



# Programme

**29 June -  
2 July '17**

**Coptic Orthodox  
Church Centre, U.K.**

*4th International  
Symposium on  
Coptic Culture:  
Past, Present,  
& Future*

## FRIDAY JUNE 30

8:30-9:30	Conference Registration
9:30-9:45	H.G. Bishop Angaelos, Welcome Address
9:45-10:00	Introductory Remarks
10:00-10:30	Mariam Ayad, Labor Activism in Ancient Egypt
10:30-11:00	Ash Melika, Poverty and Subsistence in Ancient Egyptian and Biblical Wisdom Literature
11:00-11:30	Coffee Break
11:30-12:00	Nicola Aravecchia, Christian Identity in the Archaeological Record: A Case Study from Egypt's Western Desert
12:00-12:30	Alanna Nobbs, A Coptic family from Late Antique Egypt and Women's Freedom
12:30-1:00	John Gee, Historicity of Coptic Martyrdoms and Its Implications
13:00-14:00	Lunch Break
14:00-14:30	Y. N. Youssef, Severus of Antioch as an advocate of Orthodoxy
14:30-15:00	Sherin Sadek, The Reform of Pope Cyril IV and its influences in the life of the Coptic Community
15:00-15:30	Tea Break
15:30-16:00	Bishoy Dawood, Let My People Go: Is There a Place for Liberation Theology in the Coptic Orthodox Church?
16:00-16:30	Ihab Khalil, "There is no authority except that which God has established" (Romans 13:1): An Exploration of Power Distance in the Early Church and the Modern Coptic Diaspora
16:30-17:00	Magda Shahin, The fate of the Christians in the Middle East Region and the Dangers of Religious Fanaticism in Political Conflicts



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## SATURDAY JULY 1

8:30-9:30	Conference Registration
9:30-10:00	Engy Hanna, Male and female He created them: Gender equality as reflected through Coptic Art
10:00-10:30	Alaa Awad, On National Identity & Unity
10:30-11:00	Helene Moussa, Victor Fakhoury: Iconographer, Theologian and Historian
11:00-11:30	Coffee Break
11:30-12:00	Carolyn Ramzy, After Ragheb Moftah: Repatriating Coptic Music Transcriptions as Modern Pedagogies of Female Piety
12:00-12:30	Michael Henein The St Kyrel Choir in Europe
12:30-13:30	Lunch Break
13:30-14:00	Amr Talaat, If These Walls Could Talk! The Story of Three Cairo Palaces
14:00-14:30	Monica Hanna, Heritage Advocacy and the Political Boundaries of Archaeological Work in Egypt
14:30-15:00	Michael Jones, Heritage Activists or Surrogate Civil Servants
15:00-15:30	Fekri A. Hassan, Coptic Heritage for a Better Future- Social Memory, Historicity and Current affairs
15:30-15:45	Tea Break
15:45-16:30	Panel Discussion
16:30-17:00	Concluding Remarks

## **Christian Identity in the Archaeological Record: A Case Study from Egypt's Western Desert**

*Nicola Aravecchia*

This paper will explore ways in which Christians of Egypt's Western Desert expressed their identity in the early fourth century, when Christianity was officially sanctioned as an accepted religion of the Roman Empire. This newly established position led Christians to develop strategies meant to express, in a very visible fashion, their newly found freedom, their religious pride, and a strong desire to advocate for their faith. The oases of the Western Desert, in particular Kharga and Dakhla, proved to be very fertile grounds for the development of Christianity and the adoption of artistic and architectural forms, clearly associated with Christianity, since an early time. The landscape of the oases came to be dominated no longer by temples but by churches, particularly of the basilical type. Considerable archaeological evidence attests to the effort that local Christian communities made in order to transform their environment into a visibly "Christian" land. The paper will especially discuss recent archaeological evidence from the Dakhla Oasis, where several early fourth century churches were discovered in recent decades. In particular, the case study of a church found at the small agricultural settlement of Ain el-Gedida will be discussed, in order to show that the strategies adopted by local Christians to manifestly enhance their visibility—as well as to promote their faith—were not formulated in a context isolated from the rest of the Egypt. Rather, the Christians the Western Desert were part of—and connected with—a considerably broader world and were fully aware of the idioms and trends that characterized the development of Christian architecture in Late Antiquity.

## **On National Identity & Unity**

*Alaa Awad*

Today, Egypt, its cultural heritage and civilization remain like no other. The artistic experience discussed in this presentation is heavily influenced by ancient Egyptian heritage. Using that for inspiration, my work transforms it and presents it to society in way that best resonates with modern social reality, through capturing works of art, which include "street art" murals, to express the modern concerns of contemporary Egyptian society and to emphasize its national culture, historical depth, and civilization. History and cultural heritage are of the most important means of deepening a sense of national belonging to Egypt.

The artistic experience presented in the paper tackles many social and political topics, while relying on historical and artistic foundations. The work is influenced by ancient Egyptian reliefs depicting wars, including, most importantly, the reliefs of the "Battle of Kadesh" depicted in the mortuary temples of Ramses II (the Ramesseum) and Ramses III (at Medinet Habu), as well as also lesser known some battle scenes. Significantly, most depictions of warfare occur in the New Kingdom (Age of Empire), immediately following the expulsion of the Hyksos. The history of Ancient Egypt is one of the best-recorded in history. The reliefs and murals that depict its victories still inform artists today.

