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## CAPS AND IDENTITY: ORIGIN AND INTERPRETATION OF PHRYGIAN CAPS IN COPTIC ART

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### ABSTRACT

*Different headdresses are introduced in Coptic art, among them; the Phrygian cap. It is a non-religious cap in Christianity. It's rarely depicted on Coptic art, but it had its origin in Sasanian, Greek, and Roman arts. Certain people are depicted shown wearing such cap in Coptic art. This paper aims to trace and study its origin, and its few depictions in Coptic art and artifacts. Thus, an iconographical and analytical methodologies will be followed.*

**KEYWORDS:** Headdress, conical cap, Phrygian cap, Coptic, art, textile.

### INTRODUCTION

The Phrygian cap is a soft conical headgear with a forward bent top that fits the head, also known by the Mithraic cap and the sacrificial cap. All conical hats form has their names from the term "Mithradic" or 'Mithraic' in reference to god *Mittra* or Mithra.<sup>1</sup> All the clack conical form caps are originated and generally came from east. It was originated in Anatolia, precisely in the province of Phrygia. It refers mainly to people from Phrygia and all oriental people in Greek art.<sup>2</sup> Nobles, princes, and queens were depicted wearing this headpiece throughout the Sasanian Empire. It was inspired by royal Parthian fashion.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Hargrave Jennings, *The Rosicrucians: Their Rites and Mysteries*, Sixth edition (London: George Routledge & Sons, Limited, 1921), 280-1.

<sup>2</sup> Jennings, H., *The Rosicrucians*, 282.

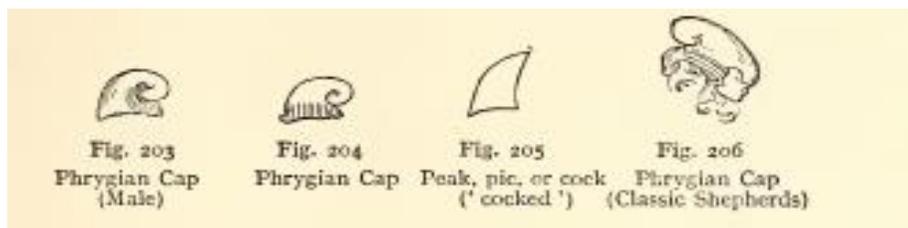
<sup>3</sup> Elsie H. Peck, "Clothing IV. In the Sasanian Period", *Encyclopedia Iranica*, V/7, 739-752, <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/clothing-iv>, accessed on 28/5/2022.

Sasanians were called Persians, medians, and Parthians. The Sasanian empire 224–637 AD. was founded by Ardashir I. He reestablishes Iranian rule with public support after centuries of Seleucid Greeks and Parthians rule. During the reign of his successor Sharapur I; the empire was expanded, and parts of central Asia and north India were included under Sasanian empire. See; Andrea Gariboldi, "The Birth of Sasanian Monarchy in Western Sources," in *The Parthian and Early Sasanian Empires: Adaption and Expansion* (United Kingdom: Oxbox Books, 2016), 47. Also See; Heleanor Feltham, "Lions, Silks and Silver: The Influence of Sasanian Persia", *Sino-Platonic Papers* 206, (August 2010): 2-4.

Phrygia was a powerful empire in Asia Minor during the first millennium BC. It is located in the west-central region of Anatolia. It is known for mythological figures such as King Midas and Marsyas, as well as its unique geographical location, which helped civilization spread from east to west. Due to invasions by Persians, Greeks, and Romans, its borders have altered over time. During the Hellenistic period, it had a tremendous impact on the development of art. The Phrygians were known as the 'Eastern Greeks' because they were so near to the Greeks.<sup>4</sup>

Historically, the Phrygian cap was originally intended to distinguish the Phrygian people, but it came to designate to all people from the Near East and Central Asia, including Trojans, Persians, and Amazons. During the Roman Period such type of caps symbolize both high and low status of the individual depending on the context of the scene. It was commonly employed over the heads of the Parthians during the reign of the Trojans, who were the ancestors of the Romans. It was referred to as a negative sign because of the conflicts between the Trojans and Parthians.<sup>5</sup>

