

Three Coptic Male Gravestones at Beni Mazar-Minia

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Abstract

Deir el- Sanquriya is located 15 kilometers to the west of Beni Mazar, in Bahnsa that is an area famous for its ancient history and monuments. The remaining buildings of the monastery include the restored ancient church (Ramzi, 1994). The gravestones constitute one of the most difficult sections of Islamic and Coptic art as they include various inscriptions and decorative elements in different styles of engraving, as well as various types of calligraphies engraved upon them. The difficulty lies in the different content of these inscriptions on the collection of the gravestones under investigation, as they vary between religious expressions, recorded invocations and poetic lines that must be handled to record these gravestones scientifically (Sirajuddin, 2007). The ultimate objective of this process is to study the civilization of a certain community in a certain historical period, in this context, the purpose of this research is the artistic and archaeological study of these gravestones, as they are Un published. This aims at showing the importance of these gravestones according to the analytical descriptive method of them and the raw material they were constructed of. This is followed by an analytical study of what was written and engraved on them, the decorations and interpretation of their contents.

Key words (Gravestones - Deir el- Sanquriya - Beni Mazar - Mikhail Athanasius - Butrus Athanasius - Yuhanna Athanasius - Calculation of sentences - floral decorations).

Introduction

The origins of this family can be dated back to the late eighteenth century before the advent of the French campaign to Egypt. Athanasius married avillager from the village of Sheikh Mas'oud, in the city of El-Idwa, Minia governorate. He was poor and after his death, his wife returned to her family in the village of Sheikh Mas'oud due to her poverty. When her children Michael and Hanna grew up, she returned with them to the village of Ashruba (Al-Madrassa al-Ibtada'iya al-Qadima). This family had played an important role in the history of the village. In addition, many architectural structures such as palaces and cemeteries with their designated endowments can also be attributed to the members of this family (Butrus, 1907).

Defining the Gravestone

It is a tablet of stone or marble placed on top of the grave. By it is usually placed on top of the grave at the head of the deceased. It includes the name of the deceased and in most cases; it has some Qur'anic verses and invocations relevant to death and judgment. Moreover, it shows the deceased's name, birthplace, profession and date of death, including the day, month and year. It is worth mentioning that tracing gravestones provide an opportunity to follow the evolution of Arabic writing in terms of texts, types of calligraphy, methods of carving and means of implementation,(Abdul'Al,2013).

Importance of Gravestones

Gravestones are of great value as they state clear facts, correct common mistakes and provide the names of prominent figures. Moreover, they add firm information that is useful in studying the decrees because they include titles and invocations. Investigating the forms of calligraphies by which the gravestones are inscribed show their diversity and development throughout the Islamic history, (Al-'Imari, 1986). They are also of great importance in clarifying the facts as well as the economic, social, artistic and perhaps the political conditions of the society at the time of their inscription, (Sirajuddin, 2007). By application to the gravestones under investigation, the gravestones indicate the status of Athanasius' family and the extent of their political and social participation in society. These gravestones provide the names of the Copts' prominent figures.

Forms of Gravestones

Throughout the Abbasid period, gravestones had rectangular forms. Other gravestones of cylindrical shape were found to replace the flat ones since the Ayyubid period, (Jad, 2010). The gravestones retook the flat shape during the Mamluk period, while some remained cylindrical and some took the forms of niches with a Mishka a glass cover containing an oil lamp -hanging from its top (Al-'Imari, 1986). By the end of the 18th century, the artist used the rectangular form in the gravestones under investigation.

Heads of Gravestones

The forms of gravestones differed according to their heads and the artist used hats to distinguish between men and women on the one hand and the functions and social classes of the deceased on the other (Suleiman, 1979). The artist used the following in the gravestones under investigation: -

Turban

It refers to the Turkish (kavuşa). It was the customary headwear of Ottomans and was used by the Coptic artist to decorate the gravestones, (Ahmed, (1989). This means the influence of the Ottoman era, on the Coptic artist so he used it to distinguish between men's and women's gravestones in the church of Saint Theodore in Deir el- Sanquriya (pl.9). Each class of the statesmen manages to wear a specific style of turbans in order to distinguish their status, so the forms of turbans varied as some were plain and simple, while others took a geometric form wrapped or ornamented with gems (Suleiman, 1979), The use of turbans refers to the status of Michael Athanasius' family in the state and at the same time, it highlights their role in the community. This can be seen clearly in Gravestones pl. (1, 3, 6).

