the church of Saints Sergius and Bacchus, the church was built by Athanasius, who was working as a scribe during the reign of Abd al-Aziz ibn Marwan in the year (685-705), at the end of the seventh century. The church of Abu Sarja in ancient Egypt was built over a cave where it is said that Jesus Christ and his mother, the Virgin Mary, took refuge to it during their sacred journey to the land of Egypt. Jabra, Jawdat (1996). Churches of Ancient Egypt, Cairo: Nubar Printing House, p. 115.

History: No date.

The icon is surrounded by a brown colored wooden frame, followed by another frame with yellow, red, white and blue geometric decorations painted on it.

The front of the icon is represented by a yellow colored ground as evidence of the desert nature, and on it is a chair on which the Virgin Mary sits, with the angel Gabriel in front of her.

At the bottom of the Virgin's feet, he painted a rug (a small rug), through which the artist wanted to show the viewer that it is the same rug on which the father priest stands at the altar to perform the Mass.

As for the middle of the icon, it is represented by a drawing of the Virgin Mary sitting on the throne, which symbolizes the throne of David, and her right hand is towards her chest, indicating her submission to the will of God, and her left hand is holding a spindle, and her clothes are brown, called in the Coptic language the colors of art (raw clay), indicating that she is human. Like us, it is made of clay, with a yellow and dark blue scarf, and a golden yellow halo around its head.

While on the right of the icon, there is a drawing of the Angel Gabriel wearing a shirt in the same color as the Virgin Mary's scarf, and on top of it is a brown scarf in the same color as the Virgin Mary and the same color as his wings, and his right hand is facing towards the Virgin Lady using only the ring finger, and the rest of his fingers are bent, while his left hand is holding a cross, a golden halo surrounds his head.

For the background of the icon, it represents a golden yellow sky, and in the middle of it is a semi-circle colored blue, from which emerge three rays that symbolize the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit heading to the Virgin Mary.

The background of the icon is represented by buildings colored yellow and white with windows resembling Noah's Ark. Behind the Virgin Mary is a building with a blue dome supported on two columns, and behind the angel there is a high building topped with a semi-circular dome colored red, and below it is colored blue and white, and between the two buildings from above. There is a tree. This icon included writings in Arabic in Naskh script, and it is present in various places in the icon. In the center of the icon is written *صورت البشارة* the *Annunciation painting* in red, and under the angel's feet there is a text, "*And his parents are in* "والديه في ملكوتك الشمس العمل سنة ١٤٩٧ قبطية عمل الحقير حنا الأرمني",

your kingdom, the sun, the work of the year 1497 Coptic, the work of the despicable Hanna the Armenian.” It included the signature of the artist Hanna Al-Armani.

3. Annunciation of the Angel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary in the Church of the Virgin (Hanging Church) (pl. 2)



pl. 2. Annunciation of the Angel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary
the Church of the Virgin (Hanging Church)

Icon data

Impact number: 570

Location: The Hanging Church in ancient Egypt, the northern portico.

Dimensions: 24 x 29 cm.

Its date: It is dated 1422 and therefore 1755 AD.

Photographer: Ibrahim Al-Nasikh and Youhanna Al-Armani.

Writings: The Annunciation

Artistic style: linen tempera on wood

School: Ibrahim Al-Nasikh and John the Armenian.

Icon condition: good.

Colors: red - dark blue - gold - dark olive - yellow - white.

The icon of the Annunciation is one of the icons collected in the Hanging Church. This icon is surrounded on the outside by a dark frame decorated with inscriptions in the Coptic language, and is kept inside a modern wooden frame. The front of the icon is represented by a golden yellow colored ground on which both the Angel Gabriel and the Virgin Mary stand, with his sickles in the middle.

As for the center of the icon, it is represented by a drawing of the Virgin Mary and the Angel Gabriel the Evangelist, standing and listening to each other. The artist was able to

express that there is a conversation taking place between them through the movement of the hands and the movement of the bodies, which shows how lively the drawing is.

The Virgin Mary was drawn standing in her full form, wearing loose clothing that reaches to the feet, with long sleeves with narrow cuffs, and a long dark blue robe that reaches to the feet, topped with a crimson scarf that covers the head and shoulders, and hangs from the figure as she stands with reverence, which indicates vitality and movement in the drawing, then She extends her right hand in the book placed on the sickle, and places her left hand on her chest, which is the artist's confirmation of acceptance of the good news, to indicate what is written in the biblical text "I worshiped the Lord." She has drawn the head of the Virgin Mary with small, round, almond-shaped eyes with clear details and eyebrows. Black, curved, the mouth is small with red lips, and the nose is long, linear. This style - in drawing existence - is known in Coptic paintings¹⁷. Around her head is a round golden halo with a red frame around it, and the lady tilts her head towards the angel as if she is listening carefully to his words.

