



**Ain Shams University  
Faculty Of Arts  
Department of Archaeology  
Section Of Greco Roman Archaeology**

**The Relationship Between Art &  
Architecture Elements And The  
Sacraments Of Egyptian Church in The  
Byzantine Period**

**(Civilizational – Archaeological, Study)**

**Prepared By**

**Ibrahim Mohamed Hassan Ghareb**

**Supervision:**

**Prof.: Mustafa Mohamed Kandeel**

**Zayed**

**DR.: Naglaa Mahmoud Ezzat**

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## Thesis Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to highlight a certain cultural part which hasn't been focused on before. As the previous studies whether the religious or the archaeological have never discussed this topic which is " the relation between the daily rituals sacraments and the architectural – artistic characteristic of the Egyptian Church ." The church here is not used only to refer to the building but to refer to the abstract meaning. As the church means a group of believers, referring to any gathering for praying or performing certain rituals. The sacrament is everything of prayers , rituals and secrets that the servant ( the priest ) each according to his rank does, including its variables and its materialistic , spiritual and social influences in the sorts of the architectural and artistic elements that affect and complete the ritual inside the church, monastery, private building or a hermitage.

From the title, we can understand that this thesis will try to reveal the relation which occurred between the Egyptian – Coptic rituals and the architectural – artistic elements of the Egyptian Church during the Byzantine Era before and after the Council of Chalcedon ( 451 A.D ) in which the Egyptian church had separated from the Byzantine Church. And because the Egyptian church didn't admit the rules of this council and insisting on following the opinions of the Church Fathers in Nicene Council ( 325 A.D. ), and the Nicene Act of Faith that Kerolos hold on to in the first Ephesus council ( 431 A.D. ) in which he refuses the idea that gives the Christ two natures. This is a evidence for the strictness of the Egyptian ideology which refuses any moderation or changes, as it believes that the Christ has one nature, its Theologian thought and its rules which were considered

to be an outcome of this religious thought and the nature of its culture and society.

This thesis aims to search for the relation between the architectural and artistic elements inside the church in Egypt through the limited ritual need of the Egyptian ideology.

Out of this, came the title of the **first chapter " The Church and council sources in determining the sacraments rules."** In this particular part, the research discuss the appearance ( rise ) of the Christianity and how it was spread in some severe circumstances made by the Roman Emperors, where it faced all kinds of persecutions. But sooner everything changed when the Emperor Constantine the First admitted the Christianity ( 306 – 337 A.D. ). The Christians Fathers then were able to solve their own problems after the foreign problems were solved. The thoughts and opinions varied, once because of the Greek philosophy and once by the Egyptian thought, which cause the Christians to disperse and the appearance of some new opinions and ideas that contradicted with the church. This led to the appearance of Ecumenical councils where the ideas were presented and voted by the church bishops. The Egyptian role was very effective in these councils. As in Nicene Council ( 325 A.D ) the Conflict between Arius and his followers and the church of Alexandria that has the Theologian thought was severe. Which Arius faced hardly trying to pass a law of faith to gather all the Christians, and if any one breaks it, he was judged just as Arius who was considered a heretic and a splinter from the Church. After that the Egyptian Church followed Athanasius method.

As for **the second chapter, it was written under the title " The study of the origins of the sacraments'**

**rituals in the Egyptian church."** The ritual is how the prayers are organized and held and the services at the religious and daily celebrations. As for the linguistics meaning, it's a derivative from the Greek word **Ταξις** which means order or system. In this part we aim at understanding the origination of the rituals during the first five Christian centuries. Concerning the ritual's origination there are three ways by which we can recognize its origin ( the oral sources – the written sources – the Archaeological sources ). For the origin of the ritual refers to ( the Biblical effects - The Hellenistic effects - The ancient Egyptian effects – Gnostic practices – The folklore ) the previous order has been made according to the direct influence on the rituals not according to the chronological order. For example, there are daily rituals which are practices called sacraments such as raise incense, the daily Mass which is considered a group of rituals gathered inside only one ritual and the handling which is one of the most important rituals performed inside the Coptic Church. There are some periodical rituals related to the seven secrets , inauguration of the churches and icons , some rituals are specially related to the prophets, martyrs and the saints because all the churches and monasteries were build on the martyrs' cemeteries. Some rituals were related to Virgin Mary.

The **third chapter is titled " the study of practicing the daily sacraments' rituals in the Egyptian church"**. In this chapter the thesis discussed in details how these rituals are performed on the oral, materialistic and spiritual level. The spiritual level is the most important as it has a direct relation between the Priest and the worshiper. the main purpose of this thesis, that is how the architectural and artistic elements being

affected by the Ecclesiastical rituals as it's clear that certain tools must be used in certain places to go along with these rituals.

**Chapter four came under the title " The architectural and artistic elements used in reinforcing the Ecclesiastical rituals."** In this chapter we consider the early Christian architecture in Egypt which wasn't clear or specific because of many reasons and elements, the most important is the modesty of the shape, size and the architectural design used by this group who was living under several social pressures such as poverty, the Roman occupation and the social and religious lack of awareness. We can also find a clear reason which is the lack of the ritual features and determining it in a fixed way during the early era . That was an essential reason for not selecting an architectural structure with specific characteristics to perform the religion freely, which was so clear in Ismant el-Kharab ( Kellis ) and its surroundings.

In addition to that, the examples of the church architecture, if there were any, that were mentioned by the majority of the early Christian Historians have been changed completely at the beginning of the 8<sup>th</sup> Century. These architecture examples couldn't resist the time factors or the desired Christian expansion in this era. So, it was removed and modified. That's why we can't be certain in identifying its architectural religious identity in Egypt during this early era. That's why the thesis was interested in churches and monasteries which haven't been changed or at least that kept their figure. Such as, Egypt's Western desert churches, Ismant el-Kharab( Kellis ), Abu Matta monastery, churches ( of / from ) monasteries such as Abu Mina , the Red and White monasteries and others.

As for the artistic elements it's logical to find a relation between the artistic elements and the architectural components inside the Egyptian church. There must be some places that serve these rituals. For examples, we find one of the most sacred secret is the Baptism which must has a certain place to perform its rituals, and the baptizing basin confession secret and the secret of Anointing the sick . all these rituals needs some private places to be practiced. We also find the tools by which these rituals are practiced whether big or small ones. Such as the cups.