Iranian horsemen and hunters used to wear the Phrygian cap which was adopted and modified by the Medians.<sup>6</sup> It is considered the original form of war helmets in Greek or Eastern arts. It is also utilized as a sign of unusual initiation and baptism. Furthermore, it has served as a symbol of the enlightened people. Most heroic figures in the Gnostic Gems depicted wear this type of headgear.<sup>7</sup> Although the form of Phrygian cap is fixed, various types of this headgear are found in art (Fig.1).



(Fig.1): Different forms of Phrygian caps. After; Jennings, H., *The Rosicrucians*, 282.

<sup>4</sup> Fatih Mehmet Berk, "The Role of Mythology as a cultural Identify and a cultural Heritage: The Case of Phrygian Mythology", *Procedia- Social and Behavioral Sciences* 225 (2016), 68.

<sup>5</sup> C. Brain Rose, Kathryn Morgan, Sam Holzman and Patricia Kim, "The Legacy of Phrygian Culture" in *The Golden Age of King Midas: Expedition Catalogue*, eds. C. Brain Rose and Gareth Darbyshire, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 41-48.

<sup>6</sup> Isabella Benda Weber, "Non-Greek Headdress" in *Tiare, Diadems and Headdresses in the Ancient Mediterranean Cultures: Symbolism and Technology*, eds. Carmen Alfaro Giner et.al. (Valencia: SEMA, 2014), 109-11.

<sup>7</sup> Jennings, H., *The Rosicrucians*, 282.

## GODS ASSOCIATED WITH PHRYGIAN CAP IN ROMAN MYTHOLOGY

Phrygian cap was associated mainly to two Greek gods; Attis and Mithra, who contributed in spreading this type of cap in Greek and Roman world.

### I. GOD ATTIS

God Attis was one of non-Greek origin deities who get involved in Greek Mythology. His homeland was in Phrygia. He is widely shown in Greek art with his homeland costumes; long sleeved belted tunic reaches till his knees. His head is close fitted cap with a pointed tip extending up and pulled forward. His cult was also in use during the Roman era.<sup>8</sup> His consort and lover was the Anatolian Mother Cybele; her origin also was in Phrygia. Her cult was spread from Phrygia to Greek world and Asia Minor. She was worshipped as goddess of earth, nature, agriculture and mountains of Asia Minor.<sup>9</sup>

A marble head of god Attis as a youth is exhibited on the Bibliothèque Nationale de France (Fig. 2). He is wearing the Phrygian cap. His facial features are nearly similar to Antonius the favorite friend of Emperor Hadrian who was died in 130 AD.<sup>10</sup> Another statue of God Attis is was discovered in Alexandria. It is made out of bronze. It dates back to Roman Period. He wears short tunic with a belt in his waist and wears Phrygian cap above his head (Fig. 3).<sup>11</sup>



**Fig. 2: Marble head of god Attis, after; Mersan T.M., "Histoire Du Cabinet Des Médailles, 11**



**Fig. 3 : Statue of god Attis in Bibliothèque Nationale de France. After; Ernest Babelon E., Blanchet J., Catalogue des Bronzes Antiques, 287. Antiques**

<sup>8</sup> Lynn E. Roller, Attis on Greek Votive Monuments; Greek God or Phrygian? *Hesperia: The Journal of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens*, Vol.63, no. 2 (April-June 1994), 259.

<sup>9</sup> Roslynn Shirley Bell, "Cybele Tristis: An analysis of the Statuette of the Magna Mater in the James Logie Memorial Collection, Ma. Thesis, Dep. of art History (University of Canterbury, 1994), 1.

<sup>10</sup> Theophile Marson du Mersan, "Histoire Du Cabinet Des Médailles: Antiques Et Pierres Gravées", (Paris: Kessinger Publishing, LLC, 1838), 11.