To the right of the Virgin Mary, the angel Gabriel stands in loose clothing that reaches to his feet. He wears a light brown-orange garment with long sleeves, and on his shoulder is an olive-coloured scarf hanging from behind, with both ends tied over his chest. He wears shoes on his feet to illustrate the idea of the vision. The artist distinguished the angel's drawing. He is oval, with almond-shaped eyes, a small, closed mouth, and long brown hair that hangs on his shoulder, and around his head is a golden halo with a red frame.

The angel extends his right hand using only the ring finger, while the rest of the fingers of the hand are bent inward to give them a blessing, and his left hand is extended to the Virgin Mary and contains a lotus flower, which is also a symbol of the Virgin's immaculate pregnancy.

It is an ancient Egyptian influence, and the same appearance and method of holding it is seen in an icon of Akhenaten and Nefertiti offering him lotus flowers. It has great religious importance for the ancient Egyptians, because it has a religious ritual among kings and gods, but it is extracted from the precious and precious perfumes in ancient Egypt, physician used it as a sedative to treat patients.

As for the background of the icon, it is completely devoid of architectural backgrounds or natural scenes. The artist contented himself with coloring the background in golden

¹⁷Leassu, j. (1952). The early Christian ad byzantine word, skira, pp. 142-143

yellow¹⁸ to reflect the divine light, there is another opinion that in some schools it symbolizes eternity.

As for the back of the icon, it represents a white dove flying with its wings spread, and around its head is a circular halo¹⁹ colored golden yellow with a red frame like the halo of the Virgin Mary and the angel. The artist painted the dove's leg in yellow and red, as it is heading towards the Virgin Mary.

3. Icon of the Annunciation of the Angel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary (pl. 3).

Taha Church²⁰ – Minya



pl. 3. Icon of the Annunciation of the Angel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary,
Taha Church – Minya

¹⁸Gilding is considered one of the most important artistic features of icons. Paintings painted on a golden background have been widely spread in Greece since the end of the Hellenistic era. Then the Byzantine tradition inherited them, and they continued in Coptic icons in abundance, especially as backgrounds surrounding people and elements. Gilding was used as a symbol of holiness, purity, and innocence. Erian, Samir (2018). The emergence and development of icon art in Egypt until the end of the twentieth century, Cairo: Design Library, p. 93.

¹⁹The halos around the heads of birds are considered one of the most prominent features of Arab school photography. Perhaps the intention of placing the halo around the dove's head was to draw attention to it, and this appeared in some images from the manuscript of the Book of Antidote. Al-Basha, Hassan (1959). Islamic Painting in the Middle Ages, Cairo: Arab Nahda Publishing House, p. 125.

²⁰This church is located in the village of Taha, west of Minya and Samalout, 14 km northeast of Minya. Taha is considered an important episcopal see. Many artifacts can still be seen around the church, including capitals and columns from the remains of the old church. The church contains many archaeological archives and icons. Al-Syriani, Samuel Tawadros. Guide to ancient churches and monasteries from Giza to Aswan, Cairo: Modern Commercial Press, National House for Printing and Publishing, p. 33. Naguib, GamalSaad. Schools of icon painting in Egypt in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries AD, PhD dissertation, Faculty of Arts, Tanta University, 2010, p. 409.

Icon data:

Location: St. Mina Church, Taha Al-Amoud - Minya

Dimensions: 60 x 50 x 5 cm

Its date: 1566/1850 AD.

Photographer: Anastati Al-Rumi²¹

Writings: The bearer of the good news, the angel Gabriel

Artistic style: implemented on a book

School: Hanna Al-Armani

Icon condition: good

Colors: red - gold - blue - green - white.

The icon is surrounded by a brown wooden frame devoid of decoration, followed by a red semicircular arch supported on two columns.

The front of the icon is represented by a ground colored yellow as if it were a desert nature, with plants scattered throughout the icon. It symbolizes the Holy Conception without human transplantation. The Virgin Mary and the Angel Gabriel the Evangelist stand on it, and in their midst is a sickle with an open book on it.