## **Labor Activism in Ancient Egypt**

*Mariam Ayad*

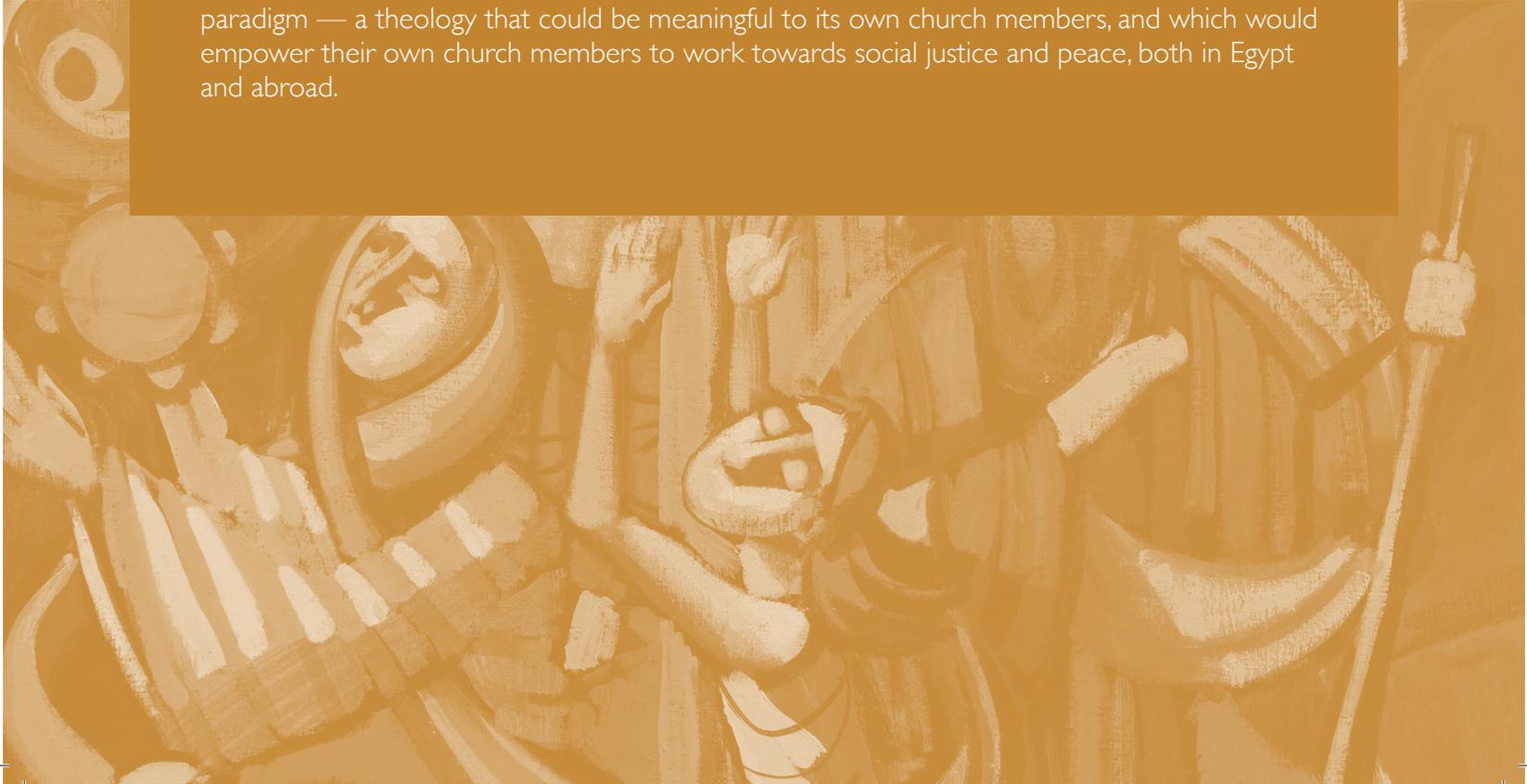
The Turin Strike Papyrus is remarkable on many levels. Foremost of which is its recording of the first ever recorded labor strike in history. The papyrus also details the workers struggle to negotiate an agreement regarding their back wages and outlines the various stages involved in the negotiation. This paper discusses the Turing Strike papyrus, the events leading to the strikes and assesses the success of the strikers in achieving their goals through (relatively-)peaceful demonstrations.

## **Let My People Go: Is There a Place for Liberation Theology in the Coptic Orthodox Church?**

*Bishoy Dawood*

While Liberation Theology arose in Latin America within the context of the Roman Catholic Church's social justice tradition, such theological reflections on social issues and actions against oppressive social structures are not found in the Coptic Orthodox Church. By examining the contemporary biblical hermeneutics operating in the Coptic Orthodox Church, which tend to focus on the individual Christian person's relations with God and the Church, this paper will argue that the Coptic Orthodox Church has the potential to develop and operate a Liberation Theology that would be attentive to social relations of the Church and the World.

There is in the current state of the Church a contrast between the individual-centred theology operating in the Coptic Orthodox Church, on the one hand, and the rise of interest in social justice issues among young, revolutionary Coptic people in Egypt and in the diaspora, on the other hand. Given the historical Patristic heritage of the Coptic Orthodox Church, as well recent encounters in ecumenical and missionary activity in poorer countries, this paper will argue that the Coptic Orthodox Church is at a time of renewal in theology, particularly as Copts deal with the situation of social injustice as minorities in Egypt, or come across injustice and poverty in poorer nations as missionaries. The Coptic Orthodox Church, I will argue, has the potential to turn its attention to social justice issues by accepting and working with a Liberation Theology paradigm — a theology that could be meaningful to its own church members, and which would empower their own church members to work towards social justice and peace, both in Egypt and abroad.



## **Combatting social injustice in the early seventh century: The case studies of Bishop Abraham, Bishop Pesynthius and the holy man Epiphanius**

*Renate Dekker*

This paper presents the case studies of three religious leaders in the Theban region who received requests to prevent or combat social injustice, before and during the Persian occupation of Egypt (619-620).