<sup>11</sup> Ernest Babelon et J. Adrian Blanchet, Catalogue des Bronzes Antiques De La Bibliothèque Nationale (Paris : Ernest Leroux&& Editeur, 1895), 286-87.

## II. GOD MITHRA

In Indo-Iranian mythology, Mithras was the deity of light, dreams, and contracts. In the second and third centuries AD., Romans regarded him as one of their gods. Mithra's authority as a hunter and patron deity of warriors is represented by him as a warrior wielding a bow and arrows. He is wearing the Phrygian cap.<sup>12</sup> "Mithra" is an Indian word that signifies "bull sacrifice" or "friendship." From the first century BC. He was connected with the sun in the Persian empire; his mission was to bring light and life to the planet. During the reign of Constantine, Mithra's worship came to an end and was totally vanished in the year 400 AD. Mithras slaying a bull in a cave was the main theme of Mithraic imagery; an event with multiple interpretations and connotations.<sup>13</sup>

Among his followers were artisans, peasants, soldiers, and nobles. The Roman Empire's warriors influenced Mithra's worship. In Europe, Christianity was the successor of Mithra's Cult.<sup>14</sup> Mithras has a resemblance to Attis when he is shown with a shield, a look that has led many researchers to believe in the existence of a military influence that symbolizes victory over evil. The warriors of Armenia wear such cap. As it related to the idea of victories against the evil.<sup>15</sup> The priests of Mithraic sacrifice wore such cap. It refers to a mythical rite, sacrifice and triumph.<sup>16</sup>

In Egypt, the presence and devotion of Mithra's divinity can be found across Egypt and probably dated back to the Persian rule in late Egyptian Period (252-404 BC.). Earlier and older than Greek and Roman Periods. Some evidence proves that proposition; the sources mentioning the god sanctuary in Alexandria, Greek papyri mention his name and refers to temple of Mithra in Memphis. Four reliefs found in Mit Rahyna near Memphis of god Mithra slaughtering the bull.<sup>17</sup> Among large number of statues found in museums around the world; this marble statue of God

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<sup>12</sup> Petrogianni Sophia, "The Cult of Deities of the Eastern Origin in the Black Sea Region", MA. Thesis School of Humanities, (Thessaloniki: International Hellenic University, 2011), 87.

<sup>13</sup> Mahlagha Mortezaee and Mohsen Abolqasemi, "The Concept of 'MiΘra' in the Ancient Iranian Mythology", *Asian Culture and History*, vol.8, no.2 (2016), 76-82.

<sup>14</sup> Zohreh Akhondi and Amir Akbari, 'The Influence of Mithraism on Christianity', *Journal of History Culture and Art Research*, vol.5, no. 4, (December 2016), 233.

<sup>15</sup> Sergej Ju. Saprykin, "The Religious and Cults of Pontic Kingdom: Political Aspects" in Mithridates VI and Pontic Kingdom, ed. Jakob Munk (Santa Barbara: Aarhus University Press, 2009), 267.

<sup>16</sup> Jennings, H., *The Rosicrucians*, 282.

<sup>17</sup> Rehab Mostafa Sharafeldean, "Archaeological and Historical Evidences of the Existence of the Cult of Mithra in Egypt in the Graeco-Roman Period", *Journal of Association of Arab Universities for Tourism and Hospitality*, Vo. 21, no 5, December 2021, 96.

Mithra preserved in British Museum. It dates to the second century AD. It was discovered in Rome city. He appeared slaying a bull. He wears eastern costume with a Phrygian cap (Fig.4).<sup>18</sup>