Raw material used in making the gravestones under investigation

Marble is one of the most important materials used in the field of recording the archaeological writings of the Mamluk and Ottoman eras due to its special properties such as the hardness resulting from its natural composition in addition to the natural luster of its glossy surface which adds to the glory of the structure, especially when the light falls on its surface, whether it is natural or synthetic, (Yassin, 2003). In addition, marble is characterized by its durability, which makes it of the most enduring decorative materials under changing conditions. However, some types of marble are characterized by the easiness of their formation into the required sizes. There are many types and forms of marble varying according to the sources of their importation, (Al-Sayed, 1994).

Methods of Executing the Inscriptions on Marble

There are two methods of writing inscription on the marble, sunk relief (Plate 2.1) and high relief ,It is the stage that through it bringing the raw material which is represented in the marble, it is identified the four directions of the piece to be cutting, it is used one of the colors or to use a piece of coal, then determined these four parts, after the selection and cutting the piece that be used, it is used a machine called (the lever) and this piece called by large piece, and then the piece is ready for use, (Abdel-Rahim, 1992).Determining the method of implementation depends on the surface of the gravestone. There is a third method but it is used less frequently than the previous two, but it is faster in inscribing the text on the surface of the gravestone, namely writing with ink, then incising contiguous points over the ink. These incised points are not deep in the surface, so they are refilled with ink, For the second method that used in the polishing process concerning of marble material represented in using a piece of marble water, sand and then the piece would be itchinness with using a Tarrawi stone and then filling the breaches with paste and then soften the marble, in order to show the marble color and to be brilliant ,this was done through the use of sandpaper ,after the ending of that a piece of cloth would be brought ,it was dipped in water and then would be putting in a flour of niter with Kberitat iron, then it was used to rub the surface of marble to be completely polished (Darwish, 1995).. Hence, the decorations carved in the marbles necessitate the artist's more accuracy and talent than those implemented to the stones, (Wagdi, 2007). By application to the considered gravestones, it can be seen that the artist used the first method, sunk relief in the marble, which lasts for a longer period of time.

This research deals with the study of the artistic and archaeological of three male gravestones of marble. They belong to the family of Athanasius. These are in the Church of Saint Theodore in Deir al-Sanquriya in Beni Mazar.

These gravestones are arranged according to the date of death as follows

- 1 - The gravestone of Mikhail (1883 AD- 1599 AM).
- 2 - The gravestone of Butrus (1902 AD - 1618 AM).
- 3 - The gravestone of John (1903 AD- 1619 AM).

The Gravestone of Mikhail Athanasius

Location: Family Cemetery at the Church of Saint Theodore.

Raw material: Marble.

Font Type: Thuluth.

Number of lines: 11 lines.

Deceased: Michael Athanasius.

Date of death: 1599 AM.

Publication: Un published.

Description

It is a gravestone of marble with sunk relief carvings in the Thuluth calligraphy, pl.1, fig.1, Its inscriptions came eleven lines and began with the words “Haza al-Maqam wal Shahid Bism Mikha’ila allazi Tuwufeya sanat 1883 miladeya, this is the shrine and tombstone of Mikhail, who died in 1883 AD. The inscriptions on this gravestone are as follows:-

Line	In Arabic	Transliteration	Translation
First	هذا المقام فيما استطعت سبيلا	Haza al-Maqam fima Istata’t Sabila	This place for whoever is able to find there to a way.
Second	فالثمرى عليائه تقبلاً	Fal thamari ‘Alyauhu Taqila	As the blooming has many yields,
Third	واشرح مآثر من حواه مردداً	Washrah ma’tar man hawahu muradedan	Explain the good deeds of who lied in it and repeat
Fourth	ماشئت من ذكرى الجميل جميلاً	Mashi’ta men zekral Jamili Jamila	Whatever you want of sweet memories
Fifth	جاد الزمان لنا على قدر به	Gadaz-zamanu lana ‘ala qadaren behe	Time bestowed him upon us
Sixth	ولقد يكون به الزمان بخيلاً	Walaqad yakunu behe az-zamanu bakhila	But sometimes it may be unwilling to do so
Seventh	فرقى رقى الزراعين إلى العلا	Fareqqi reqqi al-zera’ayn ilal ula	So, raise your hands to Heavens
Eighth	حتى قصد المد الحياة لاجلب	Hatta qasadal maddu al-hayate la-aglebu	To grant your life
Ninth Line	وشاد لسان الخافية مورخاً	Washada lesanul khafeyate mu’arekhan	The tongue of mystery whispered
Tenth	مات الكرام بموت ميخائيل	Mat al-keramu be-mawte Mikhaila	The generosity died with the death of Mikhail
	703 448 292 441	441 292 448 703	441 292 448 703
Eleventh	سنة 1883 أفرنكية	Sanat 1883 a frankeya	In 1883 AD