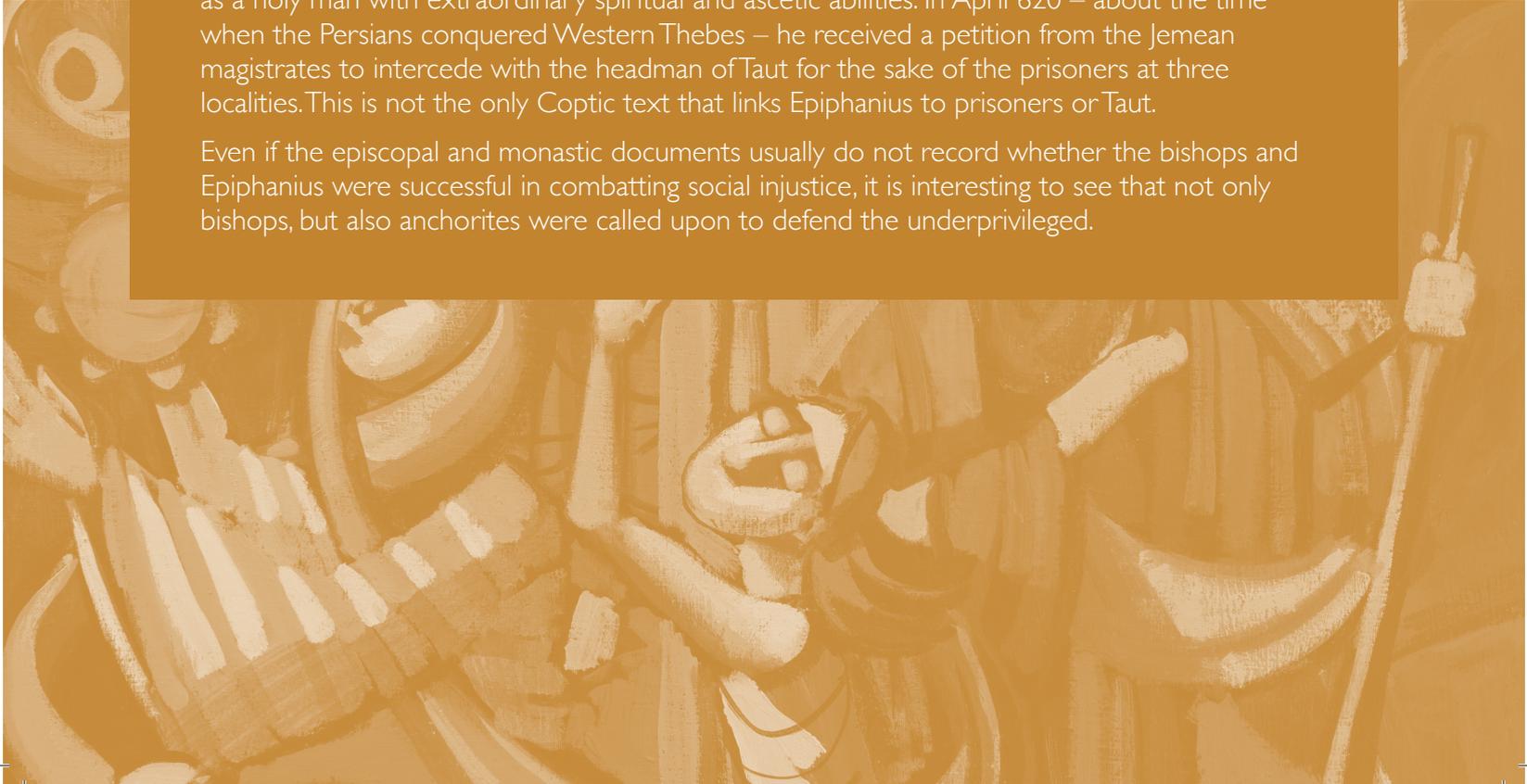
Bishop Abraham of Hermonthis (595-621) lived at the Monastery of St Phoibammon in Western Thebes and was also abbot of this monastery, which agreed to provide for poor passers-by, on account of an agreement with the nearby town of Jeme. As a bishop Abraham worked hard to combat poverty and social injustice in various ways, for instance by teaching his flock not to mistreat their neighbor; by rebuking officials who had detained a visitor or a prominent man who had prevented the poor from fishing, and by defending the interests of women in need. As abbot of the Monastery of St Phoibammon Abraham stipulated in his testament that his successor, the priest Victor, should continue to take care of the poor. Since several successors took this task seriously, the charitable fund initiated by Bishop Abraham still existed in the early eighth century.

Bishop Pesynthius of Koptos (599-632) lived at a monastery in the mountain of Tsenti, near modern Naqada, and was known for his generosity, which was not limited to his diocese, but extended – according to the hagiographic Encomium on this bishop – as far as Aswan.

Other hagiographical sources (two Lives of John the Almsgiver) confirm that there was indeed a famine in ca. 615, since the Nile did not flood that year. Pesynthius' Coptic documents shed light on the bishop's activities in the 620s, when he stayed in Western Thebes, allegedly on account of the Persian occupation. They record violence by civil authorities, imprisonment, brigandry and poverty both in the diocese of Koptos and in Theban region in general.

Epiphanius, who lived at a hermitage at a few hundred meters southeast of Abraham's residence, and with whom Pesynthius stayed for some time, also received petitions, since he was regarded as a holy man with extraordinary spiritual and ascetic abilities. In April 620 – about the time when the Persians conquered Western Thebes – he received a petition from the Jemean magistrates to intercede with the headman of Taut for the sake of the prisoners at three localities. This is not the only Coptic text that links Epiphanius to prisoners or Taut.

Even if the episcopal and monastic documents usually do not record whether the bishops and Epiphanius were successful in combatting social injustice, it is interesting to see that not only bishops, but also anchorites were called upon to defend the underprivileged.



## **Historicity of Coptic Martyrdoms and Its Implications**

*John Gee*

Scholars often characterize Coptic Martyrdoms as utterly devoid of historicity. The best guess for the dates of these narratives suggests that many of them date, to the early Islamic Period. This suggests that their intent was not primarily to convey historical information but rather to bolster faith and resolve in a time when it was increasingly difficult to be a Christian in Egypt. This paper will examine the purpose and function of Coptic martyrdom narratives in such a milieu.