**Fig. 4: God Mithra in British Museum, after; Smith A.H., *A Catalogue of Greek Sculpture*, 86.**

## **THE ICONOGRAPHICAL STUDY**

### **EXAMPLE ONE: THREE HEBREWS IN THE FIERY FURNACE**

A wall painting discovered at Wadi Serge in Middle Egypt is on exhibition now in British Museum. It dates back to sixth and seventh centuries. It shows saints Demian to the left and St. Cosmos to the right side. In the middle of the scene there are the three Hebrews in fiery furnace depicted within a panel while the fourth figure represents the angel of God.<sup>19</sup> The lower part of the panel is inscribed with Coptic inscriptions mentioning the sixty martyrs of Samalut. The three Hebrews are depicted on a small scale with halos around their heads surrounding by fire symbolized by palm fronds.<sup>20</sup> Palm branches here symbolizes the flames of fire.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> A.H. Smith, and M.A., *A Catalogue of Greek Sculpture in the department of Greek and Roman Antiquities, British Museum* (London: William Clowes and Sons & Limited, 1904), 86.

<sup>19</sup> Daniel 3:19-30.

<sup>20</sup> The five figures shown in the scene with their mother were persecuted and slaughtered in Cilicia during Diocletian's rule, along with their mother Theodosia. One among their tortures was being placed on a flaming pyre and remaining unharmed. Their martyrdom date was in twenty-two of Hator month. See, René Basset, *Le Synaxaire Arabe Jacobite (Mois de Hatour et de Kihak)*, in *Patrologia Orientalis*, eds. R. Graffin, F. Nau, (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1909), 330.

<sup>21</sup> Alexander Badawy, *Coptic Art and Archaeology: The Art of Christian Egyptians from the Late Antique to the Late Middle Ages* (Cambridge: M.I.T Press, 1978), 265. See also; N. Strudwick, *Masterpieces of Ancient Egypt*, (London: The British Museum Press, 2006), 324-5.



**Fig. 5: wall painting of Wadi Serga. After; Badawy A., *Coptic Art and Archaeology*, 324.**



**Fig. 5a: Detail of wall painting of Wadi Serga. After; Badawy A., *Coptic Art and Archaeology*, 324.**

#### **EXAMPLE TWO: A STONE CARVING SHOWS THE THREE HEBREWS IN A FIERY FURNACE**

Another limestone relief for the three Hebrews is exhibited at the Coptic Museum in Cairo, hall no. 16. Its provenance is unknown. It dates back to seventh and eighth centuries. The three Hebrews are depicted in praying attitude known by Orans. They wear tunics that reaches till their knees, and Phrygian caps on their heads (Fig. 6).<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Gawdat Gabra, *Cairo: The Coptic Museum & Old Churches* (Cairo: Egyptian International Publishing Co.-Longman, 1993), 68.



**Fig. 6: Limestone relief of the Three Hebrews, after; Gawdat Gabra, Cairo, *The Coptic Museum*, 68.**

### **EXAMPLE THREE: A STELAE SHOWS ST. THEODORE THE ORIENTAL**

The stela show St. Theodore the oriental. It is made out of limestone. It is preserved in Turin Museo Egizio museum in Italy. It's probably dates back to fourth century AD. It was discovered in Fayoum. It represents St. Theodore Al Mashriky as a soldier saint riding his horse. His head is adorned with the Phrygian cap, on both sides of his head there are two crosses with equal sizes (Fig.7).<sup>23</sup>



**Fig. 7: Limestone stela of St. Theodore Al Mashraqy. After; Badawy, *Coptic Art and Architecture*, 194.**

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<sup>23</sup> J. Strzygowski, "Der Koptische Reiterheilige Und der heilige Georg", *Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde* 40 (1903), 54. See also; Badawy A., *Coptic Art and Archaeology*, 194.