Analysis

The gravestone took the rectangular shape with a square base consisting of three layers and ends from its upper part with the shape of a turban. It contains eleven lines written in Thuluth calligraphy. Its carvings are all in the sunk relief on the marble. The inscriptions came in the form of lyrical verses in lamentation of the deceased. Then the name of the deceased is mentioned and the lines ended with the date of death in a rectangular line. It was written in numbers calculating the sentences. Geometric decorations were used in the gravestone from its top in the form of a black cross with floral decorations in the form of branch.

The Deceased’s Background

He was a tax collector during the reign of Muhammad Ali Pasha. He managed to collect taxes from Samalut city to Maghagha city. He was poor and his wealth increased until it reached 4500 acres. In 1866, he was appointed as a member of the Shura Council of Khedive Ismail. He played a major role in the Orabi Revolution as he sent four boats full of supplies to Ahmed Orabi. As a result, there was a dispute between him and Khedive Tawfiq, but Pope Cyril V intervened and reconciled between them. He remained in his residence in al-Sakakin until he died in 1883 AD and was buried in the village of Deir al-Sanquriya. He had no sons but he had three daughters, each of them inherited 300 acres. They were called Mustafeya, Batul and Roma. The remaining inheritance was left to his brother Hanna Effendi Athanasius, the father of the late Nashid Beg Hanna, (Butrus, 1907).

The most important of his works was the construction of Qasr al-Sett Batul that is demolished nowadays and sold to the commons. He built al-Qasr al-Dakheli (Al-Madrassa al-Ibteda’iya al-Qadima) that is still in place. It is famous for its sublimity and decorations. In addition, he built the palace which is currently in place next to the road and facing the garden; in 1585 AM corresponding to 1869 AD he accomplished its construction. It was renewed by Nashid Beg Hanna in 1916 AD and it was later possessed by Fawzi Beg and Nashid, whose daughter sold it. It is now possessed by Mr. Elisha al-Qummus Marcos. It is worth mentioning that the village of Deir al-Sanquriya was the center of his activity, which prompted him to rebuild the church above the ancient one located in the village. In addition, he established the family cemetery for everyone belonging to the Athanasius (Butrus, 1907).

The Gravestone of Butrus

Location: Family Cemetery at the Church of Saint Theodore.

Raw material: Marble.

Font Type: Thuluth.

Number of lines: 11 lines.

Deceased: Butrus

Date of death: 1618 AM .

Publication: Un published.

Description

It is a marble gravestone, with some inscriptions written in Thuluth calligraphy in the manner of sunk relief carving, pl.3, fig.2. These inscriptions consisted of eleven lines that began “Allahu Fatah Azim al-Sha’n”, which means “Oh God, He was a great man”. The gravestone is in the name of Butrus, who died in 1618 AM and the text inscribed on it reads as follows:-

Line	In Arabic	Transliteration	Translation
First	الله فتى عظيم الشأن	Allahu Fatan Azim al-Sha'n	Oh God, what a great man was he
Second	بحياته أودت يد الحدث	Behayatehe awdat yadul Hadath	But the hands of destiny spared his life
Third	غدر الزمان به وإن كما نشأ	Ghadar al-Zamanu behe wa'in kama nasha'	Time betrayed him, despite he grew up
Fourth	يسع وراء الخير والإحسان	Yas' wara' al-khayr wal Ihsan	In pursuit of benevolence and charity
Fifth	وقد حواه ضريحه هذا وكم	Waqad hawahu darihuhu haza wakam	His tomb enclosed him
Sixth	في مثيله ملكا وذا سلطانا	Fi mathilihi malikan waza sultana	Just like others of those having sovereignty and influence
Seventh	فليبين على ماثره التي	Fal-yubdina 'ala ma'atherehi allati	His good deeds may be seen by all
Eighth Line	حق الثناء لها بكل لسان	Haqqa al-thana'u laha bekolle lisane	To be thanked by each tongue
Ninth	واليوم داعى الفضل	Wal-yawmu da'i al-fadl	Now, boaster of grace!!
Tenth	قد حل بطرس في رياض جنان	Qad halla butrus fe riyad el janan	Butrus rested in the gardens of Heavens
	101 1101 90 271 38 104	104 38 271 90 1101 101	104 38 271 90 1101 101
Eleventh Line	سنة 1618 قبطية.	Sanat 1618 qibteyah	In 1618 of AM.