The artist wanted to place the sickle²² with the book on it to separate the spiritual world from the open book, and on it was a book in Arabic (I am the servant of the Lord), through which the artist wanted to make clear that the Virgin Lady was at home praying, and

²¹He belonged to a family of Greek origin that immigrated to Jerusalem, and he settled there and lived there for a period of time, before settling in Cairo. Then he came to the dome of Anasati al-Rumi al-Qudsi. Anasati al-Rumi in Cairo became the second most famous foreign icon painter in the second half of the 19th century AD. This is after the illustrator John the Armenian, one of the students of the local school or the school of Ibrahim al-Nasik in the second half of the eighteenth century AD, whom Anasati was influenced by in many artistic and decorative styles. Despite the large number of icons produced by this illustrator, the largest share of this Production was concentrated in Upper Egypt in general and the churches of Minya in particular. Abdel Hafeez, Muhammad Ali. The role of foreign and Arab communities in artistic life in Egypt of the two centuries (18-19 AD), an archaeological and cultural documentary study, doctor's thesis, Faculty of Archeology, Cairo University, 2000.

²²The Sickle in Coptic is pronounced (Mangelion), meaning the place of the Gospel. It is on four legs, and the top of it is in the shape of a book, tilted slightly forward. It refers to Mount Sinai, on which Moses ascended and received the honorable greeting from God. Athanasius (2004). A monk of the Coptic Church), Cairo: Nubar Publishing House.

placing the sickle in the middle between the Virgin Lady and the angel has a purpose as well. The sickle in the church clarifies the relationship between the altar and the community of believers. Believers cannot approach the mysteries of the altar and practice their liturgies²³ except through the Word of God²⁴.

As for the middle of the icon, it represents a drawing of the Virgin Mary, kneeling on her feet, with a red colored rug underneath her, her left hand on her chest, and her right hand holding an open book placed on a sickle. She is wearing a beige shirt and over it is a blue scarf with a golden frame, and around her head is a red frame. .

On her right, the angel Gabriel is drawn, standing with his right leg ahead of his left, in a moving position. He is wearing a green shirt and a beige scarf, the same color as the Virgin Mary's shirt, and is pointing with his left hand using his ring finger.

As for the last icon, it represents a sky colored in gold, and in the middle of it it is as if the sky is open in the form of an open book from which a red ray emerges, from which a dove colored in yellow and white emerges, heading to the Virgin Mary.

As for the background of the icon, it represents a building painted in white, with a window above it with a semicircular vault, and the inscriptions are located above the angel, written in Arabic in Naskh script, above the head of the angel (the bearer of the good news, the angel Gabriel).

Third: Analytical study of the icons of the Annunciation

The raw materials from which the icon is made

The Egyptian Coptic artist used all available materials in nature to draw on, whether by relief engraving or by drawing in colors, and therefore we find that he used many materials in drawing.

1. Stone

It is noted that the Coptic Orthodox do not accept the placement of sculptures in their churches, and the only acceptable thing is engraving on stones, such as the picture or the carved inscription in the Coptic Museum, which represents the painting of the Three Boys in the Fiery Furnace.

²³Liturgy: It is a collective worship.

²⁴Malti, TadrosYacoub (1995). Studies in Church Tradition and Iconography, The Church, the House of God, Alexandria: Nabe' Al-Fikr Printing Library, pp. 30-31.

We also find in the Coptic Museum in the Saqqara Hall a vessel from among the relics found in the Monastery of Saint Jeremiah in Saqqara, with an inscription representing the saints, and it is broken. It appears that this deformation that occurred during the days of persecutions, coups, and the period of the iconoclastic movement that occurred during the reign of Emperor Leo III.

2. Wood

Wood is considered an essential material for the Copts, as it is easy to carve and draw on. Wood was used to decorate churches, including church doors, church lintels, and temple veils. We find that most of the temple barriers (icon holders) were made of wood, and icons representing Jesus Christ, the Virgin Mary, and John the Baptist were depicted on them. The annunciation, angels, and saints. The custom of engraving these veils continued until the eleventh century, and this is clear in the wooden veils represented in the churches of ancient Egypt, such as the Muallaqa, Abu Sarja, and Saint Barbara, which is currently preserved in the Coptic Museum.

3. Ivory and bone

The Coptic artist also used ivory and bones to represent the pictures to be drawn, and there are many pieces in the Coptic Museum made of ivory to represent Jesus Christ and the ivory comb, which represents the miracle of raising Lazarus and healing the man born blind.

4. Metals

We find that metal tools are widely used in churches, and therefore they must be decorated, even if they are not precious metals. Thus, we find copper dishes and incense burners, all of which had scenes drawn from the Holy Bible represented.