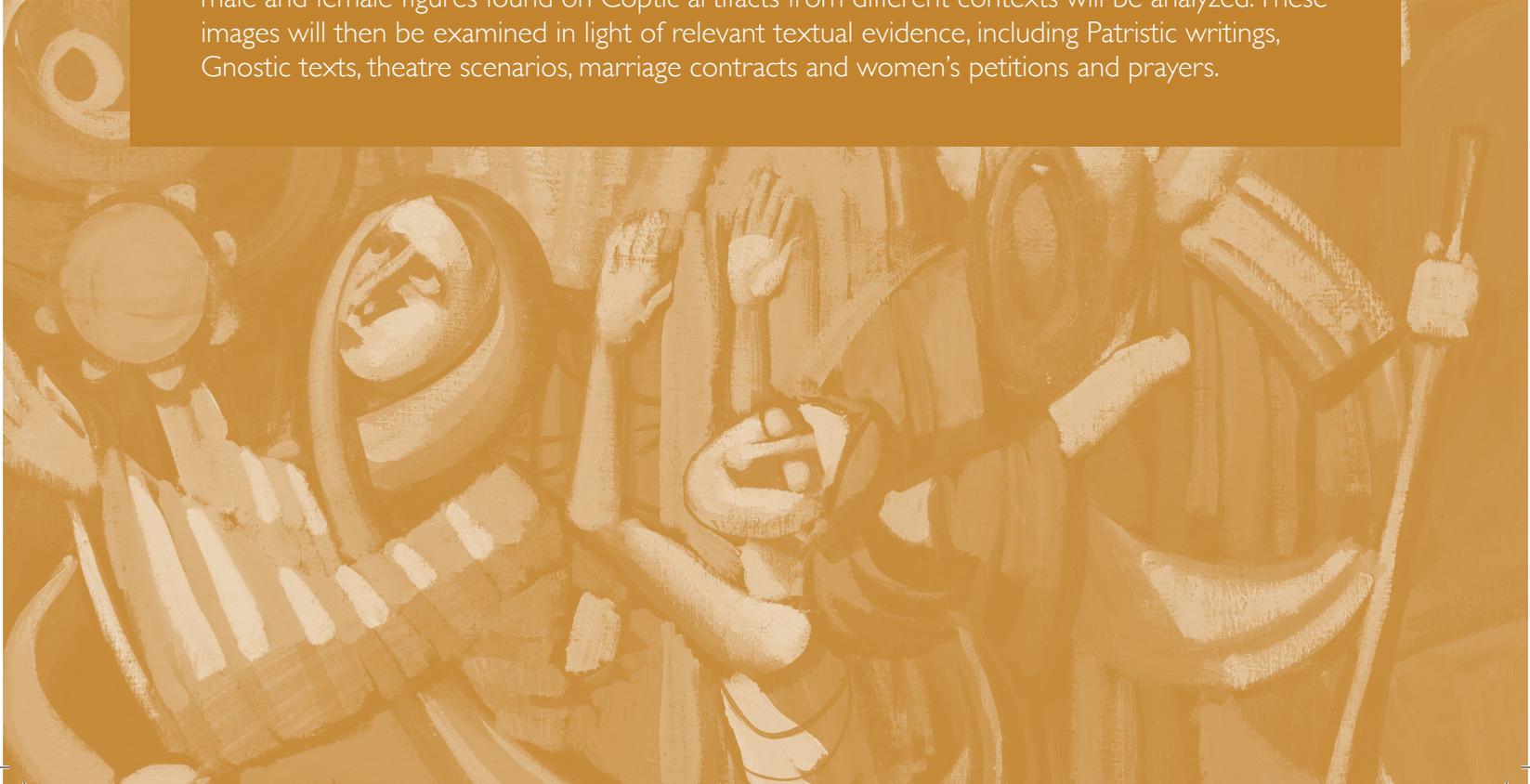
## **Male and female He created them: Gender equality as reflected through Coptic Art**

*Engy Hanna*

Judas asked Jesus: "how should we pray?" Jesus replied: "pray in the place where there is no women." With these words, the author of the Gnostic narrative *The Dialogue of the Saviour* argues that women are spiritually inferior to men. It is from this perspective that Byzantine studies frequently feature women in Late Antique and Byzantine period as being inferior to men, fallible and weak. However, Christian literature frequently advocates for women's equality to men from a spiritual perspective. Authors repeatedly assert that men and women have the same nature and both stand equal before God. These conflicting perspectives coexisted in Late Antique Egypt and defined women's position in a traditionally male-made society.

They also influenced the material culture produced by Copts. In an illiterate society, the language of imagery is quite effective.

This paper explores the intentional advocacy for women's spiritual equality to men promoted through the visual culture of Late Antique Egypt. The ideal and the real status of women will be discussed, highlighting the ways the Coptic artist featured the domains of women's power, and exploring the potential of using Coptic art as a supplementary historical source. Images of fictional couples in religious iconography, actual couples in secular art, and the pairing of the male and female figures found on Coptic artifacts from different contexts will be analyzed. These images will then be examined in light of relevant textual evidence, including Patristic writings, Gnostic texts, theatre scenarios, marriage contracts and women's petitions and prayers.



## **Heritage Advocacy and the Political Boundaries of Archaeological Work in Egypt**

*Monica Hanna*

The nature of archaeological work post-2011 in Egypt has changed drastically. The security vacuum following political events between 2011 and 2013 led to pandemic looting and land grabbing. The fast pace of cultural heritage desecration had led the already stale bureaucratic Ministry of Antiquities incapable of facing such multiple challenges with the traditional methods that were rendered obsolete by the new technologies employed by looters. Magazine and museum thefts, as well as the illicit digging has led the prices of the Egyptian antiquities to drop on the illegal market. The dramatic situation has led many groups formed by academics and regular citizens to create new awareness campaigns regarding the threats to Egyptian heritage. They actively worked on reporting looted sites or new objects for sale on the market. Furthermore, they got involved in forming a new heritage discourse in Egypt that is more democratic and challenges the colonial and post-colonial attitudes embedded in the traditional archaeological work. The institutional resistance to these new groups was opposed to public opinion support, which empowered them to negotiate heritage issues differently. Five years from 2011, the Ministry of Antiquities has started to accept notions of community and public involvement in the archaeological work. These would have been resisted adamantly before 2011. The new process of heritage democratization is also affecting the academic community and is generating a novel dialogue that is less colonial and more contested.

## **Coptic Heritage for a Better Future- Social Memory, Historicity and Current affairs**

*Fekri A. Hassan*

Coptic Heritage is an integral strand in the tapestry of national and local Egyptian Heritage. However, it is only the religious component of this heritage that receives institutional support. This is matched by a virtual lack of academic institutions to deal with the diverse aspects of the cultural legacy of Coptic Heritage.

That Coptic heritage has been reduced to a religious legacy, while understood in terms of historical antecedents, is counterproductive. Coptic heritage has to be presented, and interpreted, as a cultural legacy of all Egyptians with the understanding that Egyptian heritage is the product of transmutative processes of continuity and change. Coptic heritage survives in colloquial Arabic language, festivals, cuisine, agricultural calendar, music, architecture, names, cosmology to name a few. Therefore, genuine efforts must be made to valorize this fundamental parentage of contemporary, living Egyptian heritage and integrate it within a new vision of Egyptian heritage in order to remedy the current historical myopia and lack of appreciation of how Coptic heritage links the present to a deeper Egyptian past. This requires (1) greater recognition of Coptic heritage in the academic higher education programs of archaeology, history and tourism, as well as in school curricula, (2) implementation of all constitutional measures to ensure the rights and obligation of every Egyptian citizen regardless of creed in partnership with the civic society, (3) promotion of cultural activities such as lectures, seminars, exhibitions, and other creative activities to reveal and enhance awareness of the continuity and dynamics of cultural transitions from Ancient Egypt to the Present and to counteract hatred propaganda and misinformation. The current situation is explosive and requires serious remedial actions to avoid further confrontations, polarization and agitation.