#### **EXAMPLE FOUR: TEXTILE SHOWS ACTAEON WITH THE PHRYGIAN CAP**

A part of linen and wool curtain discovered in Akhmim, Upper Egypt. It is now on display at the British Museum. It is dated back to the fifth century AD. This curtain is richly colored and ornamented. The main figures represent a female figure to the right with green skirt represents goddess Artemis with bow and arrows; the male is depicted to the left represent god Actaeon god with his spear. He wears Phrygian cap in yellow color. The middle panel shows a dancing male figures within scrolls. Side panels shows dancing figures within vine tendrils (Figs. 8, 8a).<sup>24</sup>



**Fig. 8:** Tapestry curtain, after; Strzygowski J., "*Der Koptische Reiterheilige*", 54.



**Fig. 8a:** Detail of tapestry curtain, after; Strzygowski J., "*Der Koptische Reiterheilige*", 54.

#### **EXAMPLE FIVE: TEXTILES SHOWS HUNTERS WEAR PHRYGIAN CAPS**

A textile curtain is on exhibition at the Cleveland Museum of Art and made out of linen and wool. It dates back to the fifth century. It shows two riders wearing hunting clothes and boots, two fleeing lions are depicted beneath them. The man wears a short tunic and the woman has a fluttering skirt. The frame shows a curving acanthus leaves includes alternately running lions and hares (Fig. 9).<sup>25</sup> Another tapestry made of linen and wool preserved in Metropolitan Museum. It dates back to the fifth century. Arcades surmounting hunters on horseback. They wear Phrygian caps in yellow color, while the roundels include angels (Fig. 10).<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Badawy A., *Coptic art and archaeology*, 290.

<sup>25</sup> R. Meyer Riefstahl, *First National Silk Convention: Catalogue of the Historical Exhibition of Textiles II* (Paterson: Paterson Composition Co., 1915), 19.

<sup>26</sup> Annmarie Stauffer, *Textile of Late Antiquity* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1995), 22, fig. 47.



**Fig. 9:** Textile curtain, after; Riefstahl R.M., *First National Silk Convention: Catalogue*,19.



**Fig. 10:** Linen and wool curtain. After; Annmarie S., *Textiles of Late Antiquity*, 22.

### **EXAMPLE SIX: TEXTILE SHOWS AMAZONS WITH PHRYGIAN CAPS**

Textile for the Amazons was excavated in Egypt. It dates back to the fifth century. It is exhibited at George Washington University Museum, United States of America (Fig. 11).<sup>27</sup>



**Fig. 11:** Textile of decorated with Amazons, after; Anderson J.C., *Age of Spirituality*, 200.

### **EXAMPLE SEVEN: FEMALE FIGURES WITH PHRYGIAN CAPS**

An incense burner in the shape of a female head, made of bronze. It's on display at Princeton University's art museum. It's probably dated back to the fourth and sixth centuries. Such censer was a common household item. The neck, head, and hat-shaped top are the three components. Phrygian cap is the most common hat style to be applied on such female-head form censers. This head is claimed to represent the queen of Saba, the biblical

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<sup>27</sup> Jeffrey C, Anderson, Malcolm Bell et.al., *Age of Spirituality: Late Antique and Early Christian Art, Third to Seventh Century*, ed. Kurt Weitzman (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1977), 164.

ruler of southern Arabia, who brought gold, precious stones, and aromatic spices to Solomon's court (Fig. 12).<sup>28</sup> Another bronze female bust exhibited on Benaki Museum. She wears a collar and holds objects with both hands. Her head is topped by the Phrygian cap (Fig.13).<sup>29</sup>



**Fig. 12: Bronze Incense burner.**  
After; Kalavrezou L., *Byzantine Women*, 201, fig.112.



**Fig. 13: Bronze female bust.** After;  
Badawy A., *Coptic Art*, 334, fig. 5.25.

#### **EXAMPLE EIGHT: AN IVORY PLAQUE SHOWS THE MAGI WITH PHRYGIAN CAPS**

This ivory plaque exhibited on the British Museum. It represents the nativity of the Holy Virgin Mary. She dominates the scene and holds Jesus the Christ on her lap. The three Magi are depicted here hooding their gifts. They wear the Phrygian caps. The lower part represents the nativity theme. This scene may be a work of a Syrian workshop. The fifth and six centuries are most likely the date of making this ivory plaque. (Fig.14).<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Loli Kalavrezou, *Byzantine Women and Their World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Art Museums, Yale University Press, 2003), 200-1.