Analysis

The gravestone took the rectangular shape with a square base consisting of three layers and ends from its upper part with the shape of a turban. It contains eleven lines written in Thuluth calligraphy. Its carvings are all in the sunk relief on the marble. The inscription on the gravestone began with “Allahu Fatan Azim al-Sha'n which means “Oh God, He was a great man”, to be blessed with the word of God and to point out that the grave is the place of the life to come. The inscriptions also included some words such as “darikh”, khayr and Ihsan, which mean the mausoleum, benevolence and charity, respectively. These indicate the deceased's goodness and benevolence to the poor. It ended with invoking God to have mercy upon the deceased and let him enjoy “riyadel janan or Paradise”. Then the date of death was mentioned in the Coptic calendar, 1618 Coptic, and the artist used the Coptic calendar in this gravestone that corresponds to 1902 AD according to the Gregorian calendar, after adding 284 years, that marked the beginning of the Coptic calendar.

The Deceased's Background

He was a member of Athanasius' family and was appointed in the Legislative Council (Majlis Shura al-Qawanin). It is stated that this council demanded the establishment of Coptic schools and the revival of kuttabs by the revolution of the great reformer Pope Cyril IV (Abba Kyrillos IV). He remained a member of the parliament until his death. He spent a great deal of his wealth on churches and charity. Upon death, he was buried in the family's cemetery in Deir el- Sanquriya, (Butrus, 1907).

The Gravestone of Yuhanna Athanasius

Location: Family Cemetery at the Church of Saint Theodore.
 Raw material: Marble.
 Font Type: Thuluth.
 Number of lines: 11 lines.
 Deceased: Yuhanna Athanasius.
 Date of death: 1619 AM.
 Publication: Un published.

Description

It is a marble gravestone, with some inscriptions written in Thuluth calligraphy in the manner of sunk relief carving, pl.5, fig.3. These inscriptions consisted of eleven lines that began with “Darihun hallahu rajul”. The gravestone is in the name of Yuhanna Athanasius, who died in 1619 AM and the text inscribed on it reads as follows:-

Line	In Arabic	Transliteration	Translation
First	ضريح حله رجل	Darihun hallahu rajul	A mausoleum occupied by a man
Second	من الاقباط ذو همم	Men al-aqbati zu hemem	Of Copts and of resolution
Third	فنعلم قدره فينا	Fana'lamu qadrahu fina	So, let's know his position among us
Fourth	بما اداه من خدم	Bima addahu men khedam	Of what he had done of services.
Fifth	ولما فارق الدنيا	Walamma faraqa-addunia	When he departed our life
Sixth	وحل الناس في سدم	Wahalla annasu fe sadam	And people fall in sorrow
Seventh	لسان الحال اركه	Lesanul-hali irkhihe	They started saying
Eighth	بما نتلوه من كلم	Bema natlouhu men kalim	And repeating in agony
Ninth	توفى الله يوحنا	Tawaffa allahu Yuhanna	God took Yuhanna (to Heavens)
	75 66 496	496 66 75	496 66 75
Tenth	حليف الخير والكرم	Halifal khayre wal karam	The supporter of goodness and benevolence.
	297 841 128	128 841 297	128 841 297
Eleventh	سنة 1903	Sanat 1903	In 1903 AD.

Analysis

The gravestone took the rectangular shape with a square base consisting of three layers and ends from its upper part with the shape of a turban. It contains eleven lines written in Thuluth calligraphy. Its carvings are all in the sunk relief on the marble. The inscription on the gravestone began with “Darihun hallahu rajul” in an indication that the deceased lies in this tomb. The writings describe the deceased's personality and his good traits and value within the society as well as his fine qualities. In addition, it describes what befall people after the departure of Yuhanna, the charitable and generous. The inscriptions on the gravestone ended with the date of death in 1903 AD.

The Deceased's Background

He was the son of Athanasius, the head of the family, and the brother of Mikhail Effendi Athanasius. He inherited from his brother about 550 acres. He was a good and generous man. He was the mayor of the village after the death of Mikhail Effendi Athanasius and took charge of the village from 1884 to 1892 AD. After his death in 1903 AD, his son Rashid succeeded him as the mayor and became a member of the House of Representatives. During his reign, Khedive Abbas II Hilmi visited the village and stayed in his palace. Then, he went to Bedaros and gave him a large area of land (Abdul Dayem, 2010).