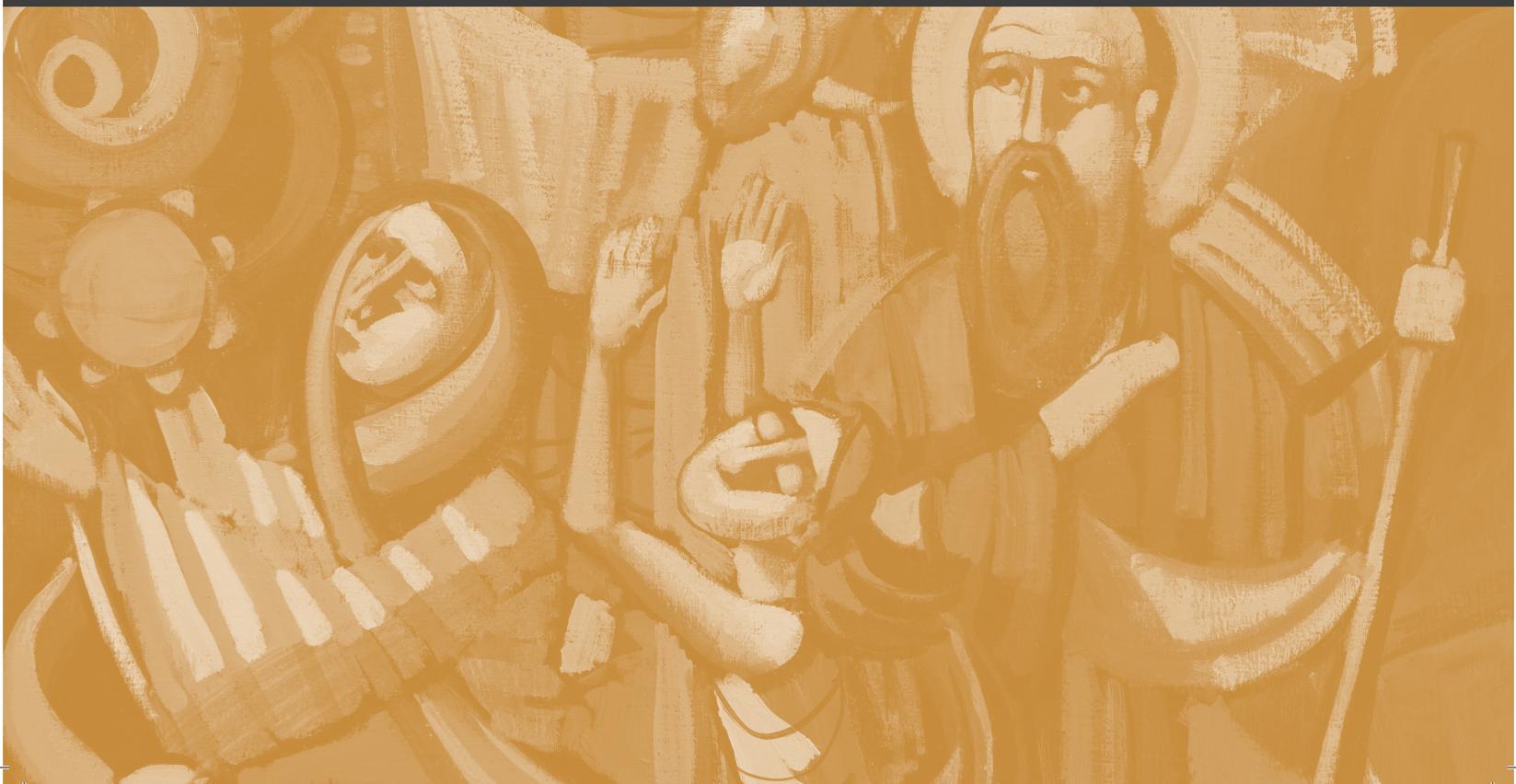
## The St Kyrel Choir in Europe

*Michael Henein*

The St Kyrel Choir is an activity of the St Kyrel Trust, a charity established in the UK in 1996 with the objective of supporting deprived university students in Egypt. To secure continuous funding the trust has established a European choir and orchestra, mostly from the UK and France with the aim of learning and performing Coptic hymns in concert format based on biblical themes. "The Anointed Servant" Concert which depicts the life of Lord Jesus, was the first to be performed in London, UK in 2011. This was also presented in other European cities. "The Creation" in 2015 was the second concert and was based on the events from the Book of Genesis. Many relevant hymns and psalms were adapted to narrate the events of each day of creation. The third concert 'Anastasis' was a unique joint performance between the St Kyrel Coptic Choir and the UK Byzantine Greek Choir. The two choirs exchanged hymns depicting the events which took place between the time of the crucifixion and the resurrection of Lord Jesus. In the Finale, both choirs sang together *Xpictoc Anecti* in one accord.

Such musical activity has its benefits:

1. Singing the Coptic music in Western languages helps the audience to better understand and appreciate the hymns and integrate in the spirit of worship
2. It instigated academic studies and researches into the unique patterns of Coptic music and...
3. ...It has encouraged the union of different Coptic choirs from around the world and provided an opportunity to integrate with other Churches.



## Heritage Activists or Surrogate Civil Servants

*Michael Jones*

In the assault on human lives and political liberties, erasing cultural expressions such as buildings, monuments, language, religion, and social practices has always been a powerful tool in warfare and social regulation. Neglect, intimidation, disrespect and coercion, whether officially sanctioned or publicly tolerated are equally destructive, eroding self-esteem, dishonouring the victims and their forebears as well as the perpetrators.

Consider what is at stake. Cultural heritage means more than just mere identity and accumulated layers of memories. Culture is consumable and constantly regenerates itself. Its conservation does not preserve the past, creating a museum of memory in which people can look but may not touch. It participates in the social lives of things. Heritage and its protection are no longer exclusive, as before, but have intrinsic importance for people, their identity and their human rights.

This will be the third paper inspired by the presence in Upper Egypt of the extraordinary Red Monastery Church near Sohag in the series of symposia held at the Coptic Orthodox Centre, Stevenage. The American Research Center in Egypt (ARCE) has been carrying out conservation work at the Red Monastery since 2003 with funding provided by the US Government through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The current grant is entitled 'Cultural Heritage Tourism in Egypt' administered under the 'Sustainable Investment in Tourism in Egypt Project'. These titles reflect USAID's current programme of investing in sectors affected by the current economic and social distress facing the Egyptian people. Though funding was initially for restoring the church and its mural paintings, continuing support is justified by moving away from the old monuments and sites approach, focusing on community involvement, capacity building and economic development, forms of public diplomacy and people-to-people exchange with the historic Red Monastery church as the venue for these activities.