<sup>29</sup> Badawy A., *Coptic Art and Architecture*, 329.

<sup>30</sup> Robert P. Bergman, "The Earliest Eleousa: Coptic Ivory in the Walters Art Museum", *The Journal of the Walters Art Gallery*, vol. 48 (1990), 47.



**Fig. 14: Ivory plaque with Magi, after; Bergman R. P., "The Earliest Eleousa", 47.**

**EXAMPLE NINE: AN IVORY PYXIS SHOWS DANIEL WEARING THE PHRYGIAN CAP**

Ivory Pyxis dates back to the fifth and early sixth century. It was discovered in Egypt. It shows Daniel in prayer attitude raising his hands in an orans attitude, surrounded by two lions on both sides. He wears the Phrygian cap and oriental dress; cap, tunic, mantle, and fitting trousers (Fig. 15).<sup>31</sup>

**EXAMPLE TEN: A WOODEN CORBEL SHOWS DANIEL WITH A PHRYGIAN CAP**

A wooden Corbel was discovered in the monastery of St. Apollo in Bawit, Middle Egypt. It is exhibited at the Museum of the Byzantine Art of the Berlin State Museums. Daniel is represented in frontal pose adjoining with two lions. He is represented with a Persian costume; triangular tunic reaches till his knees, leggings and wears a Phrygian cap. It dates back to the sixth century (Fig. 16).<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Ormonde Maddock Dalton, *Catalogue of Early Christian Antiquities and Objects from the Christian East in the Department of British and Medieval Antiquities and Ethnography of the British Museum* (London: Longmans And Co., 1901), 55.

<sup>32</sup> Marie Helène Rustschowskaya, "Woodwork, Coptic" in *The Coptic Encyclopedia* VII, ed. Aziz S. Attiya (New York: Macmilan Publishing Company, 1991), 2344.



Fig. 15: Ivory pyxis, British Museum, after; Dalton O.M., *Catalogue of Early Christian*, 55, fig. 298



Fig. 16: Wooden Corbel carved with Daniel and two lions, after; <http://www.smb-digital.de/eMuseumPlus?service=ExternalInterface&module=collection&objectId=1436134&viewType=detailView>

#### EXAMPLE ELEVEN: TWO ROMAN SOLDIERS WEARING PHRYGIAN CAPS

The icon of Crucifixion is preserved in the church of the Theodore the oriental in Old Cairo, dates back to the nineteenth century. It worthy to notice that the painter used the same Phrygian cap to identify the two Roman Soldiers to distinguish them from the rest of the people in the scene (Fig.17).<sup>33</sup>

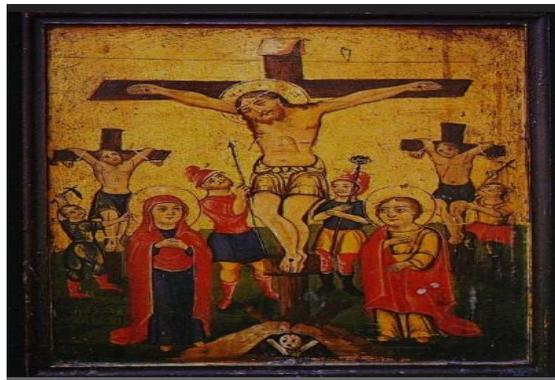


Fig.17: Icon of crucifixion, after; Attala N. S., *Coptic Icons*. 61.

<sup>33</sup> Nabil Selim Atalla, *Coptic Icons* (Cairo: Lehnert & Landrock, 1998), 61.

The study evokes four important questions; when did this type of caps present in Egypt? Why did the Coptic artists use this type of cap? Who are the people presented wearing Phrygian cap in Coptic art? What is the interpretation of Phrygian cap?

Conducting an analytical study is necessary to analyze the selected depicted scenes, and to answer these inquires.