Analytical Study

The inscription of the Coptic gravestones of Athanasius' family took a new form in terms of inscribing some religious phrases relevant to death. The Coptic artist managed to mention the religious phrases at the beginning of the gravestone and ended with invoking God to show mercy for the deceased, (Searing, 1899). The gravestone also included the name of the deceased, as well as the works he had done in his life in commemoration of his memory. It also began with the symbol of the cross and ended with this symbol to be blessed by the Lord Christ, pl.8, (Qadous, 2002). In addition, the Coptic artist considered himself as a tool working of service to the Lord without supervision of anyone, (Ibrahim, 2012) Moreover, gravestones included some artistic decorations.

1.) Analysis of the Inscriptions Content

Inscriptions on the Coptic gravestones in the late 18th century generally began with some invocatory phrases and verses from Bible such as:-

(1كو) كما في آدم يموت الجميع كذا في المسيح يحيا الجميع، الخلاق الباقي: Al-Khallaq al-Baqi (the Everlasting Creator), Kaza Fe al-Messiah yahya al-jamea' (As in Adam, all die, the same in Christ all live), هنا رقدت في الرب، على رجاء القيامة الخالدة، 'ala rajaa' al-qiyamah al-khaledah, huna raqadat Fe al-rab (On the hope of Eternal Resurrection; here lies the deceased).

، (سفر) كريم عند الرب موت أتقيائه، darihun hallahu rajul (the mausoleum of a man)، ضريح حله رجل، 15:116المزميرkarimun 'inda arrab mawtu atqiya'ih (May the Lord be Generous to the death of the pious). It can be found that the first line in the gravestones came in the form of poetical verses

to commiserate for the deceased and his status in the community where he lived, (Ibrahim, 2012); In addition, they managed to praise the deceased. They conclude the inscriptions of the

gravestone with the name of the deceased and the date of death that is written in two ways. the first by means of numbers topped with the calculation of sentences as in the gravestones under investigation.

2.) Type of Calligraphy used in the Gravestones Inscriptions

The Thuluth Script: - This type of script was first used in the first century of Hegira, the seventh century of the Gregorian calendar, but it developed only after two centuries of its use. It was first used by Ibn al-Bawab and Yacout al-Musta'semi to decorate the Naskh Script that was used before by Ibn Muqlah. This type of script was called as such because of comparing its size to that of al-Tumar script - the short scroll pen. The thickness of al-Tumar pen is 24 hairs and it is considered of the largest scripts in size. In addition, the groups of soft scripts were derived from it (Omar, 2008).

It was common to use both scripts of Thuluth and Naskh side by side despite the clear difference in their forms due to the difference in the measures and proportions of their letters. For example, the Naskh letters are written without enlargement or rotation as they are less thick and beautiful than Naskh, (Al-Bahnasi, 1984).

The Thuluth script is considered the origin of all patterns of scripts, but its large size did not make it suitable for writing texts and writings. Therefore, its use was limited to writing the titles of books and propaganda phrases, such as the basmallah, the beginning of each work, such as the Qur'anic verses and gravestones as well as some other similar writings, (Salem, 1964). As for the other script used frequently in religious constructions, it was the Jali script. Thuluth script is not used on a large scale in writing the Holy Qur'an now but it is limited to the titles, some verses and sentences due to the difficulty of its writing. In addition, it takes a long time to be written. However, if it is not written on the base, it will lack its beauty. The artist used the Thuluth script in the gravestones under investigation to show the artistic features of the writings, (Gum'a, 1969).

3.) Verses

The gravestones of Athanasius' family in Deir al-Sanquriya included some verses of elegiac poetry. These were either for exhortation or remembrance of the dead's virtues and benevolent deeds in the world as a means to seek clemency or to remind the alive of the inevitable fate, (Ahmed, 1989). They were also a kind of remembrance of paradise and its blessedness and pleasure as stated on the gravestones under investigation. Hence, it can be found that the use of elegiac poetry appeared in the Islamic gravestones in the same era, such as those of Aal-Sultan Pasha Cemetery in Minia. They were also used on some Turkish gravestones dated back to the Ottoman era as well as the Libyan gravestones dated back to Karamanli dynasty (1711-1835AD), (Jad, 2010).