These strategies reflect changes in conservation practice and in US cultural diplomacy. Since the 1980s USAID has funded cultural programs exemplifying the politically motivated use of cultural heritage in areas of US interest, Turkey, Cyprus, Jordan, Jerusalem and Egypt, where cultural heritage is highly politicised although these programmes claim to be non-political. Much valuable work has been done. Nevertheless, they embed cultural heritage in US foreign policy and are subject to attitudes and agendas formulated in Washington. The message is reinforced by the USAID logo and 'tagline': "From the American People" in every public notice and communication. Since 9/11, America's foreign assistance programmes have been more fully integrated into the US National Security Strategy with the elevation of the so-called 'third d', 'development', being added to diplomacy and defense. The rhetoric of cultural colonialism is clear (since 2003) in the annual reports of the US Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation; "Congress recognizes that the world's cultural heritage is fragile and irreplaceable, requiring our stewardship in present times to preserve it for future generations" (my italics). There is ample evidence that archaeologists and conservators are active participants.

For activists in heritage conservation discharging US cultural policies in Egypt the issues are complex. This paper addresses some of these issues within the context of Coptic cultural heritage conservation at this specific site. The Red Monastery and everyone in the project have benefitted as recipients of generous US funds. Work focuses daily on the heritage environment, community engagement for participation in change as a contemporary dynamic of the conservation process, outreach to local and national tourism concerns and hands-on training for Ministry of Antiquities inspectors. These inspire confidence by drawing people into the actual physical procedures of preservation and hopefully support sustainability. While the everyday routine is rarely subjected to the analyses outlined above, it airs 'America's good news story' asserted in the official rhetoric.

This paper does not represent the views of ARCE but is an academic appraisal of a contemporary issue in which the author has been involved.

***“There is no authority except that which God has established” (Romans 13:1)***

### **An Exploration of Power Distance in the Early Church and the Modern Coptic Diaspora**

*Ihab Khalil*

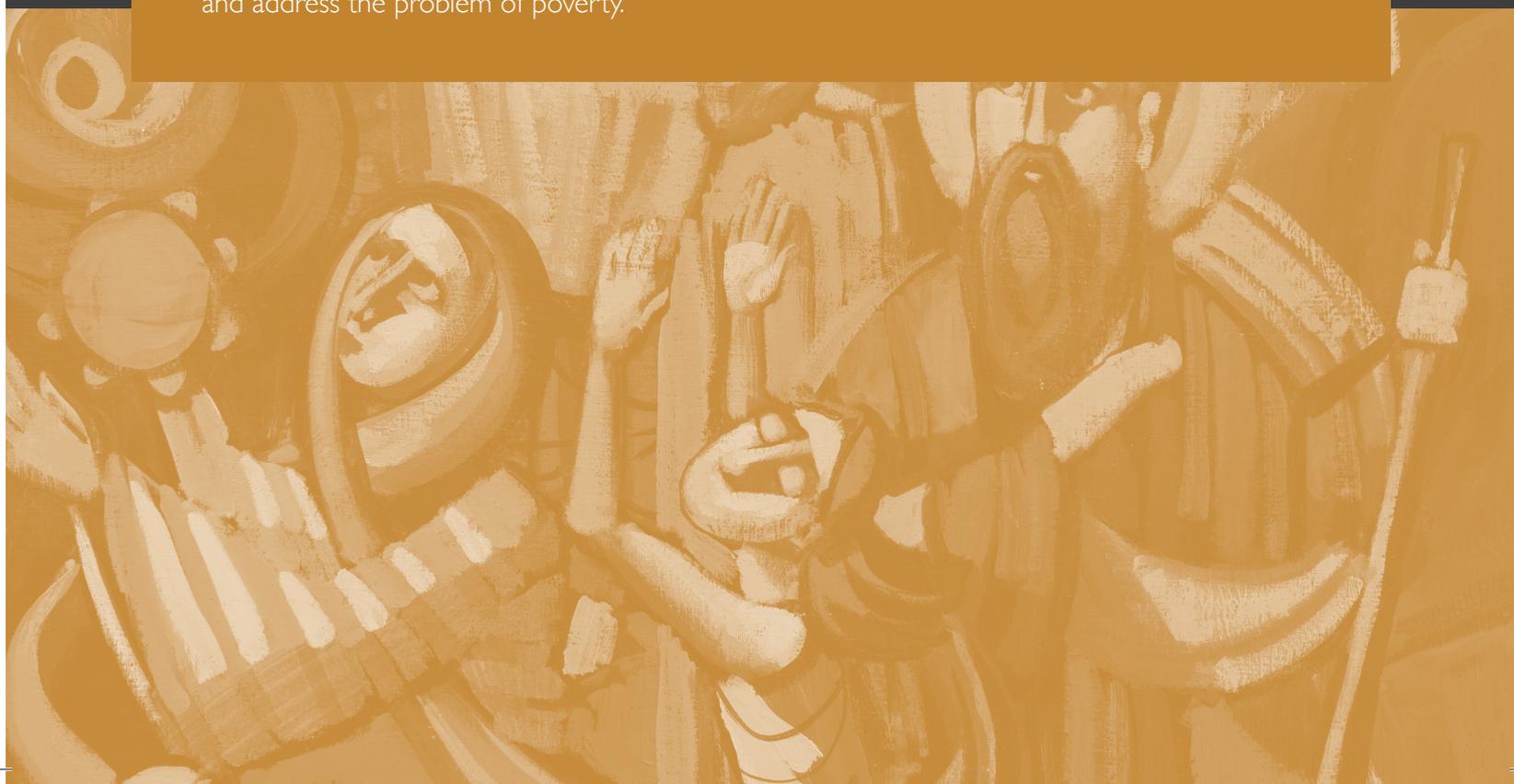
Coptic immigration has created an active and vibrant diaspora. As the diaspora moves further into the 21st century, there has been discussion among members of the community of what Coptic identity means and the roles of the clergy (priests, bishops) and laity. This paper will view this discussion through the lens of social psychologist Gerard Hendrik (Geert) Hofstede's cultural dimension of "power distance." The third century conflict between Pope Demetrius and Origen of Alexandria will be analyzed using this cultural dimension. This historical conflict will then be examined in relation to modern laity education and engagement.