### **ANALYTICAL STUDY**

The Phrygian cap appeared for the first time in Egypt with the presence of the worship of the two gods; Mithra and Attis. Since the appearance of the worship of the god Mithra in Egypt was in the late Egyptian Period, prior to the Greek and Roman eras. So that the Phrygian cap was introduced into Egypt during the late period at Egypt and continued and spread in the Greek and Roman eras (Figs. 2, 3).

### **THE THREE HEBREWS IN FIERY FURNACE**

Book of Daniel, Chapter three narrates the story of three Hebrews. Their names were Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, whose real name were Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. They were friends of Daniel, as they came together in the first Babylonian captivity in the year 605 BC. They worked in the royal court of Nebuchadnezzar II. When they refused to worship the statue of King, he ordered to throw into a raging furnace. They were not harmed by the fire and they were watched walking along with fourth figure who was the angel of god. king Nebuchadnezzar was believed in three Hebrews god. They were released and they were freely worshiped their God.<sup>34</sup>

### **PRIMARY REMARKS**

From the previous narration of the story of the three Hebrews, we can sum up that; when the Coptic artist present these three figures, he distinguished them with Phrygian caps over their heads. May be that was in reference to the place of captivity in Babel. However, the head of fourth figure inside the panel represents the angel of the God is surrounded by a halo (Figs. 5, 5a, 6).

### **SAINT THEODORE AL MASHRIQY**

St. Theodore Al Mashriky was born in Antioch. His father was called Sadrichos, and his mother was Patricia. Tadros was a skillful and

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<sup>34</sup> Daniel 3 : 1-30.

honorable leader who was known for his bravery and military prowess. During Diocletian's reign, he was fighting near the Antioch River. Diocletian summoned the prince to inform him of the matter of reconciliation with Persia. Tadros asked his soldiers that whoever wanted to be martyred in the name of Jesus. Some of his soldiers followed him. He returned back to Antioch and when the king ordered him to participate in pagan worship. He refused and declared himself as follower of the Christ. He was tortured and martyred on 12<sup>th</sup> of Tuba in year 306 AD.<sup>35</sup>

### **PRIMARY REMARKS**

After reading the biography of St. Tadrus Al Mashriky we can notice some points; the first St. Theodore was born in Antioch, he led was one of Roman Soldiers, and he defeated the Persian many times. For the previous notes the artist presents him with the Phrygian cap over his head (Fig. 7).

### **ACTAEON WITH PHRYGIAN CAP**

The narrative of Artemis and Actaeon has been thoroughly documented in Greek art and literature. The core of the myth, which has remained consistent throughout its history, is that Artemis transformed Actaeon into a stag and his subsequent death by his hounds. Major changes were applied to the myth throughout antiquity.<sup>36</sup> Actaeon was Greek great hunter and appeared in form of hunter. The Coptic artist shows him with Phrygian cap in reference to god Mithras distinguished headdress (Figs. 8, 8a).

### **HUNTERS WITH PHRYGIAN CAP**

Hunters are widely shown in Coptic textiles. In the selected examples the hunters are adjoining with running lions (Figs. 9, 10). Theme of hunters in Coptic art is influenced mainly by the Greek and Roman Myth and art in showing them with Phrygian caps.

Moreover, the Female warriors 'Amazons' were another Greek influence in Coptic art. As according to the Greek mythology, the Amazons are a female warrior nation controlled by a queen who originated in northern Asia Minor. They are descended from Ares, the Greek war god, and have fought in wars such as the Trojan War, the struggle against Hercules, who killed their queen, Hippolyta, and the invasion of Attica. In Coptic art, the Amazons are mostly associated with Hercules' labors and the Dionysiac world. Textiles show them wearing the Phrygian archers' hat and Eastern

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<sup>35</sup> René Basset, *Le Synaxaire Arabe Jacobite (Mois de Toubeh et d'Amchir)*, in *Patrologia Orientalis*, eds. R. Graffin, F. Nau, (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1915), 577- 580.