4.) Dating the Gravestones

In the Ottoman era, dates were so often written in numbers and there was a lack of using letters on the gravestones. As for the gravestones under investigation, they were mentioned on the first gravestone, that of Mikhail Athanasius as they were recorded only by the year (Sanat 1883 afrankeya). The second gravestone of Yuhanna Athanasius stated it in the same form (Sanat 1903 miladeya), and the third one of Butrus used the same form as well - (Sanat 1618 qibteyah). Dating by using sentences can be seen on the three gravestones dealt with in this study as the system of the Diocletian era known as Martyrs' era (Anno Diocletiani) was also used as the case with the gravestone of Butrus (1618 Qibteyah). This system was used after declaring Christianity as the official religion of the country, (Abdul Dayem, 2010), As the Christians considered the year of Diocletian's ascension to throne, 284 as a method of numbering years. The use of this era in history was explained as an epoch of its own and as a special Christian system of numbering and counting the Christians' memories. Despite the use of this system in dating was complex, it can be seen on the gravestones, wills, contracts and other documents. In addition, this temporal system became more widely used in the seventh and eighth centuries and continued for many centuries (Qadous, 2002).

As for the method of calculating the sentences recorded on the gravestones under investigation, calculating the sentences was known for the Jews and Arabs before Islam. The Arabs had a good knowledge of the Indians' calculation and adopted it from them - the system of numbering sentences. The Arabs in the past used a numerical system relevant to the Arabic alphabet letters and it was called the numbering system according to the calculations of sentences as they assigned a figure to refer to every alphabetic letter, so the alphabetic letters were represented by figures. This method depended on the formation of phrases of short sentences so that the sum of the numerical values of their letters is equal to the intended number. This method was used to record events such as birth, death or building mosques or palaces, (Nasr, 1983). The Arabic alphabet consists of 28 letters, each of which has a numerical meaning beginning with (1) and ending with (1000). The most common Abjad sequence, read from right to left, is:

ا	ب	ج	د	هـ	و	ز	ح	ط	ي	ك	ل	م	ن
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	20	30	40	50
ā	B	j	d	H	w	Z	ḥ	ṭ	y	K	l	m	n

س	ع	ف	ص	ق	ر	ش	ت	ث	خ	ذ	ض	ظ	غ
60	70	80	90	100	200	300	400	500	600	700	800	900	1000
s	‘	F	ṣ	q	r	sh	t	th	Kh	dh	ḍ	ẓ	gh

This is commonly vocalized as follows

Abjad hawwaz ḥuṭṭī kalaman sa‘ faṣ qarashat thakhadh ḍaḏagh (Al-Bakri, 1954).

أ = 1	ب = 2	ج = 3	د = 4
هـ = 5	و = 6	ز = 7	
ح = 8	ط = 9	ي = 10	
ك = 20	ل = 30	م = 40	ن = 50
س = 60	ع = 70	ف = 80	ص = 90
ق = 100	ر = 200	ش = 300	ت = 400
ث = 500	خ = 600	ذ = 700	
ض = 800	ظ = 900	غ = 1000	

The forms of numerating sentences on the gravestones under investigation

- 1.) The gravestone of Mikhail in the tenth line, it can be seen in the form of "مات" Mat" = (441) الكرام "al-keramu" = (292) بموت "be-mawte" = (448) ميخائيل "Mikhaila" = (702).
 مات "Mat" = (40 + 1 + 400 = 441).
 الكرام "al-keramu" = (1 + 30 + 20 + 200 + 1 + 40 = 292).
 بموت "be-mawte" = (2 + 40 + 6 + 400 = 448)
 ميخائيل "Mikhaila" = (40 + 10 + 600 + 1 + 10 + 10 + 30 + 1 = 702).

Comparing the numbers on the gravestone with the calculation of sentences, the date on the gravestone appeared to be true, it was really 1883.

- 2.) The gravestone of Butrus in the tenth line, it can be seen in the form of "قد" Qad" = (104), حل "halla" = (38), بطرس "butrus" = (271), في "fe" = (90), رياض "riyad" = (1011), جنان "janan" = (101),
 قد "Qad" = (100 + 4 = 104).
 حل "halla" = (8 + 30 = 38).
 بطرس "butrus" = (2 + 9 + 200 + 60 = 271).
 في "fe" = (80 + 10 = 90).
 رياض "riyad" = (200 + 10 + 1 + 800 = 1011)
 جنان "janan" = (3 + 50 + 1 + 50 = 104).

Comparing the numbers on the gravestone with the calculation of sentences, the date on the gravestone appeared to be true, i.e., it was really 1618.