### **Poverty and Subsistence in Ancient Egyptian and Biblical Wisdom Literature**

*Ash Melika*

Wisdom literature of the Biblical text and ancient Egypt underscore ethical, social, and religious perspectives on various issues in life. One of such issue that is regularly addressed is the topic of poverty and wealth. This paper investigates the lexical and conceptual semantics of poverty primarily in ancient Egyptian and Israelite Wisdom Literature. Various and diverse literary perspectives on the nature of poverty and the poor are examined, with a special focus on imagery and metaphors. Specifically, the study compares between ancient Egyptian and Hebrew texts that focus on the social and economic condition and exploitation of the poor, and the plea for their just treatment.

A conclusion drawn underlines the relationship between the Egyptian Christian Church's theology and participation in anti-poverty activism. Further, the paper argues that in light of the global market today which produces sizeable margins of economic inequality in Egypt and elsewhere, it is incumbent upon the Egyptian Christian Church to revisit its theological tradition, and address the problem of poverty.



## **Victor Fakhoury: Iconographer, Theologian and Historian**

*Helene Moussa*

Iconographers are artists who create devotional images and are inspired by the biblical message and guided by the dogmas and doctrines of the Church. They also “record” through imagery the biblical narratives of Jesus Christ and the Theotokos, and the lives of saints and martyrs. Iconographer Victor Fakhoury however departs from classical iconography by chronicling current events. In 2011 he started to write icons that narrate significant moments in the life of the Coptic Church and Copts of Egypt since the 25 March, 2011 Arab Spring—seven to date.

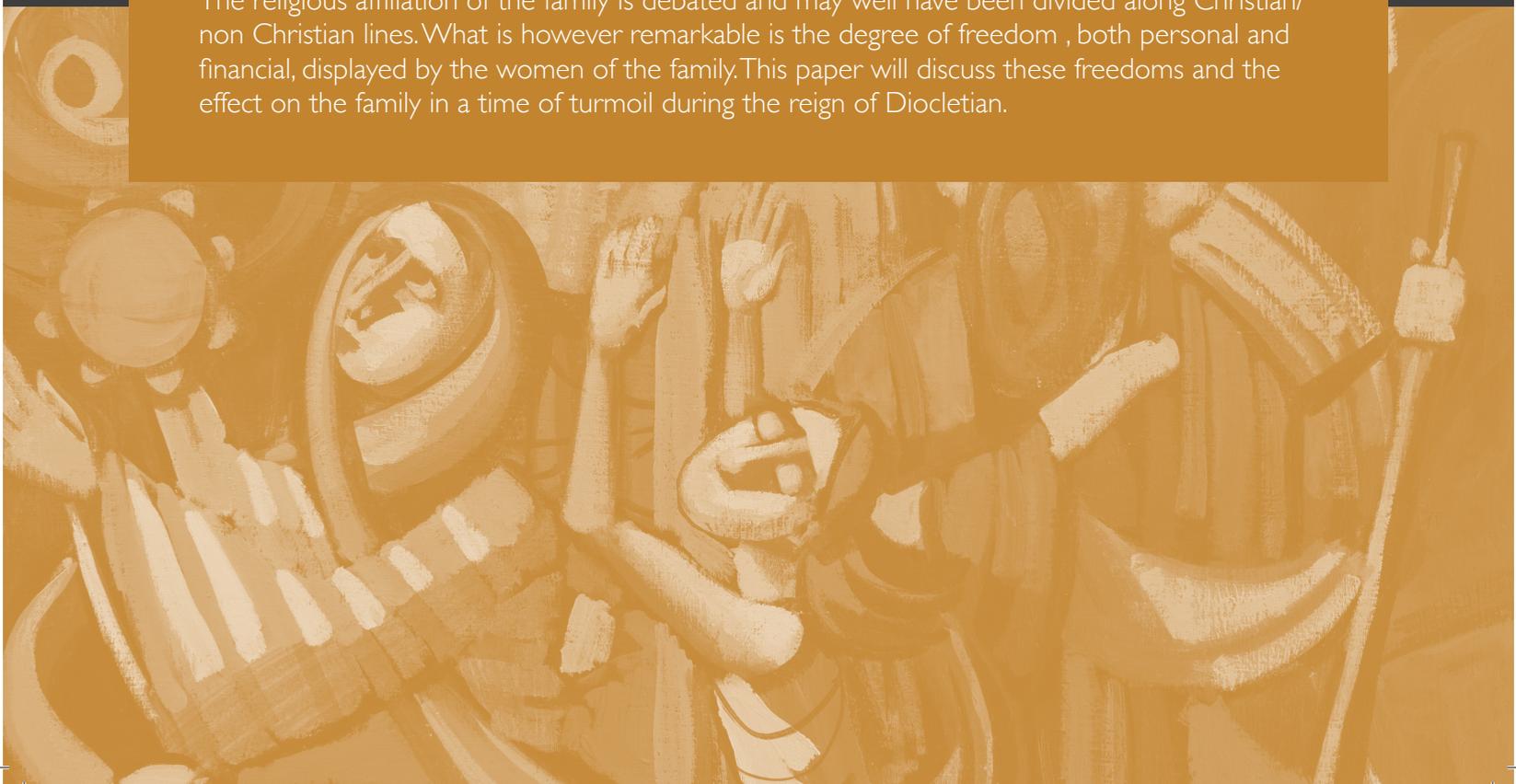
Fakhoury takes his inspiration from biblical passages to interpret each situation spiritually through the masterly skill of his brush. While each icon could stand on its own and would require a full paper to fully interpret, it is that series that make Fakhoury’s work both unique and the reason why St. Mark’s Museum has reserved the rights to acquire the full series. The series is a historical record for the present and future generations.

I have argued elsewhere that Coptic icons can also represent what anthropologist James Scott calls “hidden transcripts.” Hidden transcripts are artistic records of how subordinate groups or oppressed groups express themselves in social spaces that are not controlled by the dominant power(s), such as on icons, in the relative safety of the church, or in this case in the collection of St. Mark’s Coptic Museum. The masterly skill of Fakhoury’s brush makes for a profound expression of spiritual activism and advocacy because he narrates current situations of oppression with the underlying message of hope in God’s justice and love.