<sup>36</sup> Carl C. Schlam, *Diana and Actaeon: Metamorphoses of a Myth*, in *Classical Antiquity* 3, no. 1 (April 1984), University of California Press, 82.

peoples' trousers. When riding a horse, drawing a bow with an arrow, or holding a two-edged hatchet, they are equipped. The shield is placed on the ground between the horse's hooves (Fig. 11).<sup>37</sup>

### **WOMEN WEARING PHRYGIAN CAPS**

In late antique and early Byzantine art in Egypt; dangling earrings, Phrygian caps, and pearl necklaces are common features that symbolize women of eastern descent. Censers and perfume vessels with female heads evoked a special association with female biblical figure; the Queen of Saba, ruler of southern Arabia. Because, she astounded the court of Solomon with gifts of precious stones, gold, and aromatic spices. The censer is commonly shown as part of a woman's set, where jewelry and cosmetics are saved. The overdone eyeliner obviously resembles kohl, Egypt's traditional eyeliner, which, like incense, is famed for its beauty and protecting properties. The censer may also allude to the notably alluring effect of airborne scents as the Queen of Saba, whose beauty entices Solomon in mediaeval legends (Figs. 12, 13).<sup>38</sup>

### **THE MAGI WITH PHRYGIAN CAPS**

The Magi or the wise men are three figures whom came from the east. They visited Jesus the Christ after his birth bearing their gifts; gold, frankincense, and myrrh. They are widely represented in the nativity scene (Fig. 14).<sup>39</sup>

### **PRIMARY REMARKS**

Being of eastern origin the Coptic artist present them with Phrygian cap that refers mainly to their origin. Moreover, to distinguish the Magi from the rest figures of the theme.

### **PROPHET DANIEL WITH PHRYGIAN CAP**

Prophet Daniel is one of the Old Testament prophets. He was born in Jerusalem. He is mainly mentioned in Book of Daniel. He was Jewish youth who was taken in capture of Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. When the king issued a decree that prohibits praying for any god for thirty days except Darius himself. Anyone refused will be thrown for the lions.

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<sup>37</sup> Loretta Del Francia, "Mythological Subjects in Coptic Art", in *The Coptic Encyclopedia* VI, ed. Aziz S. Attiya (New York: Macmilan Publishing Company, 1991), 1751.

<sup>38</sup> Kalavarezou L., *Byzantine Women*, 200-1.

<sup>39</sup> Matthew 2:1-11.

Daniel was praying daily for his God of Israel. So, he was thrown in lion's den. But the god safe him and the lion's jaws were closed (Figs. 15,16).<sup>40</sup>

### **PRIMARY REMARKS**

Daniel is depicted in Babylonian captivity, and the Coptic artist depicts him wearing an eastern Phrygian cap. That's most likely due to his place of captivity in Babel.

### **ROMAN SOLDIERS WITH PHRYGIAN CAP**

This icon dated back to the nineteenth century, but the painter is inspired the costume of the Roman soldiers. So, he presented the two soldiers with Phrygian caps (Fig. 17).

### **PRIMARY REMARKS**

Mithra was patron god of the Roman Soldiers. So that the coptic icon painter in the crcifixion scene distinguish them with red phrygian caps from the rest figures attending the crucifixion incident.

### **CONCLUSION**

The Phrygian cap was known in Egypt since the Mithraic cult flourished in Egypt during the late period. It is continued and spread in the Greco Roman Art in Egypt. In Coptic art, the Phrygian cap was introduced as Greek and Roman Influence, despite of its origin in Sassanian art. It was usually applied to specific figures mainly from the fourth till the sixth centuries. Later, Coptic artists used to apply such cap for those figures.

In Coptic art; Phrygian cap was used to be worn by biblical figures as; the three Hebrews in furnace, the Magi, Daniel. Also, saints like St. Theodore the Oriental. Hunters and warriors in Coptic art wear the Phrygian cap in relation to god Mithra, the patron god of Warriors. Moreover, amazons are shown with such cap. The Phrygian cap is considering the cap of identity in referring to the people of the eastern origin.

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<sup>40</sup> Daniel; 1: 1-6; 6: 16-23.

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