5. Mosaics

Since ancient times, it has been known among the Copts that they decorate the apse or the east of the church with an icon representing the ruler of all, either on wood and then pasted on the wall, or from plaster, or sometimes from mosaic. According to what Abu Al-Makarem mentioned in his writing, there was a church in the Church of the Apostles in Deir Al-Qasr in Helwan script that was decorated with a picture of the Virgin Mary carrying Jesus Christ, and Khumarawayh bin Ahmed bin Tulun greatly admired it. Naturally, in the Monastery of St. Catherine, there is a semicircle on the east side of the temple with mosaics, surmounted by a half dome representing the Transfiguration of Jesus

Christ, also made of mosaics²⁵. But we must clarify that the use of mosaics was known to the Romans, who used to decorate their walls and floors with mosaics. Consequently, mosaics continued to be used in the Byzantine Empire more than among the Copts of Egypt.

6. Coptic cloth or fabric

It is known that the Coptic Egyptians were famous for their fabric, and therefore it was called the Coptic fabric, which is a continuation of the idea of the existence of the fabric among the ancient Egyptians.

Painting was done either directly on the fabric or by weaving it with the fabric. The Coptic artist was known for not imitating nature in Byzantine art²⁶. We found fabrics representing saints and Jesus Christ, as well as scenes of temples, crosses, birds, and other symbols of Christianity²⁷.

7. Plaster

Plaster means wall drawings that were made before the use of wooden icons in churches and monasteries. It is a very old method since the beginning of the first Christian era. These drawings are still present in ancient monasteries, especially in the Baggawat area in the Kharga Oasis, or in the monasteries of Upper Egypt or the monasteries of Wadi El-Natroun. The art of painting on plaster with watercolors continued to be represented on walls until the eleventh century or a little later, then they replaced this method and replaced it with wooden paintings²⁸.

8. Drawing on square or rectangular wooden boards

It is common knowledge that the Copts use wood to make the domes that top the altars in churches, and this dome had an icon representing Jesus Christ in more than one position placed inside it²⁹. The churches are full of wooden panels representing wooden icons, which began to appear in abundance, especially in the eleventh century, when frescoes were gradually dispensed with. However, it is known that wood requires permanent restoration because it can be damaged as a result of being affected by weather factors, such

²⁵RaoufHabib: Coptic Icons, p. 8; Abdel Masih, Yassi (1986). Saint Mina's Treatise on Coptic Studies, 1, pp. 146-147.

²⁶Maher, Souad (1979). Coptic Art, pp. 42-44.

²⁷Habib, Raouf. Coptic Icons, p. 9.

²⁸Habib, Raouf. Coptic Icons, pp. 10-11.

²⁹Abdel Masih, Yassi (1986). Saint Mina's Treatise on Coptic Studies, 1, p. 147.

as heat or humidity, which cause the wood to expand, shrink, or crack. A surface painted in colors with a thin background of chalk and glue is not able to overcome the factors of expansion and contraction that affect the wood³⁰.

This is considered a shame because icons must always be destroyed, and this was not the case among the Copts because they imagined that they were old images that had no value, so they were used to light fires in making the holy chrism oil³¹, and for this oil to be cooked, the flames must be burned on it for a long period, that is, for a long time. At night, wood is used to light it (especially sycamore wood, which is of course the wood used to make Coptic icons).

Conclusions

- This research dealt with one of the religious images in Coptic art, which represents the icon of the Annunciation, as Coptic photographers excelled in expressing this event as an expression of what was mentioned regarding this story in the Holy Bible.
- The importance of the study is due to the event of the annunciation that Luke alone narrated in his Gospel, and it is summed up in the angel Gabriel's annunciation to the Virgin Mary of the birth of Jesus Christ.
- The study dealt with three icons, the first in the Abu Sarga Church in Cairo, Old Egypt, the third in the Hanging Church in Cairo. and the second in the Taha Church in Minya,
- The icons have multiple sizes, with the area of the first icon being 47 x 40 cm, the second being 60 x 50, and the third being 24 x 29 cm.
- There were many illustrators of the icons of the Annunciation, as the first icon was drawn by the illustrator Hanna the Armenian, the second icon was drawn by the illustrator Anastati Al-Rumi, and the third icon was drawn by the illustrator Ibrahim Al-Nasikh and John the Armenian.
- The colors used in drawing elements on the icons varied between gold, sky blue, dark blue, red, and white in the first, and red, gold, blue, green, and white, while the third colors were red, dark blue, golden, dark olive, yellow, and white.

³⁰Skalova, Zuzana (1990). conservation problems in Egypt: introductory report on the condition and restoration of post – Medieval Coptic Icon. Hondelink, H. (ed). Coptic Art and culture, Cairo: Al-Ahram, p. 7.

³¹Langen, Linda (1990I). Icon Painting in Egypt, p. 65.