- 3.) The gravestone of Yuhanna in ninth and tenth lines, it can be seen in the form of "توفي" Tawaffa" = (496) والكرام "al-khayre" = (841), حليف Halif" = (128), يوحنا Yuhanna" = (75), الله allahu" = (66), wal-karam = (297).

توفي : Tawaffa = (400 +6 + 80 + 10 = 496).

الله : allahu = (1 + 30 + 30 + 5 = 66).

يوحنا Yuhanna = (10 + 6 + 8 + 50 + 1 = 75).

حليف: Halif = (8 + 30 + 10 + 80 = 128).

الخير al-khayre=(1+30+600+10+200 = 841).

والكرم: wal-karam = (6 + 1 + 30 + 20 + 200 + 40 = 297).

Comparing the numbers on the gravestone with the calculation of sentences, the date on the gravestone appeared to be true, it was really 1903.

5.) The Gravestones Decorations

The Coptic artist has drew and engraved the palm tree and palmettos on wood and the different products as a symbol of peace, pl.7, the heart and life of the believer and the martyr, moreover, he drew the olive trees which put extremely on the iconostasis and gravestones and the spandrels of the entrances inlaid with precious ivory as a gesture of peace and prosperity within above inscription peace for the sanctuary of god the good father,(Searing, (1899).The gravestones tackled in this study have various geometrical and floral decorations. It can be found that the Coptic artist used the decorations of the olive branch and the cross within it; he placed this decoration on the top of the gravestone, (Tawadros, 1968). It is well known that the olive branch symbolizes the vine and the vine symbolizes Christ. It denotes the fertility and growth. Therefore, the Copts used the plant of vine to symbolize Christ, (Qadous, 2002). In addition, Christ himself likened himself to the vine. The cross represented Jesus Christ, the means of salvation that came to the earth, which is represented in the sign of the cross on top of the gravestone. It denotes the ascension of the faithful through the blessing which given to him by Christ, while the body descends to the lower world and the souls pass to the afterlife, (Salib, 1999).The floral decorations can be seen in the plant branches of plants coming out of the cross to indicate that the cross represents Christ. It depicts that it draws life from it after death (Searing, 1899). These decorations are evident in the gravestones of Mikhail, Butrus and Yuhanna Athanasius that the study dealt with.

Concluding Remarks

In the light of this descriptive and analytical study, the researcher concluded the following:-

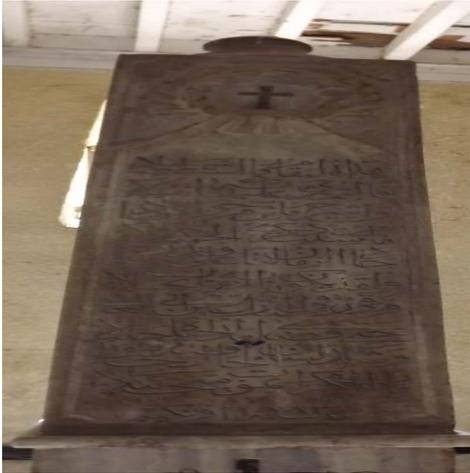
The study revealed that the family of Athanasius was one of the Egyptian Coptic families who had a prominent role in the political and social life during the late nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. The study confirmed the role of Mikhail Athanasius during the reign of Muhammad Ali Pasha, where many of his possessions were endowed in order to construct churches and palaces in the village. The study dealt with three marble gravestones for the family of Athanasius and these are Un published. The study showed the use of the numerating sentences in the date written on the gravestones and their conformity with the date mentioned in figures. Using the analytical study, the study was able to shed light on the type of script inscribed on the gravestones, which is the Thuluth. The study explained the methods of engraving the inscriptions and decorations on the gravestones, which proves the development in the technical and artistic style. The study revealed the content and purpose of the writings as well as the plant decorations on the gravestones. The Analytical study showed the use of sunk relief carvings in the implementation of writings on the gravestones. The study showed that the gravestones of Athanasius' family had no titles.