## **A Coptic family from Late Antique Egypt and Women’s Freedom**

*Alanna Nobbs*

The archive of Paniskos, known chiefly from the collection at PMich, 214-221 has recently been augmented by a papyrus (SB 12326) which can, on the basis of the names, be identified with his mother in law, (his wife and daughter being known by name already.) This gives us an unparalleled glimpse of four generations of the one family in Late Antique Coptic Egypt. The religious affiliation of the family is debated and may well have been divided along Christian/non Christian lines. What is however remarkable is the degree of freedom, both personal and financial, displayed by the women of the family. This paper will discuss these freedoms and the effect on the family in a time of turmoil during the reign of Diocletian.



## **After Ragheb Moftah: Repatriating Coptic Music Transcriptions as Modern Pedagogies of Female Piety**

*Carolyn Ramzy*

Coptic Orthodox music culture is a gendered experience; male clerics and cantors publicly perform the most valued and sacred liturgical genre, *alḥān*, while women largely sing and lead choirs who perform the more popular though comparatively undervalued colloquial genre of *taratīl*. Performed in the antiquated Coptic language, *alḥān* have emerged as the community's most "authentic" music canon, articulating the community's sense of legitimacy, indigeneity, and agency in a Muslim majority nation. Their revered status as the last link to an ancient Egyptian heritage has been further accentuated by the efforts of Ragheb Moftah (1898 – 2002), an Egyptian amateur collector who spent his lifetime collecting these hymns, as well as the interest of European musicologists who have transcribed *alḥān* into Western music notation. In this paper, I explore how one ensemble, inspired by Ragheb Moftah, continues to depend on western music transcriptions to disseminate Orthodox *alḥān*. Known as the David Ensemble, the group is also unique as one of their lead singers is a woman: Monica George Kyrillos. Kyrillos not only defies gender expectations by singing and performing *alḥān*, but she even teaches the genre on Coptic satellite television. By analyzing her program called "Coptic Tones," I argue that Kyrillos repatriates Western music transcriptions to authenticate women's participation in the Orthodox Church's canon. More importantly however, I illustrate that by teaching audiences how to read Western music notation on her TV show, she is also part of larger community reforms to inculcate a Coptic modern piety that parallels the State's modernist projects to shape and govern Egyptian popular piety. In this project, I investigate how Coptic religious revival depends on Western transcriptions of *alḥān*, discourses of modernity, as well as a middle class habitus to redefine women's Orthodox subjectivity as they increasingly participate in a male dominated genre.

## **The Reform of Pope Cyril IV and its influences in the life of the Coptic community**

*Sherin Sadek*

During the second half of the nineteenth century AD, the 110th Pope of the See of Saint Mark, Cyril IV, was the leader of a great radical reform program that had its large impacts in the life of the Copts in Egypt.

The aim of this paper is to examine the different steps of this social reform, its different, and important influences in the life of the Copts in the late nineteenth and during the twentieth centuries AD. It also aims to elucidate how these reforms influenced public policy in Egypt to achieve large-scale and far-reaching results for the protection of the Coptic families and community.

Pope Cyril IV's reforms may best be understood in terms of being an advocacy initiative and a powerful tool to support and to unite the Copts against violence and other deep problems including being marginalized in their own country. This paper will also shed light on how the Pope Cyril's reforms motivated the Copts to claim their rights, enabling them to play a pioneering role in the development of the Egyptian society in so many different domains.

## **The fate of the Christians in the Middle East Region and the Dangers of Religious Fanaticism in Political Conflicts**

*Madga Shahin*

In Egypt, in the wake of the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood to power, Coptic Christians sensed a major threat to their freedom of religion and identity. The Muslim Brotherhood's deliberate attempts to transform the Egyptian identity into an Islamic one stirred up fear and uncertainty among the Copts. Their citizenship, sense of belonging to the state, and inclusion were at stake. While enjoying massive support in the West, under the pretext of democratic elections and moderate Islam, Islamic groups took advantage of the Arab Spring to establish a faith-based state which jeopardizes minorities' rights. The Islamist government further persisted sectarianism and pursued policies that threatened not only Christians but also other vulnerable groups in the Egyptian society like women and activists which are merely protected by the constitution.

In this paper, I argue that we are neither facing a clash of civilizations, as Huntington claims nor are we facing a general revival of historic antagonism of gigantic dimensions, as I seriously believe that Muslims and Christians overwhelmingly have learned how to live with one another. We are facing a resurgence of restricted movements of extreme Islamists and so-called political Islam carrying single repeated acts of extreme and deadly violence. This paper will also shed the light on the MB's conceptions of the nation-state and the source of legislation, and their implications on Coptic minorities in Egypt.

## **If These Walls Could Talk! The Story of Three Cairo Palaces**

*Amr Talaat*

During the reign of Mohamed Aly Pacha (1805-1848) Egypt was transformed into a commercial hub for the Near East. The country embraced a wide array of diversified people who poured into Egypt's main cities to start projects and commence trade. Naturally, Cairo was at the heart of this unique blend of diversification, where various nationalities from the western world chose Egypt as a new home. This influx, in turn, was reflected into the advent of western styles of architecture that started to replace the Ottoman style prevailing in Egypt at the time. Soon new suburbs such as Helwan, Shubra, Mounira, Kobbah, Abbaseya, Helmeya and others emerged. Many of these neighborhoods saw the construction of beautiful palaces and villas built in western designs such as Renaissance, Gothic, and Rococo among others. A grand architectural revival swept the city for the next hundred years. However, during the second half of the 20th century, Egypt started losing a substantial portion of this architectural wealth, as many of these palaces were demolished to give way to modern buildings, larger in capacity, yet inferior in style.

The objective of this paper is to draw attention to some of Cairo's palatial landmarks; some of which we have lost, while others are still in place, either standing in pride as a testimony of a glorious heritage or sadly endangered. This presentation will focus on three representative palaces, in particular: Zaa'faran, Helwan, and El Nozha. It will shed light on the historical significance of these buildings, the chief events that transpired within their walls and the important figures who lived or worked there. It is a glimpse of Cairo's glorious days!

## **Severus of Antioch as an advocate of Orthodoxy**

*Y. N. Youssef*

In this talk, we will tackle the following points: 1) Sources of the life of Severus of Antioch; 2) his literary activities; and his education as a lawyer and its use argumentation. Particular attention will be given to his argumentation against the Chalcedonians; against Julianist; and against a usurper.