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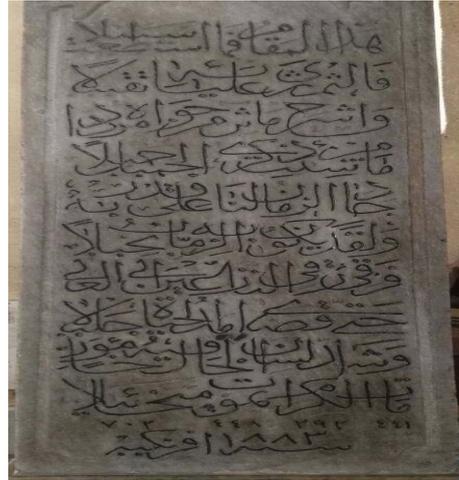
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Appendix of Figures



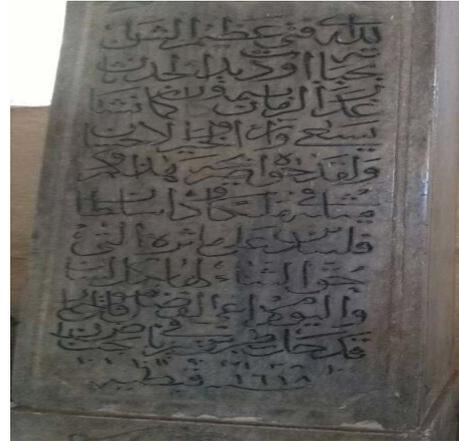
(Plate.1)
Gravestone of Mikhail (Researcher)



(Plate.2)
Inscriptions of Mikhail Gravestone (Researcher)



(plate.3)
Gravestone of Butrus (Researcher)



(Plate.4)
inscriptions of Butrus gravestone (Researcher)



(plate.5)
Inscriptions of Yuhanna gravestone (Researcher)



(Plate.6)
Gravestone of Yuhanna (Researcher)



(Figure.1)

Illustration of gravestone of Mikhail (Researcher)



(Figure.2)

Illustration of gravestone of Mikhail (Researcher)



(Plate.7)

floral decoration on the gravestone (Researcher)



(Plate.8)

Decoration representing the cross (Researcher)



(Plate.9)

Decoration representing the Turban above the gravestone. (Researcher)



(Figure.3)

Illustration of gravestone of Yuhanna (Researcher)

ملخص البحث

تعد شواهد القبور من أصعب فروع الفن الإسلامي والفن القبطي لما تشتمل عليه من نقوش كتابية وعناصر زخرفية مختلفة باختلاف أساليب حفرها وكذلك في أنواع الخطوط المستعملة في النقش عليها. وتكمن الصعوبة في اختلاف مضمون النقوش الواردة على مجموعة الشواهد المراد دراستها والتي تتنوع ما بين عبارات دينية وأدعية مأثورة وأبيات شعرية لأبد من الوصول إليها لتوثيق تلك الشواهد توثيقاً علمياً يصل بنا في النهاية إلى دراسة حضارة مجتمع كائن في فترة تاريخية ما.

يهدف هذا البحث إلى دراسة ونشر لأول مرة هذه الشواهد دراسة آثارية فنية وتبيان المقصود بشواهد القبور ومدى أهميتها وذلك بإتباع المنهج الوصفي التحليلي للشواهد موضوع الدراسة وكذلك للمادة الخام المصنوعة منها ثم الدراسة التحليلية لما سجل عليها من كتابات وما نقش عليها من زخارف وتفسير مضمونها. **ولقد انتهجت الدراسة** المنهج الوصفي التحليلي في وصف الشاهد والتعليق عليه ومن هو صاحبه مع العديد من الصور التي توضح قراءة الشواهد وأهم الزخارف الموجودة عليها.

من أهم النتائج التي توصلت إليها الدراسة أن عائلة أثناسيوس واحدة من الأسر المصرية القبطية التي كان لها دور في الحياة السياسية والاجتماعية خلال فترة أواخر القرن التاسع عشر وأوائل القرن العشرين، كما أكدت على دور ميخائيل أثناسيوس في عهد محمد علي باشا، إذ أوقف الكثير من ممتلكاته لبناء الكنائس وإنشاء القصور بالقرية. تناولت الدراسة ثلاثة شواهد قبور رخامية خاصة بعائلة أثناسيوس تنشر لأول مرة. وأشارت إلى استخدام حساب الجمل في التاريخ على الشواهد ومطابقتها للتاريخ الوارد بالأرقام، وبالدراسة التحليلية تمكنت الدراسة من إلقاء الضوء على نوع الخط الذي كتبت به الشواهد وهو خط الثلث، واستخدام طرق حفر الكتابات والزخارف على الشواهد مما يثبت تطوراً في الأسلوب الفني والصناعي وهي طريقة الحفر الغائر على الرخام. كما أشارت الدراسة إلى مضمون الكتابات والغرض منها وكذلك الزخارف النباتية الموجودة على الشواهد وتبين استخدام طريقة الحفر الغائر في تنفيذ الكتابات على الشواهد وعدم اشتغالها على أي ألقاب.